

University College Cork

2021

**Annual Quality Report
University College Cork
Reporting Period 2019-2020**

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2019-2020**

PREFACE

Note: QQI's provider portal, QHub, is currently under development and will be completed in November 2020. AQR 2021 will be submitted via QHub.

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR)**; formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	3
Guidelines on Completing the Report	6
Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template	7
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM	8
Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)	8
Introduction and Overview of Institution	9
1.0 Internal QA Framework	10
1.1 Governance and Management of Quality	10
1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision	14
2.0 Programme Development and Delivery	16
2.1 Programme Development and Approval	16
2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification	18
2.3 Procedures for Making Awards	21
2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment	22
3.0 Learner Resources and Support	26
4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes	36
5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	39
6.0 Information and Data Management	41
7.0 Public Information and Communication	43
8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review	48
9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties	50
9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	50
9.2 Collaborative Provision	52
9.3 Articulation Agreements	54
PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM	56
1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments	56
1.1 Strategic QA Updates	56
1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR	61
1.3 Governance and Management	62
1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review	63
2.0 IQA System - Enhancement and Impacts	66
2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity	79

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period	80
3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives	80
3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods	82
3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period	82
3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period	82
4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies	83

Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report - where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

Report Structure

Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been **material** changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new policies or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period - these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template¹

Legislation

- [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
- [Universities Act 1997](#)

QQI Documents

[Statutory QA Guidelines \(QAG\)](#)

- [Core QAG](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning](#)

[Other QQI Policy Documents](#)

- [QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012](#)
- [QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015](#)
- [QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015](#)

Other National/International References

- [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(2015\)](#)
- [IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision](#)
- [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#)
- [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019](#)
- [HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education](#)
- [The Salzburg Principles](#)
- [The Salzburg II Recommendations](#)
- [SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

¹ These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - <i>Internal QA Framework</i>	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - <i>Programme Development and Delivery</i>	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - <i>QA of Research Activities and Programmes</i>			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - <i>Monitoring and Periodic Review</i>				
5.0 - <i>Staff Recruitment, Development and Support</i>	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - <i>Teaching, Learning and Assessment</i>	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - <i>Learner Resources and Supports</i>	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - <i>Information and Data Management</i>	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - <i>Public Information and Communication</i>	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - <i>Programme Delivery and Development</i>	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - <i>Monitoring and Periodic Review</i>			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 - <i>Details of Arrangements with Third Parties</i>				
2.0 - <i>Programme Development and Delivery</i>	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - <i>Monitoring and Periodic Review</i>			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - <i>QA of Research Activities and Programmes</i>	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for **University College Cork** for the reporting period **1 September 2019 - 31 August 2020**.

The AQR has been approved by the **University Management Team**.

University College Cork (*Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh*) is a constituent university of the National University of Ireland, and located in Cork. University College Cork, five-time winner of the Sunday Times Irish University of the Year and Ireland's premier university for sustainability, has a tradition of independent thinking stretching back over 170 years. We are one of Ireland's leading universities with amongst the highest postgraduate or graduate employment rates of 94% for undergraduate studies and 95% for postgraduate studies.

Proud to be ranked in the top 2% of universities in the world, a degree from UCC ensures that graduates are 'World Ready and Work Ready'. UCC is unrivalled in the quality of its academic programmes and research, its collaborations with industry, the beauty of its campus and its vibrant student life, enjoyed by over 21,000 students from over 104 countries. With over 3,400 students and one third of our staff from overseas, UCC is a true place of international learning.

The AQR was developed with input with senior officers of the University and was reviewed by a Task Group of the Quality Enhancement Committee (2016-2020) to reflect the reporting period covered by this report. The AQR was approved by the University Management team (UMT).

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Quality at UCC

Vision, Mission and Values

Our **Vision** is to be a leading university of independent thinkers.

Our **Mission** is to create, understand and share knowledge and apply it for the good of all.

Our core **Values** guide and underpin our actions and our processes:

- creativity
- responsiveness
- transparency
- scholarship
- freedom of expression
- integrity
- equality
- diversity
- respect

Our key strategic aim is to deliver an innovative academic mission. The following goals will inform that mission:

Goal One

Implement an academic strategy to deliver an outstanding, student-centred teaching and learning experience with a renewed, responsive and research-led curriculum at its core.

Goal Two

Be a leading university for research, discovery, innovation, entrepreneurship, commercialisation and societal impact.

Goal Three

Create value for our community through an international outlook and informed and creative engagement on local and global issues.

Goal Four

Attract, develop, support and retain staff of the highest quality, thereby ensuring a diverse staff who are enabled to reach their full potential.

Goal Five

Strengthen our infrastructure and resource base.

The University Strategy and goals are underpinned by an institutional commitment to a quality culture based on enhancement:

“By embedding a strong quality-enhancement ethos, we will use our quality processes to ensure a culture and experience of best practice in the delivery of our academic mission, demonstrating our commitment to continuous evolution and improvement.” Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022, p. 23.

Quality Enhancement Policy

An enhancement ethos both challenges and supports the systematic examination of what we do as a University to enable excellence in serving learners, stakeholders and our wider community in terms of our education, research and other activities. Our approach to quality is founded on openness, systematic self-evaluation, engagement with peer review processes and a commitment to enhancement-based outcomes that are responsive, creative, enabling and student-centred. Through our quality enhancement approach, we seek to: preserve our institutional autonomy through accountability and transparency which will enable the diversity of our activities; recognise and share good practice; increase our reflexive capacity; support institutional learning and development to encourage responsiveness across all our activities.

In our quality enhancement approach, we are committed to:

- Building and embedding a culture of quality which is engaged, reflective and connected
- Working collaboratively to develop effective evaluation approaches that allow critical reflection on achievement of strategic goals and objectives and an appraisal of the known and anticipated needs of stakeholders
- Engaging students as active partners in the quality enhancement process to embed a student-centred approach
- Developing quality processes that promote creativity, excellence and innovation
- Using peer review as an important reference point for confirming and developing the quality of the University's activities
- Undertaking institutional reflection on the outcomes of quality review processes to contribute to ongoing institutional planning, resource allocation and institutional development
- Ensuring that quality processes facilitate the sharing of good practice internally and externally
- Developing our evidenced-based approach to quality enhancement informed by relevant research and good practice nationally and internationally.

Quality assurance and enhancement policy at UCC is informed by international best practice and has regard to the requirements of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012* and the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)*.

The practical realization of the goals outlined in our vision, mission and values statement is made apparent in the University's Priority Actions which set out activities and projects over the period of the strategic plan. Progress and development against Priority Actions are managed by, and reported on, through the University Management Team. UMT adopts an Annual Plan approach to monitor progress internally whereby strategic goals are embedded and operationalised in the quality procedures and processes University-wide, both horizontally and vertically, for education, research and services.

University-wide there are a range of quality policies and procedures which link to, and support, progression of the strategic goals. These approaches are based on the principles of expert external peer review, external stakeholder engagement, internal stakeholder engagement and robust internal approval, review and monitoring approaches. Such approaches are exemplified by:

1. Periodic quality review by external peers of academic, support and research activity;
2. External examiner system and reports;
3. External stakeholder engagement in the design and review of educational provision;

4. Student engagement and participation in University decision-making processes and student representative structures within programmes;
5. Student participation as reviewers in periodic quality review;
6. Policy and procedures for programme, module approval and curriculum review;
7. Policy and procedures for approval, review and enhancement of doctoral programmes;
8. Procedures for the appointment and on-going professional development of staff;
9. Internal monitoring, review and evaluation of key quality processes through the University's Academic Council committee structure;
10. Strategic review and monitoring of key outcomes of quality processes through the University Management Team.

Implementation of these approaches allows the University to assure the quality and standards of its awards as specified by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012.

Academic Council and Academic Board

The responsibilities of Academic Council for managing and controlling the academic affairs of the university including curriculum, instruction and education are defined by [statute](#). Academic Council, in law, is the primary internal authority responsible for academic affairs. Internal revisions in academic governance must not undermine the legal powers granted to Academic Council but must enable it to discharge its responsibilities effectively and, in practical terms, must enable the alignment and integration of University/College academic governance arrangements with an appropriate balance being struck between accountability and autonomy. Operationally this means that Academic Council retains authority on policy matters with University-level Committees and College Councils advisory to Academic Council, whilst in fact undertaking much of the preliminary work for purposes of efficacy.

Academic Council is supported by an Academic Board with delegated authority on certain matters; established standing committees and a range of sub-committees to manage academic affairs across the scope of the University's education, research and related services. The work of these sub-committees is engaged in coordinating and implementing governing structures, policies and procedures. The work of the Academic Council is supported by the Office for Academic Affairs and Governance and the governing procedures for the conduct of committees is set out in the [Academic Council Committee Handbook](#)

The main strands of institution-level decision-making fora for quality are the Quality Enhancement Committee and Academic Council both of which are under oversight of Governing Body. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/universitygovernance/documents/UniversityOrganisationChart2019.pdf>

Quality Enhancement Committee

The [Quality Enhancement Committee](#) (QEC), chaired by the President, reports annually to Governing Body. The QEC's role is to support the University's mission and strategy for excellence in learning, research and related services through developing and embedding a culture of quality enhancement based on the outcomes of robust expert peer review and informed by ongoing analysis of key quality indicators. In fulfilling its remit, the Quality Enhancement Committee advises UMT and Academic Council on key quality issues arising with implications for strategy or policy development. It provides an Annual Report to Governing Body to meet the requirements of

the Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012). Governing Body refers the report to Academic Council for consideration and review of relevant issues.

Management of Quality

The Director of Quality Enhancement reports to the President and is responsible for planning and implementing the University's quality assurance and enhancement procedures University-wide on a periodic basis. The Director is supported by a small core team of professional staff who work with oversight from the Quality Enhancement Committee to ensure that quality processes support the University's strategic mission and are fit for purpose. Overall, this helps to ensure that the University's quality processes are informed by and developed in light of international good practice for quality in higher education policies for the European Higher Education Area including Bologna and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) and national policies and procedures as outlined in Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) Guidelines.

At the organisational level, the University has established an [Academic Policy and Document Portal](#) which brings together in one place all University policy on academic matters. This development ensures that the correct policy version is being used across the University and allows easy access and consultation. The portal is maintained by the Office of Academic Affairs & Governance (which also manages Academic Council and its subcommittees) and is part of the ongoing development of academic governance provided for in Priority 6 of the University's Academic Strategy. This has seen a strengthening of representation and expertise on Academic Council through a new panel of 30 co-opted members to provide a strong central policy framework. Central academic policies are given effect at the School and College level through the principles of subsidiarity, assurance and central oversight. As an example, work has commenced on establishing formal academic governance at the programme level to allow more local and responsive curriculum change (subsidiarity) within a new University-wide system and structure of Programme Boards of Studies (assurance and oversight). These developments will be underpinned by the introduction of a new Curriculum Management System across the University.

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

UCC engages with other educational institutions in the development of research, staff and student mobility and the provision of education. It also engages with appropriate professional statutory bodies, sectoral and industry representative and learned organisations in accordance with its objectives as a research intensive and comprehensive university.

Educational collaboration

UCC adopts a systematic process for the approval of all new collaborative academic programmes offered in collaboration with other degree awarding bodies or programmes involving external partners. This aligns with the process followed for UCC wholly owned awards, namely Stage 1 which comprises Outline Programme Approval by Academic Board and Stage 2 which comprises the quality assurance procedures for full programme approval by a Programme Approval Panel. In addition, a Memorandum of Agreement or other suitable agreement in relation to academic cooperation for inter-institutional joint programmes or programmes involving external partners (inclusive of annexes/consortia agreements concerning detailed programme management arrangements), is considered during Stage 2 of the approval process. The MOA signing authorities are the Deputy President & Registrar and the Academic Secretary.

Current activities for programme collaboration are guided by the overarching principles of the [IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision](#).

All Academic Agreements must be approved at University level and signed off as appropriate. The University Signing Authority Policy is here:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/policies/SigningAuthorityandApprovalPolicy.pdf>

There is a systematic process for the approval of new academic programmes developed and delivered by UCC and a partner degree-awarding body. Due diligence of the proposed curriculum to be delivered by the partner institution must be performed as outlined in the [UCC handbook governing curricular approval](#).

A Linked Providers procedure was previously approved by the Quality Enhancement Committee. This procedure will form part of Framework for Collaborative Provision which is being currently developed.

Collaborative Programmes

Collaborative programmes offered in partnership by UCC and Cork Institute of Technology are governed by a CIT-UCC Joint Board. This is a joint Board of the Academic Council of the Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and the Academic Board of University College Cork (UCC). Its primary purpose is to ensure that the academic standards and procedures applying to collaborative and joint programmes delivered in partnership between CIT and UCC satisfy the requirements of both institutions. The Board reports by way of minutes to the Academic Council of CIT and the Academic Board of UCC in the case of programmes issues. The Board reports issues relating to resources by way of submission of relevant document(s) and Joint Board minute(s) to the CIT Executive Board, UCC Academic Council and/or UCC University Management Team (Operations). The Board is kept informed by the appropriate Officers and management bodies of the institutions of strategic and policy issues relevant to collaborative and joint programmes. CIT and IT Tralee will become the MTU on 01 January 2021 and arrangements have been made to transfer the Consortium Agreement to the successor body. UCC is liaising with the NUI to make the necessary arrangements for updating parchments to reflect the change to MTU for UCC/MTU joint awards.

The University College Cork-Turning Point Training Institute (UCC-TPTI) Joint Academic Standards Committee is responsible for the governance and academic quality of the programmes offered under this partnership.

Transnational Education

The situation regarding collaborative provision with universities in China is changing as the Chinese Ministry of Education promote models with less outward mobility for Chinese students and more time spent in the home institution. As a result, a number of articulation programmes are coming to an end and new models of collaboration are being developed. The first of these is the agreement with Minzu University of China (MUC) for a dual degree programme (BSc (Hons) Environmental Science and Management with the UCC of School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Irish Management Institute (IMI)

University College Cork acquired the Irish Management Institute (IMI) in 2016, following several years of strategic alliance during which time IMI credit bearing programmes were validated by UCC. Following acquisition, UCC began a process of integration and alignment, as appropriate, was undertaken with strands on finance, corporate governance, IT and academic matters. Academic integration was overseen and approved by Academic Board and Academic Council, which approved new arrangements for the academic governance of IMI programmes in 2019. This includes the IMI Curriculum Standards and Quality Committee, which reports into Academic Board via the College of Business and Law. The alignment of academic policies and regulations, as well as IT systems integration, was completed in 2019/20 and reported to Academic Board. With very limited (and documented) exceptions, UCC academic standards and policies apply to IMI. The IMI fits into the overall system of academic standards and quality of the University by acting as the equivalent of a school in the College of Business and Law. IMI works very closely with Cork University Business School (one of the other two Schools in the College) and this alignment is key to the University's application for AACSB accreditation.

An Academic Governance Framework for IMI has been developed and approved by Academic Board. This takes account of the work undertaken to date in presenting the new arrangements for academic governance in IMI. The Framework signals how IMI aligns with UCC academic policies and outlines any local interpretation or adaptation in line with IMI's academic, business and commercial model. It replaces the previous UCC IMI Programme Quality Assurance Handbook.

Professional Registration & Statutory Bodies / Recognition Bodies

The University engages with a range of professional, statutory and other bodies in the provision of the educational portfolio and in the maintenance of high professional standards. The outcomes of professional accreditation inform on-going programme development, monitoring and review processes through curriculum committees at School and College level. Enhanced monitoring of accredited programmes have been introduced with information being held centrally in the Office of Academic Affairs & Governance and a quarterly report to the Heads of College. The University Quality Committee has agreed as a matter of policy that, wherever possible, alignment between external professional quality processes and internal periodic quality review processes should be achieved with an emphasis on streamlining and rationalisation whilst maintaining robust external peer review processes.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

New academic programmes

UCC has a clearly defined process for the approval of new academic programmes and modifications to existing programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Policies and procedures for the development and approval of programme design are regulated by Academic Board via a sub-committee of Academic Council, the Academic Development and Standards Committee and the Office for Academic Programmes and Regulations (APAR).

For new academic programmes, the main components of the approval process include the clear articulation of Stage 1 and Stage 2. Stage 1 comprises Outline Programme Approval and the approval of the new programme title by Academic Board. Stage 2 comprises the quality assurance procedures for full programme approval. Stage 2 is specifically configured to enable employer and peer review by external subjects, student involvement to ensure appropriate input from potential applicants and Programme Team engagement with external peers to promote good practice from elsewhere in the higher education sector nationally and internationally. The two-stage programme approval process is followed in the case of all collaborative provision. Due diligence of the proposed curriculum to be delivered by the partner institution must be performed as outlined in the [UCC handbook governing curriculum approval](#).

Changes to existing programmes

Changes to existing approved academic programmes are classified as either major or minor. All changes require approval by the relevant School(s)/Programme Board of Studies and the anchor College (in liaison with participating College(s), where appropriate). Certain major changes require final approval by Academic Board. Major and minor changes are regulated by the Office for Academic Programmes and Regulations.

Information on the Academic Council approved process, policies, guidelines and procedures governing new programme approval and change may be found in the [handbook governing curriculum approval](#) and the policies and guidelines governing curriculum approval.

The output from the new academic Programme Approval and Change processes is recorded annually in four separate, but inter-linked publications, namely:

- [University Undergraduate Calendar*](#)
- [University Postgraduate Calendar](#)
- [Book of Modules](#)
- [Marks and Standards](#)

**Curriculum and examination related information for programmes offered through Adult Continuing Education may be found on the [Adult Continuing Education Website](#).*

These are published annually on the University web page and contain the curriculum and examination related information which form the basis of the University's contract with the student and fulfils the University's obligation to students in this regard.

The *University Undergraduate and Postgraduate Calendars* contain information on: Programme title, NFQ level; Programme Entry Requirements; the groupings of core and elective modules that make up each year of a programme and their associated credits values; Regulations governing Selection and Change of Modules, Information on Subject Quotas, Transfers within and across Faculties/Colleges, Work Placement options; Regulations governing Admission, Supervision and Examination of Research Degrees.

The *Book of Modules* contains information on each module listed in the University Calendar. Module Descriptions contain data on: Module Title, Credit Value, Teaching Periods; Maximum no. of Students, Prerequisites, Co-requisites; Teaching Methods/Student Workload; Module Co-ordinator, Lecturers, Learning Outcomes, Module Objective; Module Content, Assessment type and weighting, Compulsory Elements, Penalties, Pass Standard and any Special Requirements for Passing Module, Examination Profile, Requirements for Supplemental Examinations (where applicable).

The *Marks and Standards Book* contains the assessment rules and standards at academic programme level and govern whether or not a student may progress to the following year of study or graduate and the parameters that define the class of the degree to be awarded. It contains information including: Time of Examination Boards, Credits, Modules; Marks Maxima; Pass Standard for the programme, Exit Awards, Pass and Progression/Calculation of Honours Rules; Carrying Forward of Marks Towards Final Degree Result; Eligibility for Honours at Programme Level, Conditions Governing Supplemental and Repeat Year Examinations; Exemptions, Time-limiting Rules.

