

University College Dublin (UCD)

Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 Reflections on Performance

Overview

Overall the commentary provided by UCD is brief for some domains and no significant detail or analysis is provided in some cases, beyond quantifying the progress made. UCD, in common with other institutions, reports with reference to its own strategic priorities. While there is no benchmarking of performance against national or international comparators in this report, the cover letter from the President indicates that this work is underway and is expected to be complete by autumn 2015.

Consistent with UCD's stated mission, strong progress has been made in the priority areas of teaching and learning and research. Progress has also been made on objectives for engagement, internationalisation, teaching and learning and access. The university reports that all nineteen of the original compact objectives are status green. Elements of two objectives, for regional clusters, are flagged as status orange (a joint Professional Masters in Education and a MOA with IADT).

The achievement of a regional approach to progression, reported as status green, should probably have been reported orange as the target to have mapped progression routes from FE has not been fully achieved. However discussions are reported to be underway with TCD on aligning progression pathways.

One element of an objective under teaching and learning is flagged as status red: the establishment of the Learning Innovation and Academic Development Centre (ILIAD). However good progress generally is reported under this heading, noting improved ISSE scores, maintained peer mentor ratios and growth in staff numbers undertaking CPD in teaching and learning.

UCD report specific and positive progress on the relationship with NCAD. While the merger would seem to be paused pending review, there would seem to be close collaboration in a number of areas including the establishment in May of a UCD-NCAD centre for Creative Arts, work on joint graduate programmes, module sharing, exhibitions and collaboration between the two colleges in the areas of enterprise engagement and international student recruitment.

Self-evaluation report - domain level review

1. Regional clusters:

Within this domain, five objectives are identified in the compact and addressed in the self-evaluation. Two performance indicators within these objectives are marked as orange. Firstly, the programme of work by the Institute of Education (TCD, UCD, NCAD, and MIE) remains at a preparatory phase. It is reported that the Teaching Council have indicated that the approval process for the joint Professional Masters in Education may take longer than was anticipated. This will have a knock-on impact on timelines. A module from this course will come on stream in September 2016 as a precursor to the full course which was due to be introduced by that date.

The second area where progress has been slower than planned was the agreed framework for module sharing with IADT which is still in development. However, progress on other joint endeavours has been made by the two institutions in areas such as the hosting of a conference on Cultural Policy, the development of an industry focused masters in film production and finance and a module on the sharing of data visualisation.

Other developments of regional significance include the collaboration between UCD and TCD in 2014 to secure two SFI centres – Connect and iCRAG – where the two universities used their complementary skill sets to achieve success. This indicator might have been reported as progress under the first objective on the expansion of the TCD-UCD alliance which, while progressing, is not doing so at the pace originally projected.

The DRHEA project is reported as complete. One of the outputs from this is a matrix outlining the admission process for mature students across the region. In this case, UCD might have reported how this matrix is, in practice, supporting mature student entry to UCD and other HEIs. The target to have mapped by 2014 progression routes from further education to Dublin Cluster HEIs was not achieved but it is noted that this is part of ongoing discussions between UCD and TCD.

Although marked in green, progress on the trilateral collaboration (UCD, IADT, NCAD) appears slow, with the review of governance ongoing and new modules only coming on-stream in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

Within this domain, one objective is identified in the Compact and is reported on in the self-evaluation.

This objective is marked in green with the overall target for underrepresented groups exceeded by 156 to the end of 2014. To be clarified with UCD that all numbers refer to first year entrants rather than all enrolments. The only cohort not to exceed its' target is the mature/older learners, which fell by 15%. While, overall, UCD achieved an increase in participation among the four target groups, a fuller sense of the context for this achievement, plans to develop current targets and additional objectives for access would have been welcomed.

Further information on how work by the DRHEA, on the mapping of pathways and by UCD adult education could support the regaining of lost ground on the mature student target would also be welcomed in future reports.

3. Excellent teaching and learning and quality of student experience:

Within this domain, five objectives are identified in the Compact and each of these are addressed in the self-evaluation. Considerable progress is reported on four of the five objectives. This is the only section of the report to have a performance indicator marked in red, as UCD are reviewing the need to establish a Learning Innovation and Academic Development Centre (ILIAD). Notwithstanding this review, there is reported to be an active network of staff progressing the development of the scholarship of teaching and learning. Actions have included workshops to agree research themes; participation in international events by teaching fellows; reviews of the undergraduate and graduate curricula and of the Professional Certificate Diploma in University Teaching and Learning are also underway.