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The Office of Recruitment and Admissions comprises a suite of eight Professional Services, namely: Admissions Office, International Office, Graduate Studies Office, Student Recruitment Office, Quercus Talented Students' Programme, Graduate Attributes Programme, Centre for Professional Development (CPD), and the Scholarship and Prizes Unit. The Office of Recruitment and Admissions oversees the recruitment and admission of EU undergraduate students and the support of first year students. Prior to entry, the Office supports prospective students by providing clear information regarding all undergraduate programmes, entry requirements and application procedures. This is mainly done through the publication of relevant literature in print and online, through events such as Open Days and Parent Information Evenings, and through school visits. Following are links to the online resources used to disseminate information on the programmes offered:

- www.ucc.ie/prospectus
- www.ucc.ie/study/undergrad/courses
- www.ucc.ie/study/undergrad/entryregs
- www.ucc.ie/cao
- www.ucc.ie/openday

Once prospective students have become applicants to undergraduate programmes, either via CAO or via the local applications process, the Office of Recruitment and Admissions provides information regarding important dates (offer dates etc.), accommodation, registration and orientation.

The policies pertaining to admission include entry requirements, deferred entry, Student Garda Vetting, infectious disease policy, fitness to practise, etc. These are clearly published in the Academic Policy Portal and on the Admissions webpages. These can be found on the following links:

- <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/>
- www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/admissionspolicies/

The Office of Recruitment and Admissions provides a comprehensive range of supports for first year students which are managed and developed by the First Year Experience Co-ordinator and Retention Support Officer. These supports include (but are not limited to) one-to-one meetings with first year students throughout the year and a range of events including Orientation, Freshers' Fest, the Open-Door Welcome for Family and Friends, and various academic and pastoral support workshops and seminars. Details of these events and activities can be found on:

- <https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/firstyear/>

UCC is fully compliant with the QQI Access, Transfer and Progression Policy. Students entering UCC on Access routes are also supported in UCC and information on these routes can be found at the following pages:

- www.ucc.ie/en/dss/dare/
- www.ucc.ie/en/dss/dare/preentry/
- www.ucc.ie/en/uccplus/
- www.ucc.ie/en/uccplus/hear/
- www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/entryregs/matureapplicants/
- www.ucc.ie/en/mature/matureprospective/
- www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/fetac/
- www.ucc.ie/en/cpd/

Support for students is also provided by UCC's [International Office](#), [Graduate Studies Office](#) and [Adult Continuing Education](#).

First year students who have completed undergraduate modules prior to commencing their studies in UCC may be eligible for an exemption from the corresponding UCC module or for Advanced Entry to a year beyond first year. Exemptions are approved at School/Department level after the student has registered. Module exemption most often comes into consideration for students who have come into UCC through the Advanced Entry process (to a year beyond first year). Information regarding such transfers is available at www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/entryreqs/transferadvancedentry/.

Data relating to retention and progression is compiled annually by the Office of Recruitment and Admissions and considered at University Management Team meetings and by Academic Council.

Access

Access in University College Cork comprises of three core services who work with the wider university, students, teachers, communities, families, businesses, and advocacy groups to ensure that all students who have the interest and motivation to access higher education are enabled to do so.

The core access services are the UCC PLUS+ Programme (students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds), the Mature Student Office and the Disability Support Service. A comprehensive range of outreach programmes, dedicated admissions pathways and post admission supports are in place to ensure that students have equal opportunities to progress and succeed in University College Cork. The support of non-traditional students in UCC is not confined to the core access service; strong working relationships have been established between access services and professional services and academic departments. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/accessforall/>

University College Cork is recognised as a leader in the area of Access to Higher Education in 2019/20 over 23% of undergraduate admissions were through Access Admissions routes

The key services delivered by Access & Participation include:

- **Disability Support Service (DSS)**: The Disability Support Service works to increase access and retention of students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties and does this by delivering a very proactive and innovative pre entry programme to engage with primary and secondary schools as well as students with disabilities and their parents. The DSS also provide a post entry support programme to identify reasonable accommodations to support student to undertake their studies in UCC. Supports extend to students on placement, Erasmus or mentoring/internship programmes.
- **UCC PLUS+ Programme**: The UCC PLUS Programme, aims to increase the number of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds accessing and succeeding in University. There are three central strands to the work of the UCC PLUS+ Programme:
 - an outreach programme
 - a special admissions route - HEAR, and
 - a post entry support programme in UCC

- **Mature Student Office**: The Mature Student Office (MSO) works with full-time undergraduate students who are over the age of 23 on 1 January on the year of entry to third level, in addition to supporting first year students entering via QQI/Further Education route. The role of the MSO is twofold:
 - **Recruitment** - to promote and encourage mature student entry to UCC and
 - **Retention & Progression** - to support registered mature students to stay on their course of study.
- **Student Financial Support and Advice**: Providing financial support to students is key to enabling participation and success for students from low income background. A range of funds are administered by the Student Assistance Fund office. The Student Budgetary Advisor is on hand to provide advice, guidance and support to students experiencing financial challenges.
- **The SOAR Project** is an inter-institutional collaboration on Access, which is led by Access & Participation in UCC. It brings together the South Cluster – Cork Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Carlow, Institute of Technology Tralee, University College Cork and Waterford Institute of Technology together with community partners to collaborate on devising and delivering strategies to increase access to higher education for under-represented groups. The Project is funded by the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Strand 3.

Sanctuary Scholarships Scheme

An exciting initiative that has been developed as part of UCC's University of Sanctuary Status is the [Sanctuary Scholarships scheme](#). This scheme provides free tuition to 7 asylum seekers and/or refugees living in Ireland annually who would otherwise have to pay international student (non-EU) fees to enter access third level education. In partnership with the Tomar Trust and other private donors, bursaries will also be provided to successful students.

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

All academic programmes and modules are aligned with the ECTS and published in the University Calendar and Book of Modules. Assessment details for individual modules are recorded in the Book of Modules.

The criteria required to pass a particular module and progress to the next stage of a programme are detailed in the Marks and Standards for each programme <http://www.ucc.ie/admin/registrar/marksandstandards/> and in the University Calendar (<https://www.ucc.ie/admin/registrar/calendar/>). The Marks and Standards describe the timing of assessment, the total credits and marks required at each year of a programme, the pass standard and the criteria that must be met for students to progress to the next stage of a programme. The Marks and Standards also describe the conditions where Supplemental Examination and/or Repeat Year Examination is appropriate, and additional conditions such as the awarding of honours by year and/or for the programme, exemptions and rate of progression limits.

Changes to Marks and Standards require approval by the relevant College. The Marks and Standards for each year of each programme are applied by the University's Student Records and Examinations Office. Application of Marks and Standards generates a provisional final mark and award for each student. These provisional marks and awards are presented for ratification by a University Examination Board, where the Examination Officer or nominee acts as Secretary; the University Examination Board make the appropriate final approval recommendations to the University's Academic Board.

Regulations governing the preparation for and the execution of examinations can be found at: www.ucc.ie/en/exams/procedures-regulations. This includes information on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, regulations and procedures with respect to the monitoring and evaluation of examination processes and outputs and the retention of data. The assessment process for each discipline also makes provision for mitigating circumstances <https://www.ucc.ie/en/exams/procedures-regulations/>. There is also provision for [examination rechecks](#) and [Appeals](#).

External Examiners play a vital role in the assessment of programmes, assuring academic standards and advising on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The External Examiner confirms that the academic standards of programmes, modules and the awards to which they lead are consistent with the academic outcomes specified and are comparable to those achieved in the subject area in equivalent universities internationally. Guidelines for External Examiners includes information on the role of the Extern Examiner and the role of the Head of School/Department/Discipline.

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The delivery of research-based teaching and learning with a world class student experience is a strategic goal (Goal One) for UCC as outlined in the University's [Strategic Plan 2017-2022](#) and is further articulated in UCC's [Academic Strategy 2018-2022](#).

The following link provides an A-Z list of all UCC policies and regulation in respect of academic governance, including teaching and learning related policy and guidelines such as UCC's [Guidelines for External Examiners](#): <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/policy-a-z/> Further policy continues to be generated by relevant standing committees of UCC's Academic Council such as its Learning & Teaching Committee, its Academic Development and Standards Committee and various sub-committees such as the Digital Education Advisory Group. Other major policy currently in development includes an Assessment Policy and framework, expected to be approved later in 2021. The Assessment Policy and accompanying strategy is jointly led by the VP for Learning and Teaching and the Head of the Student Records and Exams Office, and will provide additional guidance and clarity for staff and students, supplementing current UCC regulations such as the *Guide to Examinations and Assessment for Staff and Students 2020*.

The Office of the Vice President for Learning & Teaching (OVPLT) advises and contributes to the development of policy for teaching and learning and, through national and international engagement, ensures that policies and practices at the University are appropriately benchmarked and informed by good practice. In tandem with other quality assurance controls and procedures (such as extern reports, external professional bodies accreditations and standards, policies such as "Fitness to Practise" etc.), OVPLT is actively engaged in the promotion and elevation of a culture across the university of developing, disseminating and celebrating quality and excellence in teaching – for example its annual President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching, the oldest such scheme amongst Irish HEIs.

The role of OVPLT is to enhance the staff and student learning experience through staff development opportunities and through engagement in innovative research-informed teaching to ensure that innovative teaching and learning approaches are fostered and supported and a student-centered approach to research-based teaching is rooted in the culture (www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/abouttheovptl/). OVPLT issues a weekly (every Monday) short email to all staff on teaching 'tips and tricks' as well as links to further reading and internal and external resources/supports, highlighting for example national seminars provided by the IUA/QQI/National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. OVPLT's quarterly e-newsletters issued to all UCC staff (and beyond) is another way that it disseminates information on good practices locally and elsewhere (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/ovptlnews/>). During the pandemic, it developed and promoted new webpages 'Keep Teaching' and 'Keep Assessing', the purpose of which was to be a one-stop-shop for staff to access information on relevant policy and available help/support/training opportunities.

UCC's reputation in the area of teaching and learning is recognised internationally as UCC is regularly selected to participate in EUA projects and Erasmus+ capacity-building projects. For example, UCC (through OVPLT) has participated in the 2017, 2018, and 2020 EUA Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) around the themes of "[Improving the link between research and teaching](#)", "[Promoting active learning in universities](#)", and "[Meeting skills and employability demands](#)". The TPGs gather a selected group of EUA member universities each year to discuss and explore practices and lessons learnt in organising and implementing learning and teaching at the institutional level. They also identify good practices on the given theme, and support quality enhancement in learning and teaching. The groups' work feeds into EUA's ongoing policy work and debates on [learning and](#)

teaching by providing direct feedback from an institutional perspective on the key challenges in the area, as well as recommendations. UCC (through OVPLT) has also been selected as one of 29 HEIs to participate in the EUA's Leadership and Organisation for Teaching and Learning at European Universities (LOTUS) programme. The LOTUS project aims to contribute to capacity building and strategic change management for learning and teaching at higher education institutions across Europe. The project also aims to discuss and demonstrate the potential of various actors (ministries, university associations, student and staff unions, etc.) to support transformation and innovation in learning and teaching. LOTUS is led by EUA in partnership with a diverse consortium of higher education institutions, national rectors' conferences, education ministries and organisations actively involved in learning and teaching across Europe. And UCC (through OVPLT) continues as a partner in numerous Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership and Capacity Building Initiatives. These initiatives focus on a range of topics related to Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and are transnational projects designed to develop and share innovative practices and promote cooperation, peer learning, and exchanges of experiences. As a programme partner in these projects, we support eligible Partner Countries (e.g. Haiti) to modernise, internationalise and increase access to higher education, and address the challenges facing their higher education institutions and systems.

OVPLT supports a wide range of CPD activities for staff through the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/ which provides support for all staff and postgraduate students in their teaching and learning roles. Credit bearing programmes in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education up to and including NFQ level 9 (Postgraduate Certificate/Postgraduate Diploma) are available online and free of charge to all categories of staff who support student learning, along with tailored modules for postgraduate students engaged in teaching. All newly appointed staff are required to enrol in and complete the Postgraduate Certificate programme, and participation rates in the programme are an institutional performance measure through the HEA Compact process. The Postgraduate Certificate programme is UCC's largest – as measured by enrolment numbers – postgraduate programme, and over 70% of all staff have successfully completed the certificate. The Centre staff also run regular seminar workshops on Teaching and Learning and Assessment theories and practices and these are advertised to all staff.

The Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund 2019 (National Forum, HEA) saw UCC receiving €483,000 in a direct allocation. Through a competitive internal application process in UCC, administered by OVPLT, 26 initiatives were selected for funding based on their potential for significant and sustainable impact on student learning. These initiatives, aligned with institutional and sectoral priorities, continue to contribute to learning and teaching enhancement in UCC. All initiatives have undergone review with a panel of international experts, and will be required to illustrate their impact via an openly available resource. All resources created from the initiatives will be available via creative commons licence. The 2020 allocation to UCC is €458,000, and again this funding will be administered internally by OVPLT. The strategic focus of this call is *Transforming Teaching and Learning for Student Success*. Institutions are prompted to reflect on what they have learned in 2020 and consider what this means for how they can strengthen key enablers of student success within and across face-to-face, blended, online and remote teaching and learning contexts. UCC will fund a number of initiatives under this fund, including a piece which will see the further development of staff and student programmes related to Academic Integrity, literacy work that will build on established policies and procedures such as UCC's Plagiarism Policy ; Fitness to Practise policy, and UCC's Guide to Examinations and Assessment for Students and Staff 2020.

The Centre for Digital Education (within OVPLT) provides support to UCC staff around the application of educational technology to education. It offers bespoke training sessions to academic and other staff across the

university around their digital skills, confidence and competence, to enhance the teaching and learning experience. Members of the CDE team sit on many committees across UCC including the academic-led Digital Education Advisory Group, a sub-committee of Academic Council, and is heavily involved with cognate units such as IT Services in procurement and fitting of hard and software technologies. The CDE team also publishes regular newsletters, blogs and FAQs and runs regular training sessions on topics informed by staff feedback on their needs (informal feedback and formal – e.g. the recent INDeX survey). As well as group training sessions open to all staff, the CDE also offers 1:1 consultations for individual staff members and departmental-level advice/bespoke training.

The Centre for Adult Continuing Education (ACE) within UCC provides lifelong learning opportunities (credit and non-credit bearing) at a number of outreach centres in Cork and beyond, including at Cork Prison and through the municipal library network and the credit unions network, and well beyond the Munster region. ACE also designs and delivers bespoke training courses for local industries (such as Pharma companies) and manages UCC's Springboard+ involvement through which several programmes at NFQ levels 7, 8 and 9 are delivered to jobseekers and workers who wish to upskill and increase their employability chances.

The University's Language Centre (also housed within OVPLT) is an accredited ACELS English language provider and as such conforms to the regulations and guidelines of its recognition scheme <https://www.acels.ie/acelsregulations> in respect to teaching, learning and assessment. The Centre's credit-bearing modules and courses are validated by the University. The Centre's suite of pre-sessional courses provide direct entrance to UCC undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. A special standardisation and moderation calendar ensures student performance is mapped to marking criteria and outcomes. Teacher training courses leading to a qualification are accredited by an external awarding body. The Centre complies with the awarding body regulations and complies with their requirements for internal and external verification regulations: <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/professional-development/cambridge-english-teaching-framework/>

The student-facing Skills Centre (also housed within OVPLT) is an additional resource available to all students offering group and 1:1 assistance in such areas as “Transitioning into College Life” “Developing your academic writing” etc. During the pandemic, the Skills Centre continued to deliver a full service, all online, Mondays through to and including Saturdays. A number of its resources are available to students 24/7. More on the Skills Centre here <https://www.ucc.ie/en/skillscentre/about/>

Since 2018, the Exams Appeals Officer reports to the VP for Learning & Teaching (and OVPLT provides all Exams Appeals administrative function). The learning that OVPLT has gained from the incorporation of this function has been invaluable, and has contributed to (through the identification of gaps) the development of previously absent policy frameworks such as a “Reasonable Accommodations” policy and set of procedures for DSS students, itself a sub-policy of the emerging Assessment Policy. The articulation of practices (e.g. Reasonable Accommodations) at UCC hithertofore undocumented is a further shift towards greater coherency and transparency. The Exams Appeals Officer also prepares annual reports for Academic Board.

An Academic Council Standing Committee on Learning & Teaching is responsible for bringing forward strategy and policy in support of the University's learning and teaching agenda and for advising on national and international good practice in these matters. The Committee provides a general forum for debate on learning and teaching and for developing the University's overall approach to assuring high quality research-informed teaching within the context of the University's Strategic Plan. The Committee is therefore the lead body with

oversight responsibility for learning, teaching and good practice in assessment. The purpose and Terms of Reference for the Committee are set out in the Academic Council Committee Handbook below. The VP for Learning & Teaching and several OVPLT staff are committee members and/or secretariat. The identified Learning & Teaching leads in the four Colleges are also members of this committee.

An Academic Council Academic Staff Development Committee is responsible for overseeing and advising on academic staff development and policies in accordance with international good practice. The Committee provides a forum for debate on current issues relating to staff development in line with international standards and for the proposal and support of initiatives that enhance staff development. The Committee is therefore the lead body with oversight responsibility for staff, the formation and/or review of academic and research staff development strategies and policies to ensure that the provision of staff development is high quality, relevant and informed by international good practice. The purpose and Terms of Reference for the Committee are set out in the [Academic Council Committee Handbook](#). The VP for Learning & Teaching and several OVPLT staff are committee members and/or secretariat.

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

UCC Library

The mission of UCC Library is to deliver excellent information services to meet the needs of the University and regional scholarly community; to support the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence; and to contribute to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the region.

UCC Library has three locations, including the Boole Library located by the Quadrangle on main campus, the Boston Scientific Health Sciences Library located in the Brookfield complex, and an offsite repository at Pouladuff Road, Togher, Cork. In addition, UCC Library supports the Mercy Hospital Library with Librarian support.

The Library has a stock of 900,000 volumes and fulfils 2.5 million full text article requests and 300,000 electronic book requests per year.

The Library Strategy is focused on the delivery of an excellent service that is proactive, innovative, timely and responsive to user needs. Central to this is a clear commitment to enhancing the student experience thereby inspiring teaching and learning. Providing the opportunity to discover and use high quality information resources will contribute to creativity and innovation, especially in supporting leading-edge research.

The Library provides a number of learning supports and training resources to students through webinars, online modules, and one-to-one research support, coordinated by the Learning and Teaching Team in the Library. In 2019 the Library developed a Digital & Information Literacy Framework that guides the development of a comprehensive and coherent approach to digital and information literacy within UCC, and determines the appropriate infrastructure required to develop consistently high-quality, equitable programmes and resources. It will enable future collaborations with University colleagues so that learning opportunities on offer are enriched by a diverse set of skills and expertise that will reach more students, teaching staff and researchers.

The Ask Us service opened in 2018, opening an online and face-to-face query service for students, using a comprehensive knowledge base of FAQs, ticketing service, and live chat function. The service acts as a first port of call for students with general research/ library related queries, such as locating and searching online resources, catalogue searching and citing & referencing.

The innovative and flexible Creative Zone opened in the Boole Library in late 2015 and offers a technology-rich space for all students and staff in UCC. A wide range of events organised in association with the schools, societies, and student services, are fully available to all the student body.

Supporting students in their digital experience is a key component of the Library strategy. The Library Studio has opened in Boole Library in 2018. This self-service studio offers a new video and audio recording facility and is fully bookable by all students and staff. 3D printing is also available to students and staff, and a Virtual Reality room is currently under development.

The dual role of Special Collections is to facilitate research and to ensure the care and conservation of UCC Libraries' unique and distinctive materials. The Archives service provides access to archival collections and facilities which have been developed to satisfy the research and information needs of the Library's users.

Collaborating closely with other UCC student services, the Library now hosts a range of services to offer a more cohesive student experience. The Disability Support Service runs the Assistive Technology Unit supporting students with a disability, which is located within the Library. In addition, there is a soundproof quiet pod available for student one-to-one tutorials and individual study. A laptop loan system is available to all students in the Boole Library, established in partnership with the Access Office, some laptops are reserved for use by students registered with UCC Pluss and the Disability Support Service.

Cooperation and collaboration includes developing programmes of formal cooperation with European and Chinese libraries in support of the international students who come to UCC from these countries. The Library maintains active links with a range of local public, voluntary, and private organisations, many of whose information and preservation requirements we readily support through advice and helpful intervention.

Cork Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is a cooperative agreement between all the main libraries in Cork city and county, with a view to ensuring wider access to learning materials for all the people of Cork and beyond.

2019/20 Key Library Highlights

- 1.03 million footfall, despite March 2020 closure of all University buildings
- User Satisfaction Increase: LibQual Survey administered with a satisfaction rating of 7.41 on a 9-point scale (up from 7.34 on previous year)
- Enabling Research & Scholarship:
 - 116,000 collection items borrowed
 - 2.84 million articles downloaded (up from 2.76m previous academic year)
 - Almost 815,000 ebook chapter downloads
 - 80% increase in ebook usage on previous Academic year
 - Over 862,000 research database records viewed.
 - 49% increase in research database use on previous Academic year.
 - Temporary access to over 182,000 additional ebooks negotiated by library staff with publishers due to COVID pandemic.
 - New rapid interlibrary loan service unveiled to provide access to digital document supply from other libraries

IT Infrastructure

University College Cork has a distinguished digital legacy stretching back to the mid-18th century. George Boole, the architect of Boolean logic, was Professor of Mathematics. Ireland's first website was www.ucc.ie and one of the first international networks in Cork, was built in UCC. Building on this tradition of innovation and value creation, IT Services in UCC wants to enable and develop a digital University for the 21st century student, one that is centred on the needs of our present and future students. IT Services in UCC is focused on building exciting digital products and services to support the student experience and student learning outcomes.

The current team within IT Services is one of the largest in the region, with over 60 IT professionals and almost 40 Students helping to provide support and develop new digital products and services.

IT Services provide services and support for 20,000 students and 5,000 staff. Our campus spans over 100 acres at the centre of Cork City. This service portfolio includes the UCC corporate systems (Finance, HR, Student), the

largest private network in Cork (Wi-Fi, VOIP), 2 data centres, over 7000 desktops and we support 300+ websites and social media presence, 190 large classrooms, including the teaching technology and also research infrastructure. The clip in the attached link explains our services and ambitions, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/about/>

IT Services are focused on building and developing our digital services to support our students' journey from application to graduation. A full list of services is available IT Services in UCC is listed in the URL, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/services/>

The University is embarking on a Digital Strategy and a Data Strategy, which is University lead and Technology enabled. These strategic initiatives will transform the UCC over the next 4 years and will support the development of a more Digital University. Enhancing and modernising the services to our students is central to these proposals. We partner with key administration, academic and research units to develop agile, intuitive IT solutions. Using concepts such as DevOps, Agile Product Development, Infrastructure as a Service as key enablers to achieving this suite of IT Systems. A full list of IT policies in UCC can be found at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/it-policies/>

The University approved its Digital Strategy in January 2019 and has been delivering on the connected university strategy over the past 2 years. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/itservices/UCCDigitalStrategy.pdf>

We are looking at revising this strategy in light of the Universities revised strategy 2022. The IT unit has been a pivotal part of UCC throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with so many University services now running online. We have seen a phenomenal transformation in the services provided to the staff and students of UCC over the period of our strategic plan and will form the backbone of our plans over the years to come.

Student Supports

The UCC Strategic Plan states that "UCC is committed to delivering strong student-focused support services which address the physical, psychological, spiritual, social, cultural and welfare needs of students by focusing on the students' transition into UCC, time in UCC and transition out of UCC."

The Student Experience Office <https://www.ucc.ie/en/studentexperience/> co-ordinates student support services and leads the strategic development and direction of policy and practice related to the UCC Student Experience in a wide range of functions and activities.

Student policies and procedures include: Student Charter, Student Mental Health: Policy for Staff, Student Alcohol Policy, Fitness to Continue in Study Policy, Support for Pregnant Students Policy, Procedure for Responding to Reports of Missing Students, Protocol for Responding to the Death of a Student and Code of Practice for Students with Disabilities are available on: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/>

The Student Experience Office uses a thematic approach to supporting and developing the student experience. Student Supports are grouped under five headings: Student Life, Access & Participation, Careers, Sport & Physical Activity and Student Health & Wellbeing. There is a focus on a collaborative approach to developing cross-service projects (such as improving the use of technology across all services), supporting transition into UCC, supporting students to progress and achieve their potential, facilitating high levels of engagement in student life, providing a focus on employability and transition to the world of work, and supporting student health and wellbeing.

The Student Experience Office coordinates an array of supports for students and encompasses Access & Participation which includes Disability Support, Mature Students Office, UCC PLUS+ Student Budgetary Advisor and SOAR Projects; Career Services which includes Careers Advisors, Employer Engagement and Work Placement; Student Health & Wellbeing which includes Student Health, Student Counselling & Development, Chaplaincy, Peer Support and Niteline; Sport & Physical Activity and Student Clubs; Student Life which includes Accommodation & Community Life (encompassing Campus Watch), Health & Safety for Student Activities, Radio & Student Media, Student Societies; Students' Union, all of which provide a range of specialised services to students.

Student Health

The Student Health Department provides a comprehensive range of student health care services to all registered students, during office hours, Monday to Friday, 12 months of the year. The Department has an FTE staff of 6.6 covering doctors, nurses, psychiatrist, physiotherapists and administration.

A combination of pre-booked appointments and emergency appointments facilitates appropriate access, according to clinical need. For those students not registered with a doctor locally, provision is made for out of hours care and home visiting for emergencies through a local general practitioner.

Services include doctor-led diagnosis and management of illnesses and problems presented by the students themselves, facilitated by a nurse-led triage system. A comprehensive contraception and sexual health service is available on-site. An on-site physiotherapy clinic provides expert care of musculoskeletal problems and a Consultant Psychiatrist clinic address complex mental health issues. There is also a dedicated comprehensive vaccination programme offering immunisation against Hepatitis B, Tuberculosis, Measles, Mumps, and Rubella to students exposed to these illnesses during their course as well as travel medicine immunisation clinics.

Student Counselling & Development

Student Counselling & Development (SCD) is a free confidential service to all students. The Service provides individual counselling and support to students with emotional, psychological, academic or personal development needs. The Service also provides psycho-educational classes and workshops including *Understanding & Managing Stress*. In addition to interventions focused directly at students, SCD acts in an advisory capacity and contributes to the development of student welfare policies within the University. SCD provides training to staff for the purposes of resourcing them as mentors of students and in responding to at risk and distressed students. The service has also developed a set of Guidelines for Supporting Distressed Students in addition to providing training in this area. SCD contributes to the learning and teaching mission of the University and to student retention and performance by reducing student distress which has an adverse impact in these areas.

Individual Counselling: In addition to individual counselling, SCD provides online and telephone counselling to students:

1. Support for Acute Exam Stress: SCD provides on call support for students in acute distress during the exam period, to enable them to successfully complete their exams.
2. Anxiety Management Workshops: Proactive intervention to provide students with strategies for recognising and managing stress.
3. Digital Offerings: SCD provides comprehensive evidence-based online resources to students.
4. Designated Liaison Point for Transgender and Non-Binary Students: SCD has been deemed the designated liaison point for transgender and non-binary students.

5. Staff Consultations: SCD provides support for staff in managing and responding to concerns about student well-being.
6. Student Consultations: Students are also offered consultations, both individually and in groups, to explore concerns about fellow students who are experiencing difficulties and may need support.
7. DLP: SCD staff member appointed as Designated Liaison Person for retrospective reporting of child protection issues to Tusla on behalf of UCC.
8. Critical Incident Response: Student Counsellors provide expertise in leading responses to critical incidents as well as providing follow up support for those impacted.

Peer Support programme

The Peer Support programme is a support service for students, by students. Our programme runs on the principle of student-to-student support as we believe that many students feel more comfortable making initial contact with a fellow student for advice.

Students are welcomed into the UCC community on their first day by an experienced student volunteer from their own course. Each of these volunteers is trained thoroughly with information about the university and how to support those incoming peers who may find transitioning to their new life confusing or difficult. We are aware that shifting into a university mind-set will be one of the greatest changes the majority of our students have ever experienced and so we aim to provide the best possible support from those who have first-hand experience of what this transition is like – the students themselves.

For 2019/20 we had 308 Peer Support Leaders across every course in the university and linked to every new undergraduate student, both 1st year and international. The first representative of the university each new student meets on their orientation day is their Peer Supporter Leader. This Leader takes responsibility for ensuring these new students are given a good grasp of everything they would need to begin their journey at UCC (campus tour, IT workshop, library tour, etc.)

UCC's Peer Support Programme is one of the most successful and comprehensive in the country. Each Peer Support Leader receives extensive initial training and is offered on-going continuing personal development to ensure they can provide their students with the smoothest transition possible. Peer Support Leaders volunteered 13,189 hours on a voluntary basis during the 2019/20 academic year. They are also rewarded for their voluntary work representing the university with each Leader receiving a UCC Works Award and being presented a Peer Support Certificate by the Deputy President & Registrar. The Peer Support Programme ensures all of our students gain a sense of belonging to the UCC community.

UCC Niteline

UCC Niteline is a listening service run by student volunteers. They provide a non-judgmental, non-directive and confidential listening service via a free phone number and anonymous instant messaging chat. All student volunteers go through 6 training sessions with the Cork Samaritans prior to interacting with callers.

The service operates 9pm-1am 5 nights a week during term time. The caller remains anonymous throughout their conversation and can raise any issue, concerns or worries that they have in a confidential manner.

There were 76 volunteers in the programme in the 2019/20. All student volunteers receive a UCC Works Award upon completion of their duties.

Chaplaincy Services

As one of the oldest service departments in the university, UCC chaplaincy engages with students and staff of all faiths and none. With a team of two full-time chaplains, two visiting chaplains, and an administrator the continuous need for outreach by our team continues to be a high priority. While the nature of chaplaincy is pastoral in nature, it also provides opportunities for developing social awareness through spirituality and liturgy.

UCC chaplaincy accompanies many students who may feel isolated in their environment – creating a safe space for them to encounter community and friendship. It is noticeable that many who use the service have confidence in chaplaincy and that their various spiritual, human and pastoral needs are met. To this end, chaplaincy engages with all other relevant services within the student experience area to create a holistic approach to the needs of students and staff. Chaplaincy takes a lead role at times of trauma and bereavement and acts as a point of reference for follow up support to families and students after such events.

Department of Sport & Physical Activity

UCC Sport is run by full-time Department of Sport and Physical Activity staff with the support of students in the form of Clubs Executive committee which represents **55 clubs** within University College Cork.

The Department of Sport and Physical Activity in UCC aims “to provide high quality facilities and services to students, graduates, staff and the wider community”.

The Department enhances and supports UCC student’s development and university experience, by promoting positive health and well-being, leadership and activities from social participation to elite. The Department focuses on supporting student clubs who provide invaluable experience both on and off the “field of play”. UCC sports clubs are run by the students for the students.

Student Clubs provide a fantastic opportunity for students to develop their skill outside of the classroom. With 55 sports clubs in UCC ranging from water sports, to outdoor pursuit type activities, to martial arts, to indoor and outdoor team sports, UCC students have a great opportunity to get involved in some form of sport and recreation activity whilst at UCC. The clubs help foster lifelong friendships and provide opportunities for students to learn valuable life skills by becoming administrators within their club. Each year clubs appoint officers and administrators to run their clubs & these operations are overseen by the Clubs Executive and the Sports Department. There are many opportunities for students to represent the university in their chosen sport throughout their time in UCC either locally, provincially, nationally or even internationally.

Accommodation and Community Life

The Office of Accommodation and Community Life was established in August 2017. This office has responsibility for:

- Student Accommodation
- Campus Watch
- Community Relations
- Residential Life

Health and Safety for Student Activity

A recent development in the UCC student experience was the addition of the health and safety officer for student activity role (Oct 2018). The following activities were undertaken in the 19/20 academic year:

Safety Training: A high-level risk assessment of each club and society was carried out and a training needs analysis based on the number of members, type of activity and other factors. Training provided to student

representation groups in 2019/20 includes; Safety Statement & Chairperson safety / overview (135 students), risk assessment for student activity training (142), hazard and incident reporting for student activity (142), first aid for student activity (91) and manual handling (13). Over 400 personnel have been trained on hands only CPR since August 2019.

Digital badge: An application to create digital badge entitled “Safety Champion for Student Activity” was made in September with plans for rollout in early 2021. The badge aims to reward students who have committed time to the completion of safety training / risk assessments and other safety related tasks.

Safety Statements: The template previously in use for club safety statements was updated for 2019/20. Safety statements were also rolled out to all societies in September 2019 for the first time, in line with best practice across other Irish Universities.

Safety suggestions and hazard reporting: An online reporting form for accidents / incidents / near misses / hazards (safety concerns) was rolled out in September 2019 to the student’s union and to the club and society club captains / chairpersons. This was done with the aim of increasing the level of reporting, to gain data on where the sources of hazards were and to identify early any Accidents or Dangerous Occurrences which need to be reported through the university channels.

Risk assessments: In 2019/20, 3 different event plan and risk assessment templates were created and made available for student led activities.

Safety Committee for Student Activity: In 2018, the UCC Student Activity Safety Committee was established, with staff and student representation from UCC Societies, UCC Clubs and the UCC Students Union.

Student Representation Governance Project: This high-level project involving Students Union, Clubs, Societies, OCLA, SEO, Finance and other relevant UCC staff included a Health and Safety for student activities strand.

Notes: Activities in 2020/21 are severely curtailed due to the pandemic. The H & S Officer for Student Activities post is currently vacant and is due to be filled in due course.

UCC 98.3 FM

UCC 98.3FM aims to promote balanced student programming, encouraging access to and involvement in radio for individuals and groups to present their ideas and views while being a trusted and informed voice for the student body of UCC while continuing to entertain, inform, educate and facilitate the student body throughout Cork city. While the station is operating from University College Cork, it actively encourages involvement from other colleges and individuals not associated with UCC to offer direct media access for all viewpoints to have a voice in our student community.

Students’ Union

UCC Students’ Union is the chief representative body for students in UCC. UCCSU is a democratic organization run by 6 fulltime officers elected by the student body. The SU’s main functions are to provide academic assistance to students, to provide support to students in need, to lobby the University and the government on issues affecting students, and to provide entertainment on campus

Student Societies

Student Societies provide a fantastic environment for students to develop their skillset outside of the lecture halls. With over 100 societies in UCC ranging from academic, charitable, creative, debating, political, religious, and social student societies aim to produce a variety of interests to get involved in. In 2019/20, there were over 1400 elected officers of societies who held positions such as chairperson, finance, and public relations along with other roles. The theme and subject range is as diverse as the societies themselves - from Drama to International Relations, Science to Science Fiction and Medieval Renaissance to Mythology. Each year societies run almost 2,000 events per year and there is always something to get involved in. There are also many

opportunities to travel through student's involvement with societies to countries such as USA, Africa, Canada, India and much of Europe. This year, the societies pivoted away from the usual international travel and found new ways to engage with their bases such as online conferences, webinars, and social meetings to ensure their members had the same positive society experience.

Career Services

The UCC Career Services helps UCC students to achieve their career objectives by:

- Providing one to one careers advice and coaching.
- Delivering employability related workshops and lectures.
- Collaborating with academic departments and other UCC units to deliver bespoke employability and career related workshops and events to their students.
- Managing work placement accredited modules in collaboration with 38 academic programmes.
- Organising Career and Graduate Recruitment events such as recruitment fairs, jobs roadshows etc. which facilitate graduate employer and student interactions.
- Providing UCC students with access to high quality employment opportunities in Ireland and internationally.
- Making UCC students aware of a wide range of postgraduate study opportunities.

To deliver these services to students, the Service is organised around the following team structure

- Employability and Employer Engagement Team
- Work Placement Team
- Careers Advisory Team

Employability and Employer Engagement Team

The main activities of this team are to:

- Organise initiatives and events that support UCC students to develop their employability skills in preparation for entering the world of work. This is achieved through initiatives such as Graduate Recruitment activities, the UCC Works Award Programme and the Student Volunteering and Community Engagement activities.
- Ensure that UCC students and graduates can avail of a wide range of employment opportunities both in Ireland and internationally. This is achieved by sourcing and promoting graduate employment opportunities to UCC students and graduates using a range of communication platforms including web based vacancy databases, social media and traditional on-campus events.
- Support the other Career Services teams in the day-to-day administration of their responsibilities.

Work Placement Team

This team supports the delivery of accredited work placement modules in Academic Programmes in the Colleges of Business and Law, SEFS and CACSSS. Responsibilities include

- Support each individual student through the placement selection process until they successfully get an offer of a work placement with a partner employer.
- Deliver class contact hours to prepare students for work placement, interviews, workplace skills, etc.
- Contact employers to identify and acquire suitable work placement opportunities for students

Work Placement officers have a joint reporting relationship to the Head of Career Services and the Head of their respective College:

Careers Advisory Team

Careers advice is a key element of our service where we aim to provide accurate, impartial careers advice and coaching based on the student's needs, qualifications and circumstances. A number of options are available to students:

- One to One Careers advisory consultations by appointment with a careers advisor where students can discuss a wide variety of topics from CV's to interviews to general advice on career paths. Where a visit to the Career Service is not practicable (e.g. student is abroad) we endeavour to facilitate students by the use of phone or video calls.
- Small group workshops on topics such as CVs and job applications, interview technique,
- Sector specific talks such as careers in teaching, Study in EU/US etc. as well as employability related workshops and lectures.
- Profiling for Success: administer a range of psychometric tools designed to improve self-awareness in students, thereby supporting their transition to professional life

Careers Education

Careers advisors also work closely with academic departments and other UCC units to deliver bespoke employability and career related workshops and events to their students.

Additional Policies for Career Services

- Student Placement Policy
- Placement Risk Assessment
- Preparation of Students Going on Placement (Procedure)
- Monitoring and Communication During Student Placement (Procedure)
- Management of Critical Incident (Procedure)

Quercus Talented Students Programme

In University College Cork we believe in creating an environment in which academic excellence can be combined with opportunities for personal development. We are committed to the intellectual growth, social formation and welfare of our students and recognise the strength that is derived from student diversity. Excellence underpins everything we do at UCC, and the University recognises exceptional students when they join, as well as those who develop their talents while studying here.