Other indicators are marked in green. There has been a welcome increase in levels of student satisfaction reflected in UCD's ISSE score and a growth in the peer mentor programme. The progression rate from first into second year has fallen slightly from 83.8% in 2012/13 to 83.3% in 2013/14.

Initiatives supporting the activity levels of students outside of the academic sphere are reported on, including the endorsement of the Healthy Ireland Initiative and collaboration with the HSE. However, it is not clear if the target of 65% of students to be engaged in physical activity has been met.

4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

Within this domain, five objectives are identified in the Compact and all five are reported on in the self-evaluation. All objectives are listed in green and as having been achieved.

The individual targets have been exceeded in all cases. Noteworthy, are the 88 prestigious research awards attained, including 11 ERC and 77 Marie Curie Awardees, ahead of the target of 60; 209 students who participated on innovation programmes, ahead of the target of 15 and 5 spin-out companies, ahead of the target of 3. However in this case, no detailed commentary or specific examples of the increased value to UCD were provided.

5. Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange:

Within this domain, one objective is identified in the Compact and is reported on in the self-evaluation. The objective as to strengthen UCD's links with industry and progress on this is reported as green. The interim targets set in the Compact have been exceeded to the end of 2015. Most significantly, 26 licence agreements were reached by the end of 2014, well ahead of the target of 12. No specific examples of any of these engagements are given and additional information would have validated and strengthened the self-evaluation report.

6. Enhanced internationalisation:

Within this domain, two objectives are identified in the Compact and both are reported on in the self-evaluation as having been fully achieved. In the case of the number of international students targeted to come to UCD in 2013-14 the target was over-achieved by 1,000 students. The status of specific partnerships with China and Malaysia which are outlined in the Compact, and which UCD had intended to build on, are not referred to but presumably have progressed well in view of the growth in student numbers.

7. Institutional consolidation:

Within this domain, one objective is identified, the deepening of the relationship of NCAD with UCD. This objective is listed in green. However, whilst progress has been reported the 2014 target to agree governance and academic structures was not achieved. 2015 activity on this objective was reported though; including site visits to Glasgow and Edinburgh in May to advise the development of joint governance and academic collaboration model. In May 2015 the UCD-NCAD Centre for Creative Arts was established in Belfield. A shared summer school is also planned for July 2015 to discuss joint graduate taught programmes for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

8. Additional Notes

Proposed changes to compact

Regional Clusters

1 - Deepen TCD-UCD Alliance

QUB joined as a partner in delivery of Grad. Cert. programme

2 - Establish the Institute of Education

Target to establish a joint professional M.Ed. and appoint a head of the institute moved to 2015 (was 2014)

- New KPI on research strategy (two TCD-UCD SFI centres). Suggest move to objective 1 (UCD-TCD alliance)

3 - Regional Approach to Admission (DRHEA)

Report on admissions processes for mature and part-time students – outcome
Map of progression routes from FE to DRHEA ongoing, clarify if outcome in 2015.

4 – Bilateral Collaboration with IADT

Timelines for MOA, module sharing and research plan moved, clarify if 2015 or 2016

5 – Trilateral Collaboration in Creative Arts

Review of governance ongoing (target was 2014)

Joint programme delivery at PG level. Framework agreed? Will this extend to UG?

Module sharing with IADT and NCAD (confirm has framework been agreed).

Teaching and Learning

Establishment of ILIAD centre under review

Institutional Consolidation

Deepen Relationship with NCAD – original objectives to be discussed with HEA

Targets Achieved

Participation, Access and Lifelong Learning

Target for 2016 exceeded, bar mature learners. Revised targets being considered?
To be clarified that numbers for each target group refer to new entrants.

Research and Innovation

For targets achieved (e.g. publication impact, prestigious awards, patent applications) are new targets proposed?

Enhanced engagement

Internationalisation

For both domains, some targets exceeded, are new targets under consideration?