To this end, we introduced the Quercus Talented Students' Programme aimed at supporting and promoting excellence in academia, sport, creative and performing arts, active citizenship and innovation/entrepreneurship for both prospective undergraduate/level 8 students and students already registered in UCC. In addition to the scholarships in these Quercus also offer three types of Quercus Academic Scholarship: Entrance; College and University.

Scholarship Benefits

The five strands of talented students within the programme benefit from a wide range of academic, financial, personal, and other supports. Scholars may receive a reduced points entry into UCC, but they must achieve at least 85% of the CAO points for the year of entry. Individual programme plans will endeavour to ensure that participation in the Talented Students' Programme will lead to a broadening of students' full spectrum of talents.

These benefits may include:

- Reduced CAO Points Entry (if required)
- Campus Accommodation
- Fee Waiver
- Bursary

- Life Coaching
- Participation in Quercus Lecture Series
- Individualised Career advice
- Academic Mentor
- Invitations to relevant networking events
- Flexible academic arrangements
- Participation in relevant workshops/master classes
- Support to compete nationally and internationally
- Sport Medicine/Physiotherapy support
- Physiological monitoring and feedback
- Nutrition coaching
- Strength training and Conditioning
- Performance Analysis

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

University College Cork (UCC) is an internationally competitive, research-led University that plays a key role in the development of Ireland's knowledge-based economy. Our institutional research strategy focuses on creating and supporting world-leading clusters of researchers, building on the research strengths of the University and is aligned with key Government strategies including the *Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Hunt Report)*, and *Ireland's Strategy for Research and Development, Science and Technology, Innovation 2020*.

The UCC Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation (2017-2022) details performance targets for research and economic development that seek to position UCC as Ireland's leading research-performing institution to be a premier European research university, and to be a key national contributor to the ongoing development of Ireland's knowledge-based society. One key initiative, approved at University Management Team level in the current year, is the *ERC Enhancement Strategy Implementation Plan* designed to improve institutional performance in this key European programme.

UCC has formally endorsed the revised version of the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland. To ensure alignment with this policy and international developments in the key area of research integrity, and informed by UCC's Vice President for Research & Innovation role as Chair of the National Forum on Research Integrity, the UCC Code of Research Conduct (updated October 2019) provides a robust framework for the proper conduct of research and provides guidance for researchers on the standards expected at UCC. The Code details the responsibilities of the University and the research community with respect to the conduct of research including; principles of good practice, ethical approval, competence, responsibility, integrity, rights and dignity of research participants, data management and dissemination. In the light of the revised European Code and National Policy, Statement of Research Integrity, and taking on board experience in its use, the UCC Code of Research Conduct was revised in both 2018 and 2019 to ensure that the Code is up to date with the pace of national and international developments in the field. The UCC Digital Badge in the Responsible Conduct of Research has been widely recognised, including in a recent article published by the prestigious journal *Nature*, as a very impactful initiative to raise awareness among the research community of current policies and approaches in ensuring the highest standards in the conduct of research.

The UCC Policy on the Governance of Research Centres and Institutes provides clarity on how research institutes centres and units interface with academic Schools and Colleges. In 2020, a new approach to the annual reporting process was successfully piloted in the College of Business & Law in May 2020, with the aim of improving collaboration and engagement between Schools, Centres and Institutes. This new process proved highly effective and will be rolled out across all Colleges during 2021. The IEP report highlighted the importance of ensuring effective engagement between RICUs and academic schools as enabled by this policy, to foster research excellence and maximise synergies and impact.

The SFI Research Centres Programme was established in 2012, with a total of 16 Centres now currently funded. They are Centres of significant scale in terms of size, location, discipline and funding, and are hugely important to Ireland because of their overarching objective to bring scientists and industry together to address crucial research questions. UCC plays a major part in these Research Centres, by leading on four and being partner in nine others. The Centres have created huge opportunities over the last decade, not alone in driving interactions between academia and industry, but also in the generation of employment.

The SFI Centres for Research Training (CRT) are also entities of significant scale in terms of size, location and funding. The CRT programme was launched in 2018, with six funded nationally (two UCC-led and a third in which UCC is partner), and which collectively focus on PhD training in the area of ICT and data science. There are two overarching aspects of the CRTs – the ‘cohort’-based approach to enable peer-to-peer learning, and the engagement with enterprise, to ensure the CRTs can contribute to Ireland's future workforce and economy. The recently launched SFI Strategy 2025 'Shaping Our Future' has a target of 18 CRTs by 2025.

The SFI Research Professorship programme was established to attract outstanding research talent to Ireland and to enhance the country's reputation as a location to conduct high-impact and high-quality research. Recently, under this programme, Professor Jens Walter joined UCC to lead a €3.7 million research programme at APC Microbiome Ireland (APC). Professor Walter is the third SFI Research Professor appointment at UCC in recent years.

UCC undertook its second institutional Research Quality Review (RQR) in 2014/2015. The majority of units in UCC, including research centres, were reviewed by 15 panels comprising more than 300 international peer reviewers. All Panel reports have been published in the [Report of the Research Quality Review 2015](#).

Building on the experience garnered from the first two rounds of this institutional-wide initiative, planning for the next RQR to take place over the coming years is underway, with the objective of continued enhancement of research quality across the University.

To provide oversight and monitoring of research project deliverables on an ongoing basis during the life-time of the project, prior to institutional sign-off on project reports to funding agencies UCC have introduced measures to ensure that project deliverables are being met as agreed with the relevant funding agencies, that relevant T&Cs are being complied with, and that potential issues arising are identified and resolved on a timely basis.

Research students, doctoral and Masters, are a key component of the research community in UCC. As an autonomous university, UCC has developed its own [internal policies](#), having regard to the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes (2017), the National Framework for Doctoral Education, Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Programmes, and the HEA's Principles of Good Practice for Research within Irish HEIs (2020).

In UCC there is oversight from when each research student applies to the university and has a supervisory team appointed, to peer review as part of the panel for Annual Progress Reviews, to the appointment of External and Internal examiners for the examination of the research thesis. From 2020, an Independent Chair is now a compulsory member of the viva voce for doctoral students and a viva voce has been introduced for MD students. The reports of the Examiners for every research student are examined by UCC's Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee and recommendations are sent to Academic Council for approval.

Research students and their supervisors are supported in the research journey by workshops run by the Dean of Graduate Studies from orientation at the start of the research degree through to training for the viva voce. A digital badge is available to supervisors who undertake the supervisor training workshop and assessment, which is run by the Dean and UCC's Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL). Responsible research conduct and integrity is an integral part of the training of research students, including a dedicated [5-credit module](#).

Along with the 6 other IUA HEIs, in 2020 UCC participated in the Survey on the implementation of the Irish National Framework for Doctoral Education (NFDE). UCC completed the pre-meeting survey and then met the panel from the European University Association Solutions implementation team, who had been commissioned by the Higher Education Authority, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the Irish Universities Association, and the Technological Higher Education Association. The report prepared by EUA Solutions will be available publicly in Q2 of 2021.

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

UCC has well developed recruitment and appointment procedures and all academic posts are advertised publicly. A probation period applies to provide a reasonable period during which the new appointee can benefit from additional support and guidance in order to establish teaching and appropriate academic administrative activities and to establish research activity. The probation period also allows the University to be assured as to the quality of the appointment and that the new appointee will be able to carry out all responsibilities required and to an appropriate high standard. There is an establishment period of progress review and support by a senior academic board chaired by the President. Therefore, there is a minimum of one-year support during probation and, where the appointment is permanent there is a three-year period of support in total.

New staff are assigned a named mentor on appointment and there is a mentoring programme in place to support academic staff with less than five years' experience as an academic. UCC has conducted a review of academic promotion schemes and competitive calls have been processed for promotion to Senior Lecturer and Professor (Scale 2).

UCC is committed to staff wellbeing and in 2018 was the first university to be awarded the IBEC Keepwell mark, an evidence-based accreditation in workplace wellbeing, which reflects the institutions dedication to the health and wellbeing of its staff. UCC is currently an affiliate member of the Healthy Universities Network and we work actively to create a learning environment and organisational culture which enhances health, wellbeing and sustainability. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/>

UCC is committed to the support and promotion of staff development and training. There is also an employee assistance programme in place. UCC has a Performance Management Policy and Capability Policy as a means of local and individual discussion on the role of performance and staff development: <http://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/performance/pdrs/forms/>

UCC has signed up to the Athena SWAN Charter for gender equality. Participation in the Athena SWAN Charter supports UCC to identify areas for positive action on gender equality and equality issues more broadly, and to recognise and share good practice. UCC holds a Bronze institutional Athena SWAN award, having successfully renewed its accreditation under the expanded Charter in November 2019. Eight Schools currently hold Bronze departmental awards: Pharmacy, Chemistry, BEES, Food & Nutritional Sciences, Nursing & Midwifery, the Dental School & Hospital and the Department of Business Information Systems. The Schools of Law, Biochemistry & Cell Biology and Tyndall National Institute are submitting in the November 2020 round (rolling deadline through Jan 29th, 2021), and six more Schools will submit in 2021 (Chemistry, BEES, Pharmacy, Applied Psychology, Mathematical Sciences and Microbiology).

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion unit supports the University's commitment to fostering an inclusive culture that promotes equality, values diversity and supports initiatives designed to maintain a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all staff and students are respected. Athena SWAN connects to range of equality initiatives already underway within UCC, such as the Gender Identity and Expression Policy and Guidelines, the Race Equality Forum, the LGBT+ Staff Network, and the Aurora Leadership Development Programme UCC's commitment to an internationally recognised gender equality initiative allows UCC an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to equality in specific, measurable ways.

Resource Tree Showing [Staff Supports](#)

SUPPORTING UCC STAFF IN 2020/21

RESOURCE TREE SHOWING STAFF RESOURCES

The "Acorn to Mighty Oak" has come to symbolise students' academic and professional development journey throughout their time at UCC. We believe this is also true for our staff. In alignment with this rich metaphor, the support services available to our staff are presented in the form of a [Resource Tree](#).

This tree depicts the support services and resources available to staff and provide links to further information about each service.



6.0 Information and Data Management

Records and Data Management

Records and Data Management policies and procedures have been updated through UCC's ongoing Digital Records Management (DRM) Project. This project seeks to ensure that records and data in all formats are managed effectively through policies, procedures, and systems which

- support business processes,
- enable legal and regulatory compliance and
- preserve archives of the University's history,

while protecting the security and integrity of records and data, including personal data.

Records retention schedules, based on functional areas (academic and administrative), set out what records the University maintains in order to function and carry out its responsibilities. They detail how long those records have to be retained, and the final disposition of those records, through controlled destruction, review, or permanent retention as University archives

The records management policy assigns responsibilities and sets out the structures for University staff to ensure the efficient management of records.

Policy is supported by procedures providing practical instructions and by best practice guidance on related areas, e.g., version control, email management.

Schedules, policy, and guidance are accessible to staff on the University Archives and Records Management section of the Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs (OCLA) website: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/archives-and-records/>

The data protection policy details how the University performs its responsibilities under the legislation in accordance with the Data Protection Acts and EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/comp/data/dataprotection/>.

In 2018 as part of the GDPR compliance process, UCC developed an intuitive online GDPR resource for staff. Details of our GDPR policies, process and services are available on <https://www.ucc.ie/en/gdpr/>

Like all public bodies, access to records held by the University is available under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014, (the procedure for this is available at: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/comp/freedom/howfoi/>). In addition, individuals can seek access to their own personal data under data protection legislation: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/compliance/gdpr/DataSubjectRightsProcedure-5Oct2018.pdf>

Records management at UCC informs and is informed by relevant/related policies (and procedures) throughout the university. These include:

Data Classification Procedure:

https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/itpolicies/procedures/DataClassification_V1_2.pdf

Research Data Management Policy;

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/policiesdocuments/ResearchDataManagementPolicy.d>

OCX

Acceptable Usage Policy:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/it-policies/policies/au-pol/>

Externally Hosted Personal Data Policy:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/it-policies/policies/>

Records and archives are maintained by the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU) for quality review-related records inclusive of quality reports, improvement plans, operation of the Quality Enhancement Committee including agendas, papers and minutes since the inception of the quality review processes. Early records are retained in hard copy and electronically; more recently records are archived wholly electronically. Reports for all quality reviews conducted are published on the University website at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/>.

Records related to the quality policies and procedures for the academic affairs of the University governed by Academic Council are managed by the Office for Academic Affairs and Governance and held on the Academic Policy Portal. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/>

As part of the *Connected University* programme of work, UCC is currently in the midst of an ambitious multi-year investment in its core student and curriculum management systems. This investment will further enhance how the University manages its information and data. Highlighted below are some of the expected benefits from this investment;

- The establishment of an intuitional Data Hub will better support enrolment planning and analysis of student retention and performance data.
- Usage of the full capabilities of a recently implemented Virtual Learning Environment (Canvas) will create new opportunities for learning analytics.
- A new curriculum management system will allow the capture of new curriculum meta-data and attributes and further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme approval process.
- A new best-of-breed student placement system is being implemented across the university and will bring with it additional institutional level oversight of placement as a key form of student assessment.
- Collectively, all of the above will provide the University in a better place to explore and support the introduction of more flexible learning such as micro-credentials.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

Stakeholder engagement takes place at a wide range of levels within the University and in the spirit of the University's mission for knowledge creation to enhance the intellectual, cultural, social and economic life regionally, nationally and internationally. Across a wide spectrum, these engagements occur at intra- and inter-institutional level, as well as through the institutional and disciplinary processes. Indicatively, examples of stakeholder engagement include: participation in the South West Regional Skills Forum; strategic engagement with city and region; research and knowledge transfer; formal institutional processes such as strategic planning, quality review and programme approval, and community engagement.

Quality processes

Stakeholder consultation and engagement is a vital facet of the quality of the University's educational provision and all quality processes, including periodic quality review, programme approval and review and monitoring processes involving stakeholder feedback and participation. During periodic quality review, stakeholders meet with Peer Review Panels. The evaluation and findings from quality assurance evaluations are published in full on our website. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/>

Regional Skills Forum

UCC is a partner in the South West Regional Skills Forum together with:

- Education & Training partners: CIT, IT Tralee, Cork ETB, Kerry ETB, Skillnets
- Statutory Agencies: Enterprise Ireland, IDA, Cork City & County Councils & Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), Kerry County Council & LEOs, Dept of Social Protection, South West Action Plan for Jobs
- Industry Associations: Cork Chamber, Cork Business Association, Ibec, Construction Industry Federation, Irish Hotels Federation

In 2020 four industry-led Sector Specific Regional Skills Groups were active:

- Manufacturing/Engineering [chaired by P. Buckley, MD, EPS Group]
- Pharma/Biopharma [chaired by G. Hartnett, GM, Janssen]
- Tourism/Hospitality [chaired by A. Mansworth, Director, Trigon Hotels]
- Construction [chaired by J. Phillips, HR Director, Dorrnans Engineering]
- ICT [chaired by D. McCarthy, CEO Fexco]

The approach of the Regional Skills Forum is to develop sector specific industry-led partnerships with multi-national companies and high growth SMEs to meet skills needs. Employer driven sector groups work with education and training provider representatives to tease out existing/projected skills priorities, agree regional skills priorities and plans to address the identified priorities.

Community Engagement

We are a leading signatory to the Irish University Association's Civic and Community Engagement Charter (2014) www.campusengage.ie/. As part of the IUA's 'Campus Engage' initiative, we work with seven other Irish Universities, to embed a common evidence-based framework for community engagement across all of our institutions. This includes a focus on engaged research, community engaged learning, staff and student volunteering, outreach and partnerships.

As an *engaged member* of the Talloires Network talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/ we work on advancing the field of community engagement with a global coalition of 402 other community-engaged universities, across 78 countries. We have formed a European University www.unic.eu/ with eight universities with a clear mission of societal engagement and impact. We play a leading role in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, helping to frame UNESCO's *The Cork Call to Action for Learning Cities* (2017), which endorses societal engagement through lifelong learning as a driver for environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/.

UCC participated in a successful external review by the US Carnegie Foundation in 2016; whose *Community Engagement Classification* is the leading international benchmark for university community engagement. The review found, that "UCC is poised to become a model of a community engaged research university in Ireland". In 2019, UCC was awarded 1st Place Winner of the International MacJannet Prize for Community Engagement, from the Talloires Network talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/2019 . In 2019, UCC ranked overall 21st in the world in the Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Rankings. It ranked Number 1 in Ireland for working towards the UN goal of 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions' (12th globally). In relation to the institutional-level rankings, UCC's performance in recent years has seen an improvement. The Quacquarelli Symonds (**QS**) World University Ranking placed UCC at 286 up from 310 in 2019. The 24 place improvement saw UCC have the greatest increase of the Irish universities for the second year running. UCC again improved it's score in this ranking where 1,602 universities were considered for the most recent cycle. Finally, at an institutional level with a national focus, UCC is 2nd in Ireland (after TCD) on the **Sunday Times League Table**, which looks at third-level institutions in Ireland across 8 different indicators.

UCC has created a new position of Civic and Community Engagement Officer, to bring coordination across the institution under the auspices of a Civic and Community Engagement Committee. Each College and relevant Administrative Office is represented on this committee. Under the leadership of our Vice President External Relations, this body reports directly to the University Management Team. Each of our Colleges each have structures in place to facilitate community engagement, a leading example being our *College of Arts Celtic Studies and Social Sciences* Civic and Community Engagement Committee. In a Staff Survey (2016) 64% of staff surveyed (N=1,129) reported that they had been involved community engagement as part of their role as a UCC employee.

Our research strategy has a distinct focus on addressing societal challenges *with* society – and including external stakeholder involvement in the research process. Our Research Institutes advance a broad range of stakeholder engagement specific to their disciplinary focus. E.g. the SFI funded *MaREI Centre* has an engagement advisory board and *APC Microbiome Research Centre* has a Scientific Advisory Board, that includes Community Engagement representation. The *Dingle 2030* partnership with ESB Networks, led by our Marei Centre, is developing new ways to build capacity and empower communities around climate action dinglepeninsula2030.com/. Our *Centre for Local and Regional Governance* ucc.ie/en/government brings the University directly into City Hall, providing a platform for constructive dialogue with citizens on issues of critical importance to the city and region. Our *Centre for Cooperative Studies* actively supports a wide range of national organisations and communities. Our *Centre for Global Development* www.ucc.ie/en/cgd/, a member of the Development Studies Association of Ireland, supports international engagement on development and sustainability issues. *The Glucksman Gallery* is a leader in the field of arts engaged practice partnership, recently in partnership with the *APC Microbiome Research Centre*, it held an Irish Arts Council funded exhibition on Circadian Rhythms that engaged 22,000 community members www.glucksman.org/exhibitions/

UCC's *Institute for Social Science in the 21st Century (ISS21)* www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/ has distinct focus on co-creating knowledge with society, bringing together interdisciplinary teams that focus on impactful social science research that benefits and includes lay people, communities and organisations. UCC is a leading member of the European Living Knowledge Network, alongside some of the highest ranked Universities in Europe and worldwide. Our *Community Academic Research Links (CARL)* www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/ac/ programme is one of two 'Science Shops' on the Island of Ireland - small entities that engage researchers with citizens and civil society organisations, to address societal challenges across a wide range of disciplines – free of charge. In response to COVID-19 UCC progressed a wide range of activities www.ucc.ie/en/civic/covid19/; among other things setting up an interdisciplinary Covid-19 research team of 100 researchers, and providing responsive and trusted scientific information in the region, nationally and internationally.

UCC's Academic Strategy: Connected Curriculum and Graduate Attributes Programme (GAP) integrate community engagement across student learning, in all of our academic programmes and courses. ucc.ie/en/registrar/theconnecteduniversity. Through our *Access and Participation Office*, we engage with regional policy makers, families and students to further access to education www.ucc.ie/en/accessforall/. UCC has produced one of the first comprehensive reports on student volunteering in a university in Ireland - *Making a Difference (2019)*, ucc.ie/en/civic/governance/ shows that 46% of our students are volunteering with community organisations, clubs and campus groups on an ongoing basis. We are scaling student volunteering through our online 'tech for good' system www.studentvolunteer.ie. Over 1,940 UCC students recently registered 10,528 volunteer hours to community organisations as part of this national initiative.

Each year UCC intently brings the university into dialogue with citizens, communities and organisations. Our *Community Week* involves 50 different individual local, regional and global events www.ucc.ie/en/civic/open/communityweek/. Our annual public talk series *Relevance to You* makes our research accessible to a lay audience, and includes time for networking and reciprocal discussion with the public www.echolive.ie/corknews/. Our *Equality and Refugee Weeks*, provide a regional focal point for dialogue and action on issues of social justice citizens. *Cork Discovers* involves 40 community based research engagement events in venues across the City www.corkdiscovers.org/. Over 12,000 people participate in the *Cork Science Festival* corksciencefestival.ie/ each year, organised by Corks Lifetime Lab and UCC's Tyndall, IPIC, CONNECT, APC Microbiome Ireland, MaREI and INFANT.

UCC's is a key contributor to multi-organisational civic partnerships in the region. These include Cork Healthy Cities, Cork Food Policy Council, Cork Environmental Forum, Cork City of Sanctuary and Cork Age Friendly City and County. We engage deeply with Gaeltacht areas and rural communities. We have established an outreach centre in Cahersiveen (Skellig CRI). The EU funded Grassroots Wavelength Project has established Community Radio Stations on the West Cork Islands, and we support the Islands through an academic partnership with Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann.

UCC and Cork Opera House

UCC and Cork Opera House announced and launched its strategic partnership in February 2018. This 8-year partnership sees the two organisations working together to educate the next generation of arts managers, creative practitioners and professionals. The partnership establishes Cork Opera House as a Learning Theatre and provides UCC with an immersive learning environment which enriches and elaborates the student experience. 2020 has been an exceptionally challenging year for the Arts & Culture sector generally and the theatre sector in particular. Cork Opera House has been closed since March 2020 and this has inevitably effected

the four pillars of the partnership. However, we are in regular contact with Cork Opera House and remain fully committed to finding creative ways to continue to work together through the pandemic and beyond.

There are four key pillars to this partnership:

- *Placement and Internships*

Cork Opera House mentors students through internships in the areas of Organisational Management, Marketing, Production, Business Development, Stage Management, Lighting Design, Sound Design and Costume Design. This aspect of the partnership supports the national target of providing all higher education students with the opportunity to undertake work placement as part of their course by 2025. Due to Covid-19 and the cancellation of both the 2020 Summer Show and Christmas Pantomime, these placements and internships have had to be paused. Both UCC and Cork Opera House remain committed to this pillar and look forward to reinstating placement and internships as soon as Cork Opera House re-opens and public health directives allow.

- *MA in Arts and Cultural Management*

Cork Opera House & the School of Film, Music & Theatre at UCC collaborated on the research and development of the MA in Arts Management & Creative Producing (MA AM&CP). This programme was approved in 2018, launched in Sept 2019, ran successfully and graduated its first students in 2020. This cohort were due to run a festival in partnership with Cork Opera House, and instead ran one of the first online festival programmes in Ireland with considerable success and national profile. The 2020 cohort have continued to work online and will also curate and produce an online festival with Cork Opera House.

- *PhD Studentship*

The Cork Opera House – UCC PhD Scholarship was awarded to Lina Schumacher in 2018. Lina successfully completed the first 18 months of her PhD focussed on Cork Opera House before the pandemic hit in March 2020. This research is primarily archive based and this has not been possible during the pandemic. The recipient has therefore paused her PhD studies for this reason and will resume in 2021.

- *Theatre Artist in Residence*

Cork Opera House and UCC co-fund a *Theatre Artist in Residence*. This is a distinctive collaborative artist residency programme which brings together the resources of the opera house and UCC to provide a theatre artist with space to develop their own work and to interact with students / staff at UCC. The playwright and actor John McCarthy was the recipient of the inaugural Cork Opera House-UCC Theatre Artist in Residence from 2018 – 2020. McCarthy's play WHALE developed as part of this residency will be fully produced through a co-production between Cork Opera House and Cork Midsummer Festival in 2021. Unfortunately, due to severe budget cuts the UCC-COH Theatre Artist in Residence programme has been paused for 2020-21.

This partnership also represents a smart utilisation of the city's assets. The Cork Opera House provides UCC with access to a 930-seat capacity at preferential rates. UCC will use the Opera House facility for large student events and to increase the university's conferencing offering. During the exceptional emergency of Covid-19 UCC remains actively supportive of Cork Opera House and looks forward to the re-activation of paused collaborative pillars once the public health crisis is over.

Strategic Planning

External stakeholder groups are engaged in consultations underpinning the development of the University's Strategic Plan. These include:

- The Alumni Board
- IDA
- Enterprise Ireland

- Business organisations (IBEC, Cork Chamber, American Chamber of Commerce)
- Arts, Culture & Heritage organisations
- Community & voluntary organisations
- Local Authorities (Cork City and County Councils, Kerry, Tipperary, Waterford and Limerick County Councils)
- Parents and representatives of second level school
- Cork and Kerry Education & Training Boards
- HEA, IUA and Institute of Technology partners
- Science Foundation Ireland
- Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Department of Education and Skills and other government departments
- Public Representatives

External stakeholders are also engaged in an audit of UCC's reputation amongst key stakeholders locally, nationally and internationally. These consultations allow structured exploration of external needs/perceptions/requirements of such important groups to be integrated into the formulation of the Strategic Plan.

External Engagement

The University is actively engaged with a range of higher education institutions, bodies and agencies internationally and nationally. University staff engage nationally and internationally in peer esteem activities through their participation in disciplinary networks for education and research, and through acting as external examiners, external peer reviewers and external advisers. The University engages with international, European and national agencies for education, research and funding purposes. UCC is a member of a UNIC, an alliance of eight European Universities based in post-industrial cities, as part of the EU Commission European Universities Initiative. The University is also a member of the IUA, EUA and Utrecht Network, a founding charter member of Erasmus, and a constituent member of the National University of Ireland.

<https://www.iua.ie>

<https://eua.eu>

<http://www.nui.ie>

<http://www.utrecht-network.org>

<https://www.unic.eu>

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Periodic Review

Quality assurance and enhancement policy at UCC is informed by international best practice and has regard to the requirements of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012* and with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)*. Our [guidelines](https://www.ucc.ie/en/geu/) are comprehensive and include our objectives, principles and process.

UCC's approach to peer review is informed by the Quality Enhancement Policy; the University is committed to institutional reflection on the outcomes of quality review processes to contribute to on-going institutional planning and development. In light of this the University has taken the enhancement decision to have senior university officers as Chairs of Panels to further augment their connection into the quality review process. Chairs are, for the most part, members of UMTO (University Management Team, Operations). UMTO is the senior executive management committee whose membership includes senior university officers, Vice-Presidents and Heads of College and its purpose is to assist and support the President in leading the development of the University and the delivery of University Core functions in accordance with the strategic plan and the Universities Act. This is part of the Quality Enhancement strategy for shared engagement and shared responsibility for quality across the University.

The key components of the periodic quality processes include review methodologies for: academic quality, research quality, support quality, thematic and topic specific issues. Review methodologies are based on self-assessment and an expert assessment model involving external peer review, national and international benchmarking and analysis of good practice. They are underpinned by key data and indicators emerging from internal approval, review and monitoring mechanisms. Periodic review takes account of national and European guidelines as well as good practice in higher education quality. The methodology for the periodic review process follows the 4-stage process of:

- Self-evaluation
- Appointment of a peer review panel and site visit
- Publication of a peer review report
- Follow-up and quality enhancement

All review reports and recommendations arising from periodic review are considered by the Quality Enhancement Committee and senior management. Recommendations arising from review are responded to by the area under review and are subject to a follow-up process. Key issues arising from review are analysed and reported to the Quality Enhancement Committee and the University Management Team as part of the integration between quality and strategic planning actions and processes. Annually, the QEC reports on the key issues, improvements and themes from University-wide periodic review to Governing Body, which then refers the report to Academic Council for consideration and action. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/geu/>

Thematic Review

In addition to periodic quality reviews of education, research and services Thematic Reviews are also undertaken. The function of Thematic Review is to support the development of priority strategic actions through peer review and benchmarking. These Review take an enhancement-led strategic evaluation of a topic encompassing University-wide processes, practices or policies to assess their current stage of effectiveness and identify international good practices that can inform future developments. Each Review has a customised scope

which is developed by the Quality Enhancement Unit in consultation with the senior sponsor and the Quality Enhancement Committee.

Specific features of Thematic Review include:

- A holistic policy to practice approach to a strategic theme
- A horizontal scope which transcends units and includes multiple stakeholders across an activity
- External expert panel
- Strategically aligned and sponsored

The conduct of Thematic Reviews follows broadly the same methodological steps as periodic review, with some adaptation to the self-evaluation report to reflect the strategic and University-wide scope of the review process.

External peer review

External peer review is a central part of the University's overall approach to quality and in this regard the University engages extensively with other higher education institutions, nationally and internationally. Objectivity of external peer review for periodic quality review, external examining and new programme approval is preserved through the rigorous application of criteria to ensure that peer reviewers have appropriate expertise and experience to fulfil their roles.

All peer reviewers must be free of any conflicts of interest including current or recent prior close association with the University including as a student, staff member, or peer.

The role of the External Assessor in new programme approval is found here:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/apar/curriculumapproval/handbook/>.

The Extern Examination procedures for taught programmes is found here:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/externs/>

and the policy is found here:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/standards/#external-examiners>

Supporting Self-Evaluation

The University's Quality Enhancement Unit provides advice and guidance to units engaged in self-evaluation as part of the periodic quality review processes and guidelines are accessible and available through the University website: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/geu/guidelines/> . As part of the self-evaluation process, all academic units prepare a Case Study of Good Practice <https://www.ucc.ie/en/geu/casestudiesofgoodpractice/> to highlight existing practices which are effective in supporting and enhancing student learning.

Through partnership with Staff Development & Well Being support is provided for SWOT Workshops for all units at the outset of the self-evaluation process. Ongoing work with the Centre for Integration of Research, Teaching & Learning (CIRTL) and Research Support Services provides ongoing support and connection to self-evaluation and review methodologies for education and research.

Each unit undergoing review is assigned a Quality Enhancement Advisor from the outset to conclusion of the process, this role provides dedicated support, advice and guidance on all aspects of the periodic review process. The Advisor also acts as Review Coordinator for each review site visit, acting as a key point of liaison between the Peer Review Panel and the University, supporting the Panel throughout the site visit, facilitating the development of the Quality Review Report of the site visit and coordinating follow-up.

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	39
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Commerce International (six entry routes) CK211, CK205, CK206, CK207, CK208 and CK209 Bachelor of Commerce CK201
Date of accreditation or last review	2019
Date of next review	2023

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Accountants Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BCL Law and Business CK307
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2021

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Commerce International (six entry routes) CK211, CK205, CK206, CK207, CK208 and CK209
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2021

4. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Diagnostic Radiography CKX26 MSc Physiotherapy CKS23
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2024

5. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD)
Programme titles and links to publications	Higher Diploma in Human Resource Management MSc Human Resource Management
Date of accreditation or last review	2019
Date of next review	2021

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total number
Joint research degrees	2
Joint/double/multiple awards	26
Collaborative programmes	5
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

1. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programme
Name of body (/bodies):	National Ambulance Service
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Studies
Date of last review	24 June 2019 (first cohort students entered Sept 2019)
Date of next review	2021

2. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Dual Degree
Name of body (/bodies):	Minzu University of China (MUC)
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc (Hons) Environmental Science and Environmental Management
Date of last review	12 August 2019 (first cohort students entered Sept 2019)
Date of next review	2024

3. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programme
Name of body (/bodies):	National Ambulance Service
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc (Specialist Paramedic Practice)
Date of last review	19 Aug 2020
Date of next review	2021

4. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programme (Discontinued)
Name of body (/bodies):	Beijing Technology & Business University (BTBU) and Beijing Information Science and Technology University (BISTU)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (Hons) Economics (Dual Degree)
Date of last review	Effective from 2019/20
Date of next review	

5. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programme (Discontinued)
Name of body (/bodies):	Beijing Technology & Business University (BTBU) and Beijing Information Science and Technology University (BISTU)
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc (Hons) (Business and Financial Economics) (Dual Degree)
Date of last review	Effective from 2019/20
Date of next review	

6. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programme (Discontinued)
Name of body (/bodies):	Beijing Technology & Business University (BTBU) and Beijing Information Science and Technology University (BISTU)
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc (Hons) (Financial Economics) (Dual Degree)
Date of last review	Effective from 2019/20
Date of next review	

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Articulation agreements - Total number	13
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1. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Beijing Technology & Business University (BTBU)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (Hons) Economics BSc (Ord) Food Science and Technology BSc (Hons) Food Science and Technology BSc (Hons) Risk and Actuarial Studies Diploma in Accounting Studies Diploma in Arts and Social Sciences Diploma in Business and Financial Economics Diploma in Financial Economics
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	2019
Date of next review	2022
Detail of the agreement	

2. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Minzu University of China (MUC)
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc(Hons) Environmental Science with Environmental Management
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	2014
Date of next review	2022
Detail of the agreement	

3. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Beijing Information Science and Technology University (BISTU)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (Hons) Economics BSc (Hons) Computer Science - Single Honours Diploma in Accounting Studies Diploma in Computer Studies
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	2011
Date of next review	2019 (renewal in progress)
Detail of the agreement	

University College Cork

2021

Annual Quality Report
University College Cork
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

UCC 2022 – Delivering a Connected University

UCC's strategic plan *Independent Thinking - Shared Ambition*, launched in 2017, reached its midterm review as the Covid-19 pandemic swept across the world. In light of the fundamental changes to the landscape in which higher education operates, the University reviewed its strategic priorities during 2019/20 in order to ensure agility and sustainability.

The University Management Team and Governing Body worked together on a thematic prioritisation exercise to reframe UCC's strategic priorities for the remainder of the lifetime of the existing Strategic Plan. A new plan - *UCC 2022 – Delivering a Connected University* – was developed between September 2020 and December 2020 to enable UCC to deliver its priorities within the period 2021-22 clustered within five interconnected thematic pillars: Learning and Teaching, Research and Innovation, People, Students, Infrastructure and Resources. Four of these pillars are clearly aligned with four of the University's existing Strategic Goals. A fifth pillar – Student Success – addresses pressing challenges for our students. The existing Strategic Goal 3 – Create value for our community through an international outlook and informed and creative engagement on local and global issues – is now woven into and across each of the five pillars of UCC 2022, affirming the University's commitment to local, regional and national communities, and to human societies across the globe. As well as challenges for the student body, graduates face the challenge of a constrained labour market aggravated by the pandemic. With these factors in mind, *UCC 2022* represents a strategic pivot, reprioritising activities to best position UCC for a secure and sustainable future, underpinned by values of creativity, respect, transparency, responsiveness, integrity, equality, diversity and scholarship.

Through the actions identified in *UCC 2022* the University will align with and adopt the recommendations of the EUA-IEP2 report of 2020, as well as strategic issues emanating from the quality review process. UCC's ambition, at all times, is to streamline systems and processes, thereby reducing duplication and fragmentation, while enhancing efficiency and effectiveness, ultimately releasing time and effort towards the delivery of the core academic mission of the University. Each pillar will be operationalised in Q1 2021 via the establishment of a dedicated subcommittee of the University Management Team (UMT), which will develop individual implementation plans. Over the next two years UCC will develop and implement an overarching organisational development plan for the University as a whole.

Covid-19 Adaptations

Teaching and Learning

In March 2020 like all HEIs, UCC 'pivoted' to online delivery of teaching and assessment. A number of dedicated websites were designed and delivered for staff including 'Keep Teaching'; 'Keep Assessing' where policy and guidance was issued along with links to available in-house training (including live Q&S), succinct weekly emails

directing staff to supports and resources available. Weekly live training was provided by the Centre for Digital Education (CDE) with periodic CPD sessions provided by CIRTL and recordings of same made available to all staff. CIRTL also produced weekly 'Learning Enhancement Guides'. See the following websites for further details: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/digital-ed/> · <https://www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/> · <https://www.ucc.ie/en/keep-teaching/> · <https://www.ucc.ie/en/keep-teaching/assessmenthub/>

Funding

From the announcement of HCI (Human Capital Initiative) in late 2019, UCC proactively engaged with all three pillars. In June 2020, UCC was awarded funding of €5.6million for six new postgraduate programmes under pillar two (727 student places over three years) which were co-developed with enterprise partners responding to skill needs in the region. €300,000 was awarded to increase the intake in undergraduate engineering programmes under Pillar two. During 2020, UCC worked closely with enterprise partners on the development of Pillar 3 projects resulting in UCC participation in ten proposals and the award of €14.4million across five collaborative projects.

In July 2020, as part of the Government's announcement on the July stimulus package an additional funding allocation was provided for Higher Education skills-related programmes. UCC was awarded funding for places on existing programmes and modules in identified skills areas. 363 additional students were recruited to existing taught postgraduate programmes and 285 on skills-based modules with a total value of €3million.

Academic Response: Academic Leadership Forum (ALF) and the Academic Readiness Plan

The immediate challenges of Covid-19 were managed on an emergency management basis by the Academic Leadership Forum (ALF). ALF was originally established in 2018 as a non-executive forum for academic leadership in the University and a reference group for academic leadership and strategy. Its core membership comprises the Deputy President & Registrar, Heads of Colleges, Vice Presidents, Academic Secretary, and Librarian / Head of Information Services. It was agreed by Academic Council on 09-04-2020 that ALF would become an executive subcommittee of AC empowered to make decisions on behalf of Academic Council. The Examinations Business Continuity Group (EBCG) was similarly empowered in relation to urgent decisions on examination matters (see Section 4 Case Study for further information on the EBCG).

ALF established an Academic Readiness Group to develop a plan to transition from emergency management to the planning and implementation of readiness for the coming academic year. The Academic Readiness Group developed an Academic Recovery Plan to bring together, in one place, decisions on the key issues for the academic mission of the University along with their underpinning narratives. It outlines the principles and approaches which are already in use and which will continue to guide the University through uncertain times ahead. Open for Learning also highlights new initiatives and modifications to services which are proposed to support students and staff. Similar planning activities are underway across the University (e.g. Research, Library) in order to prepare and provide as much certainty as possible against the background of evolving public health advice.

Principles of the Academic Recovery Plan

1. Maintain and promote high academic standards across the university
2. The welfare of students and staff is central to decision-making (including awareness of the need for rest and recovery periods for both students and staff during the year).

There was and continues to be substantial adjustment and modification of existing patterns of learning and teaching in the light of the anticipated on-going application of social distancing protocols.

The Academic Leadership Forum recognised the challenges that colleagues and students in all Schools faced in adapting to the new learning environments, and aimed to support that process of adaptation through the sharing of best practice, and the identification of both resource constraints and process bottlenecks.

Students

The first principle underpinning the Academic Readiness Plan addressed the ongoing commitment of the university to the provision of a high-quality educational experience for all its students. This is reflected in Goal One of the University's Strategic Plan – namely 'to deliver an outstanding student-centred teaching and learning experience' - and in its Priority Action 1, which states that 'Our students and their learning experience are our highest priorities.'

UCC's Academic Strategy (Priority One) identified the central characteristic of this learning experience as the development of a Connected Curriculum, defined as emphasising 'the holistic development of students and staff through research-based, collaborative enquiry', with 'a commitment to excellence and the integrity of the discipline' as 'core design principles'. Notwithstanding the particular challenges of the current situation, UCC remains wholeheartedly committed to these strategic objectives.

Subsidiarity

A foundational premise underpinning the Academic Readiness Plan is subsidiarity - the recognition that many of the solutions (including adjustments to the curriculum) that are required to respond to the new learning environment are best devised by those academic colleagues, experts in their subjects and experienced professionals, who deliver the teaching.

Given the diversity of subject areas and pedagogies offered across UCC, it would be neither appropriate nor possible to impose a universal approach. Instead, it was for Schools to decide how best to respond to the new learning environment and its particular challenges, keeping in mind the fundamental principles mentioned above.

Equally, within Schools and subject areas there exists a variety of student cohorts, programmes, disciplinary norms and pedagogies, which necessitated differential approaches.

The Academic Readiness Plan fostered an environment which encouraged innovative solutions devised by front-line staff within the broader context of a commitment to high quality education, at the same time recognising the impact of the current context on staff workloads.

Due attention was paid to the requirements of professional, statutory and regulating bodies (PSRBs) where appropriate, and such approaches were designed appropriately in respect of the necessarily finite resources available to any given School. Schools exercised appropriate levels of oversight and quality assurance in signing off on all new arrangements, with a further review of School responses conducted at College level. Certain aspects of the academic mission (examples include timetabling arrangements for the use of large lecture theatres, and the protocols for the delivery of examinations on-line rather than in physical venues) required elements of central University coordination and oversight and were facilitated with the pace and professionalism that continues to be demonstrated during the response to Covid-19.

Support

It is clear from the first two principles outlined above that the University's ambition remains undimmed by Covid-19. We will continue to provide a world-class education and our academic colleagues remain at the core of our ability to respond in an agile, innovative and imaginative manner.

It is critical that both students and staff have access to appropriate forms of support and advice to assist them in navigating the forthcoming academic year. We know from our experience since mid-March that we have much of this expertise available and we have the agility and imagination to respond to these challenges.

For staff there are [various forms of support](#). Some broad guiding principles that assisted staff in adjusting their teaching methods and assessment practices were drawn from the first four priorities of the Academic Strategy, namely the development of a Connected Curriculum (1); the aligning of curriculum offerings with demand and with teaching and research priorities (2); the aligning of assessment practices with learning outcomes (3); and the development of core values and graduate attributes (4). These tenets helped us to clarify the key objectives to keep in mind when making the necessary modifications to the UCC learning environment.

Pedagogical and technical advice was available to assist staff in developing online and blended content, to prepare them for creating podcasts or delivering online lectures, and to guide them in the management of online seminars and tutorials. Protocols were drawn up to help staff respond effectively to online interaction with students whilst at the same time protecting the time they have for other work (and for leisure and family time in an environment in which the work/non-work demarcation is less clear-cut).

When planning to meet the challenges posed by Covid-19, the challenge of engaging students was identified as a priority from the outset. All student services adapted to enable students to access support and services online. A [Student Support Tree](#) was developed which not only portrayed all of the supports available to students in one place, but also upon clicking on a particular service provided students with up to date information about that service and how to access it. Incoming first year students were also a particular concern, particularly given the challenges many faced in the final months of their second level education. A comprehensive University-wide academic mentoring programme was established and implemented. Societies and the peer support programme collaborated to establish a training for safe delivery of meetings and events online and ensured that there were many creative online activities made available to students.

In recognition of and anticipation of the financial hardship that many students and their families were enduring due to job losses and the unavailability of part time work, a specific Hardship Fund was generated from contributions made from all parts of the University and from donations made by alumni.

Equality

Implicit in the above is the ongoing commitment of University College Cork to the equal treatment of all its students and staff. The new learning and working environments posed particular issues which have various equality dimensions. These included (amongst other things) equality of access to technology and remote learning resources for students and staff; the need to address and take account of the varied environments in which both students and staff were operating, which often involved balancing work and study with responsibilities to other family members; the particular requirements of students registered with the Disability Support Service; the provision of a campus experience for all cohorts; and the challenges (already mentioned above) of dealing with a more isolated context for both students and staff. UCC demonstrated imagination and

empathy in responding to the new working and learning environment, and ensured that it consulted with and listened to staff and students on a regular and ongoing basis.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Research Quality Review – finalise the work of the RQR Technical Group and convene the RQR Steering Implementation Group.	The final essential component of the RQR Technical Group project plan was the communication of its proposed methodology to Colleges and RICUs via a series of townhall meetings. As this was not possible due to Covid-19, the Technical Group took the decision to pause work on the RQR for a minimum of 12 months.
2	Pilot Programme Reviews - arising from an enhancement project on Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review (2018/19) pilot programme reviews were to be undertaken in 2019/20. The primary objective was the development of an effective and agile mechanism for periodic review and self-evaluation of programmes to enable programme enhancement and development in the context of the University's Academic Strategy and the University's responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement.	Due to Covid-19 the timeframe for these reviews has been moved to 2020/21.

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Quality Enhancement Committee	18 October 2019 16 December 2019 30 January 2020 24 April 2020 28 May 2020
Governing Body	4 February 2020

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

President Patrick O'Shea announced in July 2020 that he would retire early. Governing Body took the decision in September 2020 to appoint an interim President, Professor John O'Halloran. Professor Stephen Byrne has taken up the position of interim Registrar.

The following new senior positions were filled during the academic year 2019/20.

Department Description	Start Date	Job Title Description
APC Microbiome	01-Jan-2020	Professor
School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures	02-Sep-2019	Professor
School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures	02-Jan-2020	Professor
Academic Affairs	01-Feb-2020	Programme Manager
Student Counselling & Development	06-Jan-2020	Head of Student Counselling
School of Mathematical Sciences	16-Sep-2019	Head of School
School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures	01-Oct-2019	Head of School
Recruitment and Admissions Office	02-Dec-2019	Head of Student Recruitment
Roinn an Nua Ghaeilge	01-Jan-2020	Professor
Cork University Business School	02-Jul-2020	Professor
Cork University Business School	01-Sep-2020	Professor
Cork University Business School	01-Sep-2020	Professor
Cork University Business School	28-Oct-2019	Development Project Lead

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
Alumni & Development	8 - 10 October 2019	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/admin/PanelReport-AlumniandDevelopment.pdf
School of Society, Politics and Ethics	22 - 24 October 2019	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/cacsss/FinalPanelReport-SchoolofSociety,PoliticsandEthics.pdf
School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences	3 - 5 December 2019	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/sefs/FINALSchoolofBEES_PanelReport-APPROVEDfollowingQEC.pdf
School of Education	11 - 13 February 2020	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/cacsss/FinalSchoolofEducationPanelReportQECApproved.pdf
School of Law	25 - 27 February 2020	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/buslaw/FinalSchoolofLawPanelReportQECApproved.pdf
Department of Physics	Rescheduled to 2020/21 due to Covid-19	
Cork Centre for Architectural Education	Rescheduled to 2020/21 due to Covid-19	
School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures	Rescheduled to 2020/21 due to Covid-19	
School of Mathematical Sciences	Rescheduled to 2020/21 due to Covid-19	
Thematic Review of Placements	Rescheduled to 2020/21 due to Covid-19	

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels² involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

Guide

Details in respect of review/evaluation processes that concluded during the reporting period should be set out below.

Please use whole numbers rather than percentages.

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	5	4	1				
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes	5	4	1				
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes							
Average panel size for each process type*		5	5				

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

² QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Governance and Management of Quality

EUA Institutional IEP Review

During academic year 2019/20 a President’s initiative on institutional reflection and analysis saw the University engage in the European Universities Association, Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP). The focus of IEP was decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management; the relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The commencement of the Review process was delayed by a period of 2 months as a result of Covid-19, and in light of the ongoing public health provisions, the IEP visit took the form of a virtual review over a period of 6 weeks. The conduct of the Review proved to be strategically valuable, as it encompassed new strategic considerations for the institution arising from Covid-19, and corresponded with a decision by UCC’s Governing Body to commence a strategic pivot of the existing UCC Strategic Plan 2017-2022. The IEP Review Team met with members of the Governing Body in the course of the Review site visit and presented its Review findings to the Governing Body in June 2020. The outcomes of the IEP Review have been embedded in the programme of work to deliver the strategic prioritisation entitled ‘UCC 2022 – Delivering a Connected University’.

Programmes of Education and Training

Graduate Attributes

As a socially-minded, civically-engaged institution, our core values and graduate attributes are the bedrock of our student experience. Graduate attributes refer to the skills, knowledge and abilities of our graduates, beyond disciplinary content knowledge, that are applicable in a range of contexts in their lives. They advance the development of academic, specialist and technical skills.

Based on extensive consultation with stakeholders, the following core graduate attributes will be prioritised for the lifecycle of this Academic Strategy:

- Creators, evaluators and communicators of knowledge
- Independent and creative thinkers
- Digitally Fluent
- Socially Responsible
- Effective global citizens, who recognise and challenge inequality

The following core values will be prioritised for this Academic Strategy: Respect, Ambition, Compassion, Resilience and Integrity.

A successful application to support our Graduate Attributes Programme was made to the **HEA Innovation and Transformation Programme 2018**, and a successful financial commitment from the **Tomar Trust** in 2020 will widely develop this programme.

The funding provided through the HEA Fund and Tomar Trust is supporting the development of a pilot Graduate Attributes Programme, which is predominantly targeted at BA Arts students. Delivery of a suite of initiatives within the programme is focussing on the different stages of students’ Transition In, Through and Out of the university. The overarching objective of our programme is to enable a successful student journey, which will prepare students for their future through three main projects.

1. **Transition In** initiatives are guiding students into the right programme of study for them, whilst simultaneously widening access of under-represented cohorts and improving first year retention rates.
2. **Transition Through** initiatives are providing targeted supports, delivering skills training and developing graduate attributes that go beyond disciplinary content knowledge and can be applied in life-wide contexts.
3. **Transition Out** initiatives are preparing final year students to transition into professional environments, delivering on the ambitions of our Institutional Employability and Employment Guide.

This initiative is advancing the development of students' academic, specialist and technical competencies, equipping them with transferrable skills that can be applied in different environments. With a focus on developing core values and graduate attributes, these initiatives are integrating with the academic curriculum, taking a holistic educational approach to develop character, professionalism and the capacity for critical and creative thought.

UCC graduates will be recognised as well-rounded, curious, self-aware, individuals who continually learn new skills, are open to new ideas, and make things happen.

Academic Governance

Priority 6 of UCC's Academic Strategy is to "Reform academic governance such that innovation is enabled, coherence is restored and risk is reduced". A key part of reviewing and reforming academic decision-making is Programme Governance.

Academic Programme Governance at UCC has developed over a number of years to reflect the needs of local academic units and the characteristics of the various disciplines, departments and schools in the University.

The Programme Governance project proposes a model structure for programme governance in the University. The purpose of this proposal is to enhance the ability of Programme Coordinators to successfully carry out their duties by clarifying their roles, providing the necessary information to make evidence based decisions, to ensure University policy is central to planning and decision making and to enable Programme Coordinators and the Programme Boards of Studies (PBS) to meet quality assurance and quality enhancement processes.

The PBS is modelled on the existing Interdisciplinary Programme Governance Policy. The rationale for introducing the PBS is to simplify the process of programme governance, to provide clear guidance on the expectations around programme governance, to ensure academic decisions are made locally, to avoid duplication of decision making at various levels of the institution, to simplify flows of information between the colleges and the schools, and to enable the development of technical solutions to assist in the administration of academic programmes in an comprehensive way (e.g. locally managed minor changes etc) including the Curriculum Management System which is under development.

Proposals were brought to Academic Board in October and feedback is being obtained from Colleges. A pilot is underway with 5 programmes and all new programmes are encouraged to operate PBS from the outset.

A Curriculum Management Group with representation from curriculum committees in each College/ACE, the Office of Academic Programmes and Regulations and the Director of Academic Services was initiated in October 2019. The purpose of this group is to support the process for reviewing, updating and approving the 2020/21 curriculum and to promote cross-functional learning and sharing of experience. Since March 2020 this group has met regularly to tease out the implication of responding to Covid-19 on the approved curriculum for 2020/21

and to define processes in-line with the principle of subsidiarity for its review and update outside the normal curriculum approval deadlines. Recommendations and queries from this group are considered by Academic Leadership Forum/Academic Board. The college representation on this group fulfils a critical role in the communication to Colleges/Schools/Depts of advice and considerations (particularly the impact of public health guidance on elements of the curriculum) when reviewing the curriculum for the next academic year. Whilst changes to the modes of teaching and assessment have been required due to Covid-19, such changes ensure the same competencies and Learning Outcomes are met.

Staff Management and Development

In response to Covid-19 a new group was established by Interim President Professor John O’Halloran, to consider the impact on staff of online working. The group progressed a number of actions to support colleagues. Colleagues across UCC have faced a variety of different issues and for many colleagues, managing this situation has not been an easy one hence the importance of the university taking a lead in putting in place some new supports and in highlighting existing supports for staff. This group chaired by Paul Moriarty, Director of Student Experience brought together colleagues from across HR, the health and wellbeing domain and senior university managers to work to develop visible and accessible supports for colleagues. The work undertaken by this group was focused in three core areas:

Guidance for carrying out UCC business covering meetings; their timing and duration and also email protocols.

UCC supports – these cover the array of policies, tips, guidelines and FAQs put together by the UCC Business Continuity group, HR, IT Services and Learning & Teaching that have been put in place in the past number of months – bringing them together in one place for colleagues together with full detail on HR supports, workshops, networks and lunchtime activities together with the vast array of health and wellbeing resources which are on the UCC Keepwell website.

Personal Supports - these personal supports encompass the ongoing support that is available from line management, colleagues, the HR team – both centrally and HR Business and also encompasses coaching, mentoring and peer networks.

A number of measures were approved by the University Management Team for dissemination within the university - these cover the following:

1. Meeting timings - reiterating core hours under Athena Swan for meetings between 10-4 while appreciating that this may create challenges currently for colleagues working from home – hence the need for local discussions to support these colleagues at the present time;
2. Making arrangements locally for an identified “meeting free afternoons/mornings” to give the opportunity for planning and preparation work;
3. Meeting duration – more focused meetings that are less than an hour to incorporate the opportunity for breaks between meetings;
4. The incorporation of a discussion in team meetings on “staff wellbeing” – what is working well locally and what tweaks or improvements can we make to supporting our wellbeing;
5. Email protocol – for colleagues who wish to catch up on email out of hours – it is recommended that they leave the emails in draft to send the following day or that they employ the “work offline” function;

A resource tree was also developed to sign post colleagues readily and easily to the significant range and breadth of resources both internal and external that are available to support health and wellbeing at the present time. This tree is built on the strong foundations which encompass our UCC values together with highlighting the strong social based supports that are available from line managers, colleagues and HR. Clicking into the sections

on the branches of the resource tree will bring colleagues to the pertinent information on the support that is available <https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/wellbeing/supportinguccstaffin202021/>

In addition, the group have in conjunction with Marketing and Communications launched a series called “Learnings from Lockdown” on Work Vivo for staff. This series which commenced in December has encouraged colleagues to outline their challenges during Covid-19 and to identify what one thing they have done or tried to do to support themselves and their team. It is intended that this work will continue to support staff who are working on-line and also in transitioning to the new normal in 2021.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Connected Curriculum 2018-2022

Learning and teaching are the defining characteristics of every university. What is taught, how it is taught, and the overall ethos of the university’s teaching mission are the characteristics that define any institution’s offering to its students. To optimise UCC’s relevance to potential and existing students and to ensure our students are enabled to study and learn in the most efficient and effective ways, it is vital that UCC regularly reflects on what and how it teaches. That reflection is all the more critical in the current environment.

UCC is committed to the personalised education of every member of its student community. We prioritise the provision of quality of education to equip students with the skills, discipline and intellectual rigour that can be adapted to their requirements and challenges throughout their lifetime. UCC is committed to delivering future-ready education programmes, adopting a systems approach underpinned by the philosophy of life-long and life-wide learning.

UCC’s Academic Strategy 2018-2022 was launched in December 2018 and has enjoyed great support across the University. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/registrar/theconnecteduniversity/academicstrategy/>. The strategy is being delivered through 6 key priorities:

1. [Develop a Connected Curriculum, building on existing strengths and best practice globally.](#)
2. [Align the Academic Portfolio with demand and with teaching and research priorities.](#)
3. [Constructively align effective Assessment practices with learning outcomes.](#)
4. [Facilitate students' development of core values and Graduate Attributes.](#)
5. [Establish a student Enrolment Plan that aligns with student recruitment targets.](#)
6. [Reform Academic Governance such that innovation is enabled, coherence is restored and risk is reduced.](#)

The implementation of this strategy is being achieved by breaking each goal down into a number of discrete actions each led by a dedicated team of staff and student representatives. Delivering these actions involve working with all Schools and Colleges, and with individuals; the development of metrics; and regular reviews.

The implementation of the strategy is on track with all 35 actions now underway, and 26% already completed. This strategy has supported UCC to deliver its academic mission and safeguard student success in the face of the ongoing challenges posed by the Covid-19 crisis. Some of the adjustments, modifications and innovations developed in response to the restrictions will endure post-crisis. These have been incorporated into the implementation of the Academic Strategy and will support innovations in learning, teaching and the student experience, particularly in the areas of student recruitment, assessment and mitigation and academic governance.

The development of a Connected Curriculum aims to ensure that six key elements are embedded across the curriculum. More than 400 staff have engaged in the online Digital Badge course on The Connected Curriculum and You. The course content was also repurposed for incoming international students as part of the online Transitions-In programme that was launched in response to the Covid-19 restrictions. The integration of the Graduate Attributes Programme has continued across campus with more than 30 teams collaborating on projects to support students as they transition into and through university. A digital self-assessment tool is ready for piloting in 2021, and students will generate a bespoke profile illustrating their starting point for values and attributes. A new Student Success Zone was launched in collaboration with UCC Skills Centre, which will facilitate student engagement with a breadth of learning experiences.

The “Connected Curriculum and You” Digital Badge is one of the success stories of the online pivot. Despite the closure of the physical campus, the badge was successfully launched in April 2020 and a large number of staff from across the University engaged with the material and connected with each other via live online workshops which were developed in response to the campus closure. This course provided a much-needed point of connection for staff at a time of displacement and also showcased the possibilities of Canvas and MS Teams as platforms for online learning and teaching. A Learning Design workshop to support the implementation of the Connected Curriculum framework was transformed into an online offering and run fortnightly between May and July for UCC staff. The workshop was especially relevant for staff grappling with how to transform teaching for online or blended learning and proved very popular. There was a necessary refocussing of the workshop at that time to respond to the expressed development needs of staff. The peer review of the self-evaluation tool for the Connected Curriculum was paused in recognition of the increased workload of staff as they transformed their teaching and assessment.

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated several elements of the Assessment Strategy and key learnings have been incorporated in a comprehensive revision of the document. A review of admissions policies is underway to support the complaints and appeals processes. A review of postgraduate programmes admissions decision criteria has informed the configuration of the newly launched CRM Recruit application engine. UCC has been awarded funding for the development of policy on Recognition of Prior Learning as part of a national project. Review and reform of academic decision making is a key objective and, following extensive consultation, a process has been developed to inform this work. This governance model will have implications for how we make decisions at the level of the local academic unit, but also will inform the need for multiple layers of decision-making structures at the College and University level.

Mid-way through the four-year implementation period, nine of the 35 individual actions of strategy have been completed.

Retention Rates

UCC has a strong commitment to maintaining high levels of student retention and works systematically to support early student engagement and support, through the activities of the First Year Coordinator. UCC has shown consistently high rates of first year student retention and student progression rates. HEA findings suggests that up to 15% of university students do not progress beyond first year (October 2020, p.37-38). UCC has arguably the best first year retention rate nationally, if not internationally. Goal one of the University’s Strategic Plan 2017-2022 is to implement an academic strategy to deliver an outstanding, student-centred teaching and learning experience with a renewed, responsive and research-led curriculum at its core. One of the targets of this goal is to achieve student retention rates of 92% after first year. UCC continues to be a leader with a first-year retention rate of 94%.

In response to Covid-19 and consequent difficulty with on-campus orientation, the University transitioned its orientation programme to a virtual environment. This also gave the University an opportunity to review the content, structure, and delivery of the programme.

The Orientation Team transformed time-tested successful events of years past into a digital offering and seized the opportunity for innovation. Given that online learning escalated exponentially since March 2020, academic staff had little opportunity to develop content for online orientation. However, with the support of the Orientation Team, Digital Services and the Centre for Digital Education all content was delivered on time and was accessible, without exception, to all first-year students.

Key Findings

- 4,204 students enrolled in the Orientation course
- 2,310 students attended Campus Tours
- 32,546 visits to the First-Year web pages <https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/firstyear/>
- Content was delivered on time using a blend of videos, text, quizzes, checklists and rewards
- Orientation content continues to be accessed 'on a need to know' basis by students.

The virtual orientation was very successful and the Orientation Team has recommended that students engage both online and in person for future orientation sessions outside Covid-19 to ensure that they find their place in the UCC community and that they make meaningful connections. In order to future-proof virtual orientation for the long term the following key recommendations were made by the Orientation Working Group.

Long-term Plan

Identify digital champions in each of the four colleges who will work in close collaboration with Digital Education, Digital Services and the Orientation Team to ensure shared responsibility for sound instructional design and quality.

Course Structure

Include collaborative and varied activities such as quizzes, checklists and rewards. Having structured tasks as well as intuitive design models will influence positive interaction.

Content

Condense content into 5-10 minutes of video. Eliminate or significantly reduce pages of text/PDF
Stagger the release content on a 'need to know' basis.

Delivery mode

Consider using Panopto as much as possible.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance must set out specific criteria and a process by which orientation content is designed, reviewed and approved.

No Academic Disadvantage

UCC introduced the No Academic Disadvantage measures for all exams undertaken during the Covid-19 period in recognition of the exceptional circumstances. Students whose personal circumstances may be compromised by Covid-19 may apply to defer their examinations and attempt the examination in the deferred examinations scheduled in August/September with no academic disadvantage. There are no examination repeat fees should a student sit a repeat examination; if a student is unhappy with their online examination/ assessment they can choose to re-sit the examination/assessment; should a student fail an examination they can take the supplemental exam without any academic penalty.

Information and Data Management

National Student Survey

At UCC the views of students are central to improving teaching, research and student services and to the quality review process. Student surveys are an important tool for students to provide feedback on university experiences, educational quality, institutional effectiveness and student satisfaction, and play an important role in the involvement of students in university management and governance at UCC. The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (StudentSurvey.ie) invited responses from first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate, and taught postgraduate students in 27 higher education institutions in Ireland. There is also a survey designed for postgraduate research (PGR) students (including Masters by research and doctoral degree students). The PGR StudentSurvey.ie runs every two years. The 2020 StudentSurvey.ie fieldwork launched at UCC in February 2020. All eligible students were invited by email to participate.

The survey data is intended to add value at institutional level by enabling institutional leaders, subject leaders, teaching and learning colleagues and quality officers to consider the experiences of different groups of students within the institution. The ability to collect, analyse and use information about our students' experiences in their programmes of study is a key element of our commitment to quality. The findings, both quantitative and qualitative indicate the potential for this data to enrich the University's understanding of student engagement, which is much broader than formal academic provision, looking also at how students spend their time. Knowing how and why student's learning and teaching needs may vary according to discipline can drive the development of evidence-based improvements.

Post fieldwork analysis

Responses are analysed at a national level and national results are published annually to inform national policy making. Every year, the data sets of responses of our students are made available shortly after fieldwork concludes. In order to facilitate discussions, a preliminary analysis of indicator scores is carried out at an institutional level in early summer, in consultation with the University Student Surveys Board. In autumn, the results are compiled into an annual university level report and circulated more widely internally. The results report serves as a guide for continued enhancement of teaching and learning and also student engagement. The results are presented at Academic Council and summary reports utilising the disaggregated college data are circulated to each college to open discussion and explore uses of the data within the local context. Feedback is shared with colleagues across all support areas i.e. IT Services, Societies, Library colleagues, etc. so that the data can be used to improve and enhance facilities, supports, and the learning environment for all students.

In interpreting the data that is provided by StudentSurvey.ie, higher education institutions are encouraged to work collaboratively with students, ensuring that students are involved in translating the data that they have generated in the first instance. It is recognised that students have a major contribution to make in the design of curricula, and in reviewing and providing feedback on their experience of college. Through our University Student Surveys Board, we work in partnership with student representatives to close the feedback loop through visible reporting on the findings of the previous years' surveys, coupled with ensuring strategies for optimizing uses of the data is included on agendas of appropriate meetings, specific briefings, internal publications and across popular social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

This timeline depicts some of the ways in which we engage with staff and students so that we can demonstrate that the feedback loop is being closed.

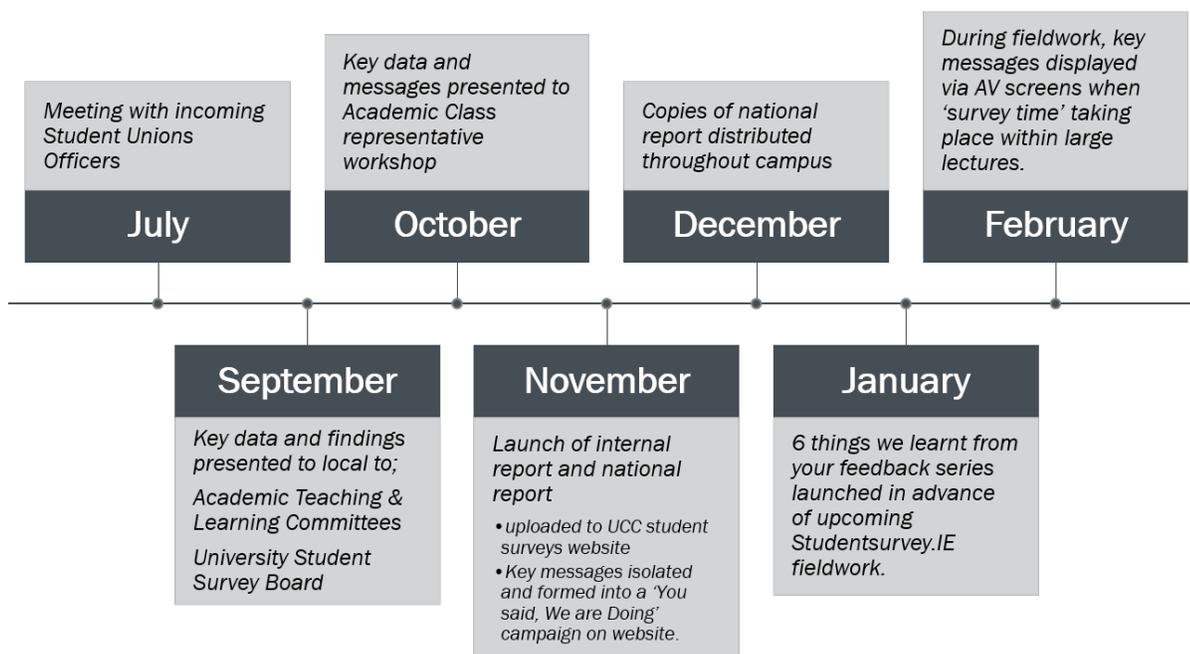


Fig 1.1 Feedback timeline 2019/2020

UCC's response to student feedback

As part of the work of the Student Surveys board, the University engaged in the following activities throughout the academic year in response to student feedback:

- Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data locally;
- Production of annual university level report to coincide with publication of national report; <https://www.ucc.ie/en/studentsurveys/studentsurvey.ie-ucc/>
- College level summary reports collated with bespoke signposts for further consideration;
- Data shared across all support units;
- Developed infographics to display key facts and findings; <https://www.ucc.ie/en/studentsurveys/yousaidandwearedoingtogether/> <https://www.ucc.ie/en/studentsurveys/studentsurvey.ie-ucc/studentsurvey2020statistics/>
- Promotion of reports, key messages and building awareness through our dedicated social media channels <https://twitter.com/SurveysUCC> | <https://www.instagram.com/uccstudentsurveys/>
- Launched the inaugural Student Voice week in 2020 to coincide with the StudentSurvey.ie 2020 fieldwork. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/studentsurveys/howwelisten/>
- Following on from identification of the potential of a staff survey on student engagement as an interesting mechanism to distinguish UCC's interaction with the internal dialogue on Student Survey data, the Survey Board has partnered with our HR colleagues to devise a proof of concept to determine its practical potential.
- Presented at the Academic Class representative workshop in October 2019 and also as a panelist at the StudentSurvey.ie National Practitioners Forum May 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rob9jHJuOgE>
- Launched a student video competition to synthesize the UCC results of StudentSurvey.ie 2020 to further develop student participation in university decision making.

Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Thematic Review of Work Placements

The Thematic Review of Work Placements was commissioned by the Deputy President & Registrar and the Director of the Student Experience to provide a University-level view of current good practice in the overall structure and co-ordination of placements, and to identify opportunities to enhance these practices into the future. It is intended that the findings of the Review will also help to shape the implementation of the InPlace placement management software system which is currently being rolled out across the institution.

The Review was established in early 2020 and was due to run from 28 April 2020 and had to be re-cast in format and timescales as a result of Covid-19 to a remote review and virtual site visit in the period June – October 2020, with the final Review Report due in November 2020.

The scope of the Thematic Review of Placements:

- Evaluate the current organisational infrastructure underpinning placements in terms of policy, governance, academic and professional staff responsibilities;
- Assess the suitability of the current organisational infrastructure in relation to the range and scale of placement provision on offer and future scale-up in response to the University's Academic Strategy for a Connected Curriculum;
- Evaluate the current procedure and processes for securing and managing placements;
- Identify international good practices which can maximise the quality of the student learning experience on placement taking account of the diverse learning needs and contexts of the University's student population;
- Evaluate the interface with employers in securing and managing placements;

The approach to Thematic Review involved a strategic and horizontal appraisal of a topic from strategy through policy, implementation and outcomes. The methodology for thematic review followed the accepted model for quality review as defined by the European Standards Guidelines (2015), as follows:

- Documentary submission
- External review by nominated peers
- Virtual Site visit
- Report publication and action planning

The documentary submission was organised by the Quality Enhancement Unit and reflected the horizontal scope of the review from strategy to policy to practice and implementation. As the focus of the review was thematic, there was not a single self-evaluation document, rather there was a compendium of documentation which aimed to provide the Review Panel with background to UCC's strategic and operational context for work placement. A briefing document outlining the scope of the review was provided to the Review Panel.

In order to provide the Review Panel with some self-evaluation material, a series of short evaluative accounts (300 words) addressing current strengths and areas for development were invited from across the University. The target audience was all those engaged in placement supporting both the academic and administrative aspects of work placement. The circulation inviting submissions was based on a list of programmes with work placement supported by the Careers Office, and direct communication with College Offices to reach those work placements which were organised locally at programme level.

The final documentary submission for the Panel included:

1. Institutional strategy documents: University Strategy and Academic Strategy
2. Current policy documents for the operation of work placement
3. Details of current work placement modules including credit, duration and assessment methodology
4. A reflective account on the operation of the work placement policy
5. Evaluative accounts of 300 words (invited) on operation of work placement from internal staff of the University
6. Report of a survey of University staff on the impact of Covid 19 on Work Placement arrangements
7. Report of a survey of employers

Self-Evaluation of Examinations Business Continuity Group

The Examinations Business Continuity Group (EBCG) was established as a high-level expert group in March 2020, to develop required policy and direct implementation activities for modified examinations arrangements arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. At national level several agencies provided sectoral level guidance on key principles to frame institutions' activities as they developed responses and modified arrangements. These included including Quality & Qualifications Ireland as well as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning^[1].

To assure the effectiveness of the EBCG it was agreed that a Self-Evaluation and Review (SER) process should be undertaken to achieve a focused evaluation of the effectiveness of the decision-making and operational processes of the EBCG. The SER methodology was developed by the Quality Enhancement Unit and following consultation the intended outcomes of the exercise were agreed as: to learn and understand what worked well; to identify what could be improved and detail any issues remaining to be resolved. The outcomes of the examination process and students' attainment was not within the scope of the Review.

The SER process would evaluate the extent to which:

1. the decision-making and operational processes adopted by EBCG were based on robust principles appropriate for the purposes of maintaining the integrity of the examinations process
2. technical decision-making was informed by an appropriate evidence base inclusive of current policy and practices as well as information on concurrent national and/or international practices
3. communication and consultation with students was effective and timely
4. communication and consultation with staff was effective and timely

The outcomes of the exercise will provide reassurance to Academic Council on overall effectiveness and a summary analysis of the key learnings in terms of good practices and issues for further development. In the wider higher education quality context, the exercise will also affirm the University's capacity to self-regulate its activities and practices for maintaining the quality and standards of its education.

The overall methodology defined for reflection and analysis included the following elements:

1. A **SWOT analysis** by members of the EBCG to identify what worked well and why? What worked less well and why? What threats or wicked issues remain? What opportunities for future development emerge?
2. A summary of the decision-making principles adopted and an analysis of how well these met and/ or exceeded prevailing national policy advice? Cross-reference to QQI guidance, National Academic Integrity Network, any relevant international practice or publications which were considered? A

consideration of any risks associated with the decision-making process, and risk mitigation, for example when any risks were identified, how they were considered and decisions reached, or levels of risk within the approvals process for modified examinations arrangements^[2].

3. Details of policy and or regulatory modifications made and analysis of intended impact particularly in relation to link between intended learning outcomes, modified examination arrangements and students' ability to achieve the intended outcomes? This should take account of the question of cheating.
4. A short survey to garner staff and student opinion on the communication processes adopted to convey decisions in terms of relevance, clarity and timeliness of communication.

On completion of the evaluation and review phase, the final draft document will be internally peer-reviewed by at least two colleagues chosen from the University Quality Enhancement Committee, who were not members of the EBCG and by two international peers. The function of the peer review process will be to validate the integrity of the self-evaluation process and to provide access to international good practice and experience of assessment adaptation in response to the pandemic.

Further details of the scope, authority and operation of the Exams Business Continuity Group are provided as a Case Study in Section 4.

^[1] "Providers who have not already done so are advised to establish a set of principles which can act as a framework to support planning and to facilitate consistency of decision-making. It will also provide a record of the rationale underpinning key decisions." (QAA (UK) Thematic Guidance: Academic Standards p.2 See:

https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/covid-19-thematic-guidance-academic-standards.pdf?sfvrsn=cbcccd81_6

^[2] QQI Guiding Principles for Alternative Assessments (March to August 2020) see:

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Guiding%20Principles%20for%20Alternative%20Assessment%20%28COVID-19%29%201-10-20.pdf>

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, see:

<https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/2020/03/20/supporting-teaching-and-learning-through-covid-19/>

Quality Assurance of Research Activities and Programmes

Research Quality Review

QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) state that each institution 'is responsible for organizing an integrated system of quality assurance in relation to its research activities. These should build upon the peer review mechanisms widely employed in research funding and publication and incorporate relevant metrics.'

UCC's approach to this has been to conduct institution-wide Research Quality Review (RQR) exercises. The RQR Technical Group was established by the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), chaired by the President, in order to design the outline principles and approach for the next RQR. QEC agreed that the focus of the Technical Group's work would align with both the UCC Research and Innovation Strategy with an emphasis on research quality enhancement, and with the UCC Academic Strategy with an emphasis on research-based education.

The remit of the RQR Technical Group is to develop recommendations for a model of internal research quality review which is framed in light prevailing approaches in higher education for the review of research quality in a national and international context, and practices/expectations of funding agencies for the quality of research; UCC's strategic context as a research-intensive university with a research-based curriculum at its core; the

University's commitment to enhancement as articulated in the University Strategy, the Research & Innovation Strategy and the Academic Strategy.

The RQR Technical Group defined research as a process of investigation leading to the creation of new knowledge and / or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, insights, inventions, methodologies, solutions and understandings. This can include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes. In some disciplinary areas it may involve the creation of artefacts, or may be embodied in artistic work, design or performance.

The RQR Technical Group successfully completed stage one of the RQR project plan with the publication of the RQR Technical Group Report to the QEC in January 2020, encompassing the proposed method of review. The communication phase of the plan commenced in February 2020 and was abruptly halted due to Covid-19.

Covid-19 has obvious implications for the scheduling of the RQR. Covid-19 has had a profound impact on the workload of academic staff not least of which is an impact in regard to lost research time. There has been a tremendous effort by the University to contain and manage the effects of Covid-19 on core academic business and this has had a consequent impact on the prioritisation of IT services, a crucial component of the successful implementation of the RQR.

The Thematic Prioritisation of the University Strategic Plan was approved by Governing Body in December 2020. The RQR methodology is consistent with the Thematic Prioritisation process as it relates to research and the outcomes arising from it, however, for the RQR to be meaningful and strategically relevant the timing of its implementation is very important. Taken together, all of the foregoing, the very earliest initiation of the assessment phase of RQR is likely to be January 2024. Depending on the further evolution of Covid-19 and also conclusion and direction setting from the Thematic Prioritisation exercise this may need to be extended out to September 2024.

Integration of UN sustainable development goals (SDG)

In 2016, UCC launched its [Sustainability Strategy](#), which was framed around the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The sustainability strategy focuses on themes of Citizenship (SDG 10, SDG 16, SDG 17), Teaching & Learning (SDG 4), Research, Food, Health & Wellbeing (SDG 2, SDG 3), Landscape, Heritage & Natural Resources (SDG 11, SDG 14, SDG 15), Waste Management (SDG 12), Energy, Water & Climate (SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 9, SDG 11, SDG 13), Procurement & Contracts (SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 12), Commuting & Business Travel (SDG 11, SDG 13).

The [Annual Sustainability Report](#) for AY 2019-2020 is currently in preparation but previous reports are available at the link provided. Sustainability is also embedded into the [University's Strategic Plan](#) 2017-2022, and our [Academic Strategy](#) 2018-2022. We are a member of the [EAUC](#), Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Higher Education and are signatories of the [SDG Accord](#), higher education's collective response to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In the AY 2019-2020, University College Cork celebrated 10 years since becoming the first University in the world to be awarded a Green Flag from the Foundation for Environmental Education. In 2019 UCC successfully renewed its Green Flag for the 4th time. Core to the Green Flag process is the active participation of all elements of the university in sustainable development, and over the past decade it is evident the UCC has undergone complete institutional transformation, reaching further into the university community each year. The Green Campus

Programme is student led, research informed and practise focussed, and UCC uses this framework to embed action on the Sustainable Development Goals across the university estate, facilities & operations, research, teaching and learning.

UCC consistently performs well in international sustainability rankings and was the first university outside of North America to be awarded a [Gold Star](#) from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. STARS ([The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System](#)) is the most comprehensive, transparent, self-reporting framework for HEIs to measure their performance against Sustainable Development Goals. All data submitted to STARS is publicly available and remains valid 2018-2021. In 2019-2020 UCC ranked 9th globally in the [UI Green Metric](#). The UI Green Metric ranks over 900 HEIs according to their performance in environmental sustainability, incorporating metrics relating to twelve of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Times Higher Education [Impact Rankings](#) assess universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal, using carefully calibrated indicators to provide comprehensive and balanced comparisons across three broad areas: research, outreach and stewardship. In 2019-2020 UCC was ranked 32nd globally out of 768 universities that were assessed. On this occasion UCC was the highest-ranking university in Europe for impact on SDG 1 and SDG 12.

Through our [Connected Curriculum](#) and [Graduate Attributes](#) Programme (Priorities One and Four respectively of our Academic Strategy 2018-2022) we are championing the development of values, skills and aptitudes that promote civic participation, social inclusion, sustainability, and impactful, global citizenship in all academic courses. All 17 SDGs are covered within the formal curriculum at UCC, with 6% of the university's modules including direct sustainable development teachings. These modules are spread across 60% of the university's academic departments meaning that 17% of our students graduate having taken one of these modules in the course of their degree. In 2019-2020, UCC commenced a new project funded by the National Forum for Teaching and Learning, designed to enable educators to [integrate the SDGs further into the curriculum](#), enhancing teaching and learning both within (SDGs of relevance to the discipline) and across (cross-cutting competencies and skills) disciplines. Each year, our University-wide Module in Sustainability (UW0005) is offered annually as a Digital Badge to all staff or as additional University Credit to all students. It is designed to nurture sustainability citizenship amongst staff and students and takes a co-created interdisciplinary approach to the SDGs with contributions from 20 different staff from across all colleges. In 2019-2020, the module was taken by 60 staff and students from all colleges of UCC. In addition three other [university wide modules](#) that speak directly to the Sustainable Development Goals were launched in 2019-2020; Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Social Justice, Equality, Diversity and Health (UW0011), Development and Global Citizenship Education (UW0012) and Global Sustainable Development: Interdisciplinary Perspectives (UW1201).

The UCC Strategic Plan 2017-2022 prioritises impactful research and innovation that are curiosity driven, seeking breakthroughs that will address global societal grand challenges including the UN Sustainable Development Goals. 15% of all researchers in UCC are engaged in research that is directly related to the SDGs. UCC's sustainability researchers are found across a variety of disciplines throughout the University. The [Environmental Research Institute](#) (ERI) brings together over 400 researchers from 20 different scientific disciplines with expertise in the five broad research platforms of Environment, Sustainable Energy, Marine, Sustainable Agri-Food, and Sustainable Materials. Similarly the [Centre for Global Development](#) aims to support, enhance and promote UCC's commitment to addressing the challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals. Other examples of research institutes conducting research on the SDGs include Institute for Social Sciences in the 21st century ([ISS21](#)), [Tyndall National Institute](#), [MaREI](#), [APC Microbiome](#), the [Food Institute](#) and more. In excess of €20m is secured annually for environmental and sustainability research.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is at the heart of all academic endeavour and is critical to the reputation of the University; the integrity of awards and qualifications; the assurance of quality and standards; good research quality; ethics, and institutional academic leadership. The University has clear policy on plagiarism and provides support and advice to students on academic integrity across all aspects of their academic work. The Students' Union also provide advice and update to their members.

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/student-policies/#plagiarism-policy>

<https://libguides.ucc.ie/academicintegrity/referencing>

The QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) established the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) in November 2019. UCC played an active part in the membership of the network with Dr Siobhán Cusack (Head of Student Records & Examinations Office) as the University representative and Paul O'Donovan (Academic Secretary & Assistant Registrar) as her deputy. UCC continues to be an active member of the network and took part in the first National Academic Integrity Week in 2020.

https://twitter.com/IUA_Academic/status/1318951544780443648?s=20

The establishment of the network was welcomed by UCC's Academic Board and the focus on a national, sectoral response was particularly welcomed. It is expected that the University will adopt the national definition of plagiarism and the national lexicon/glossary when it is finalised by the network.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINTE recommendation.</i> <i>If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
1.	EUA Institutional Review - University Response	The University will progress the recommendations from the EUA Institutional Review through the Quality Enhancement Committee and through the work of the Strategic Thematic Prioritisation Working Group. The University will develop an Action Plan taking account of the recommendations of the IEP Report.
2	Evaluation of virtual periodic review	An evaluation of the implementation of virtual periodic review will be undertaken in order to assess how effectively the adapted model worked. Effectiveness will take account of the perspectives of peer reviewers and Heads of Units, national and international adaptations to methodology. The outcomes of the evaluation will identify future adaptations and enhancements to the periodic review methodology and conduct of the site visit. In line with the University's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and reduction of its carbon footprint, the configuration of the site visit as a hybrid model of remote and face to face will be explored.
3	Thematic Review of Teaching and Assessing with Technology	Through international peer review, options for maximising the organisational, governance and decision-making structures required for strategic steering and overall coordination for teaching and assessing with technology. This review links to wider strategic developments being led by the VP for Learning & Teaching to develop UCC's digital education strategy.
4	Programme Review	Following from an earlier enhancement project (2018/19) on the effectiveness of programme approval, review and monitoring a series of pilot "Programme

		<p>Dialogues” had been identified to commence for semester 2 of AY 2019/20. These plans have been delayed due to the impact of Covid-19 and will be taken forward in 2020/21. This initiative connects the priority theme of Academic Governance from the Academic Strategy, the UCC 2022 Strategic reprioritisation process and the evaluation of periodic review.</p>
5	Placement Review	<p>The outcomes of the thematic review of Placements, namely the recommendations and planned actions, will be taken forward by the Director of Student Services and the Registrar. The Placement review as it relates to employability is linked to the Academic Strategy.</p>

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Department of Physics	2020/21 (<i>rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19</i>)	2010/11
Cork Centre for Architectural Education	2020/21 (<i>rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19</i>)	2011/12
School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures	2020/21 (<i>rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19</i>)	2012/13
School of Mathematical Sciences	2020/21 (<i>rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19</i>)	2011/12
ASSERT Centre	2020/21 (<i>rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19</i>)	N/A (opened 2015)
Thematic Review of Placements	2020/21 (<i>rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19</i>)	N/A
Thematic Review of Teaching and Assessing with Technology	2020/21	N/A

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Reviews 2021/22

Periodic Review

- Human Resources
- Office of the VP Research & Innovation

Thematic Review

- Research Degree Student Experience

Enhancement Project

- Student Feedback

Programme Review Pilot

Reviews 2023/24

Periodic Review

- School of Applied Social Studies
- School of Nursing
- Registrar's Office (all Directorates)
- School of the Human Environment
- School of Medicine
- School of Applied Psychology

Institutional Review

- Follow-up

*Research Quality Review (RQR)**

Reviews 2022/23

Periodic Review

- Finance Office

Institutional Review

- Institutional SER – Q3 2022
- Planning Visit – Q4 2022
- Main Review Visit – Q1 2023

Thematic Reviews (topics tbc)

**there is contingency to move the assessment phase of the RQR to Sept 2024 depending on the further evolution of Covid-19 and the strategic priorities identified by UCC 2022.*

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Exams Business Continuity Group - Case Study

Background

On March 4th, 2020, in response to the emerging threat of a global pandemic, University College Cork appointed and mobilised an Examinations Business Continuity Group (EBCG). The group was initially established to assess and prepare for the potential impact of a full or partial lockdown of the university campus on all elements of University examinations and assessments.

Since then the group has met a total of 39 times and was formally established as an Executive Committee of the University's Academic Council and reports regularly to the Academic Leadership Forum.

The group is authorised to respond to issues in the exigent manner which the crisis demands. The group's membership of over 50 university staff members is drawn from the Academic Community, Professional Services and the Students' Union.

Issue Tracking & Resolution: All assessment and examination issues arising from the COVID-19 crisis and the necessary pivot to online teaching and assessment have been formally tracked and managed by the group. All issues have been formally recorded on an issues log. A total of eighty issues have thus far been reported. The log is formally submitted to all meetings of the Academic Board.

The group has overseen the assessment and resolution of a broad range of issues including;

- The introduction of the *No Academic Disadvantage* measures to support students who were impacted by COVID-19 crisis.
- On-going communication and collaboration with external accrediting bodies and professional representative bodies in relation to changes to assessment format and the acute challenges associated with student placement.
- Updating of university assessment policy and procedure particularly in the areas of plagiarism and academic integrity.
- The evaluation of remote invigilation software for a proposed introduction for use in a small number of programmes in Semester 2 of 2020/21.
- Modification and approval of module assessment method changes and associated wording in the University's published Calendar.
- The introduction of online exam appeal and exam deferral facilities to support students many of whom were no longer living close to campus.
- The introduction of additional oversight from senior and experienced academic staff at online University Examination Boards.

Assessment Readiness: Assessment of students is a whole of campus endeavour. The pivot to online assessment has required close co-operation and collaboration between all of our stakeholders.

In April 2020 the EBCG undertook a formal readiness assessment to ensure stakeholders (Students' Union, Professional Services and Academic colleagues) were all appropriately prepared to deliver c50,000 online exams\assessments. As part of this process colleagues were invited to review and assess readiness against agreed

criteria before a formal readiness sign off was provided to the Registrar from the Head of College\Function. See Appendix 1.

Communication: The pivot to online\remote assessment required regular a significant amount communication with our student body academic staff and external stakeholders.

- The EBCP assisted in the drafting and approval of communications. For consistency, the majority of communications were issued via the Registrar and logged by the group.
- Readiness guides were prepared and issued to staff to ensure an evenness in the student experience. See Appendix 2.
- In consultation, with the Students’ Union the EBCP provided FAQ and guidance for students.
- An Assessment Hub was created and published to promote consistency of approach across all aspects of assessment including design, policies, delivery and grading.

Timeline: Initially, it was anticipated that the EBCG would disband at the end of the Summer 2019/20 examination season. However, to support and orderly transition to 2020/21 academic year, the Academic Leadership Forum approved additional phases of work for the group to monitor oversee. See Figure 1.0

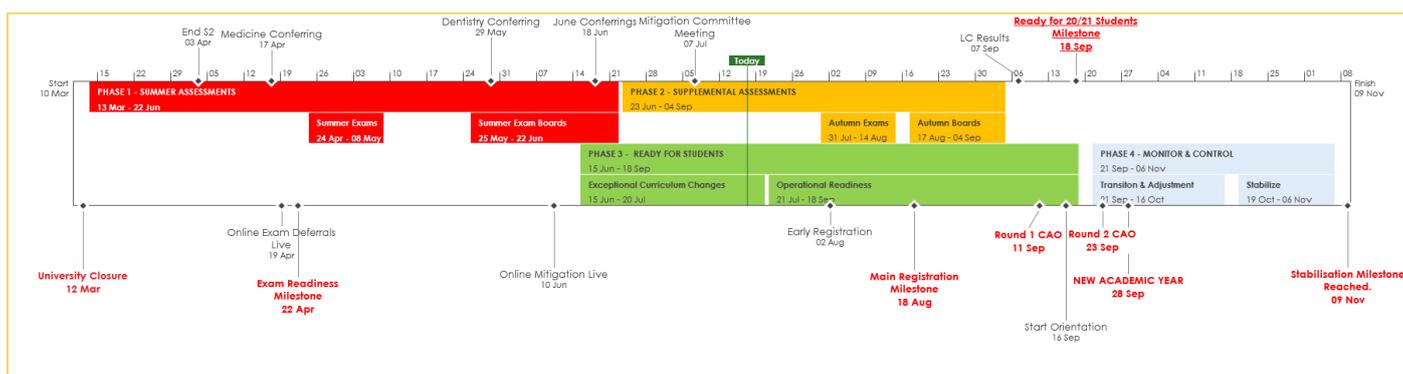


Figure 1.0 – Timeline of Activities

The ongoing and changeable nature of the crisis has meant that necessitated that the group continues to meet and is expected to do so for the foreseeable future.

Self-Assessment Quality Review

The decision and actions undertaken by EBCG have been significant. A report on a self-assessment quality review of work of the group will be presented to Academic Council in the coming months. This report will invite internal and external peer review and any recommendations arising will be adopted by the group.

Appendix 1– EBCG Readiness Assessment

Online Exam Readiness

Introduction

Since the closure of the University on March 12th all Schools, Colleges and Schools have gone to considerable effort to substitute summer written exams with alternative online formats.

Summer Exams will commence on April 24th.

1. Approximately 50,000 exam sittings will take place.
2. 796 modules will be assessed.
3. 137 modules have class sizes over 100 students. These account for almost 50% of sittings.

Risk Mitigation and Readiness

Given the scale and importance of summer exams for staff and students it is necessary to formally assess whether or not the required level readiness has been achieved.

It is proposed this assurance is achieved as follows;

1. The templates in Appendix 1 are to be completed in consultation with key staff in the relevant schools and functional areas.
 - a. The templates are not intended to be onerous but to provide an *aide memoire* to help surface any outstanding anomalies that can be resolved ahead of exams.
 - b. Ideally, Heads of College will have received a completed readiness check from the relevant Heads of School by close of business Monday 20th.
 - c. Readiness is a shared responsibility. In addition to Schools, Professional Services and the Students Union will also self-assess.
2. When completing the School readiness template, particular focus and attention should be paid to ensuring modules for the first day of exams and those exams with larger class sizes are ready. See Appendix 2.
 - a. A successful day one of exams will set the trajectory for the remaining exams and importantly give confidence to staff and students. It is important to start strong.
 - b. The larger class sizes need to be managed. These account for almost half of all sittings.

Note: The exams BCP group will meet on Wednesday 22nd to close out readiness assessments and again in the late afternoon of Friday 24th to see how day 1 of exams performed.

Readiness Criteria

School

The template below is provided as a prompt for each School to consider, at a high level, its overall level readiness for the Summer 2020 examinations. Importantly, it is also a final opportunity to identify and flag any outstanding issues which need to be escalated to the Head of College and the Exams Business Continuity Group. **Please return to the Head of College before 17:30 Monday April 20th.**

Readiness Criteria The School is satisfied that...		[INSERT SCHOOL NAME HERE]	
		YES	NO
1 Quality	All alternative assessment formats chosen in the School are appropriate for module learning outcomes.		
	All alternative assessment formats chosen in the School satisfy the requirements of external professional/accrediting bodies.		
	External examiners have been notified of alternative assessment formats and are supportive of these changes.		
2 Communication	Module co-ordinators in the School have explained to students the format of alternative assessments.		
	Module co-ordinators in the School have advised students of when each assessment starts and finishes.		
	Module co-ordinators in the School are confident that they can support large class sizes (100+ students).		
	Module co-ordinators in the School have provided contact details should students need to contact them during an exam.		
3. Submission	Module coordinators in the School have received a sample copy of the official Exam Book cover page and are aware that students will use it.		
	Module coordinators in the School have finalised and will present all examination papers in Microsoft Word™ format.		
	Module coordinators in the School have made provision for students registered with DSS.		
4. IT	Module coordinators in the School are confident that they can use Canvas to manage their online assessments.		
	Module coordinators know that students will contact the IT Support Help Desk for any IT issues encountered but will notify them in the event that an issue cannot be resolved and the student is unable to complete the exam and/or upload their work		

Professional Services & Students Union [*Professional Services & SU to Complete*]

Readiness Criteria		YES	NO
		Education & IT Digital 1	Canvas is capable of supporting the volume of assessments that have been scheduled.
Turnitin is capable of supporting the volume of assessments that have been scheduled.			
Change freeze on all exam systems and critical monitoring of operational performance in place and checked daily			
A Student IT Support Help Desk has been established as the first point of contact for technology issues.			
Academic Services 2	Students who need to defer a Summer online exam because of COVID-19 have the facility to apply for mitigation		
	The Mark Entry System has been configured to support non-anonymous marking and modules assessment structures are correct.		
	Exam timetable reflects confirmed changes to date and start time of scheduled examinations.		
Student Experience & Students Union 3.	All reasonable examination accommodations have been identified for students registered with the DSS.		
	Students have been informed that they should contact their module coordinator if they have queries or encounter any issues during an exam.		
	Students know how to use Canvas and any other technologies to successfully complete an online assessment.		
	Students know the time and format of their online assessments.		
	Students are aware of the Exam Book cover sheet and know where to access it.		
	Students who need to defer a Summer online exam because of COVID-19 know how to do so.		

Please complete and return to Deputy President & Registrar before 17:30 Tuesday April 21st.

Appendix 2– Communications Artefacts

Check lists for Module Co-ordinators & Students

MODULE CO-ORDINATOR ONLINE EXAM CHECKLIST



CONTENT

1. My online exam meets the module learning outcomes.
2. My online exam meets external accreditation requirements.
3. My exam can proceed as per the published schedule.



CONFIGURATION

4. I have set up my online exam on Canvas.
5. I know I need to add 20 minutes to the submission window for all students.



ACCESSIBILITY (DSS)

6. I have contacted my Head of School for details of DSS students.
7. I have created my exam in a Microsoft Word format.
8. I will allocate an additional 10 minutes per examination hour for DSS students entitled to extra time.



CONTACT

9. I will be logged into Canvas for the duration of the exam so I can respond to student queries.
10. I have arranged a colleague to deputise for me in the event that I am unavailable.

VISIT [HTTPS://WWW.UCC.IE/EN/KEEP-ASSESSING/](https://www.ucc.ie/en/keep-assessing/)
FOR FAQs AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Online Exam Checklist for Students



I have checked my registration record is correct.



I know the date and time of my exam.



I can access and use Canvas.



I have a suitable computer and broadband.



I understand the format of my online exam.

For further information:

www.ucc.ie/online-exams