



Healthy Campus Case Study



HEA

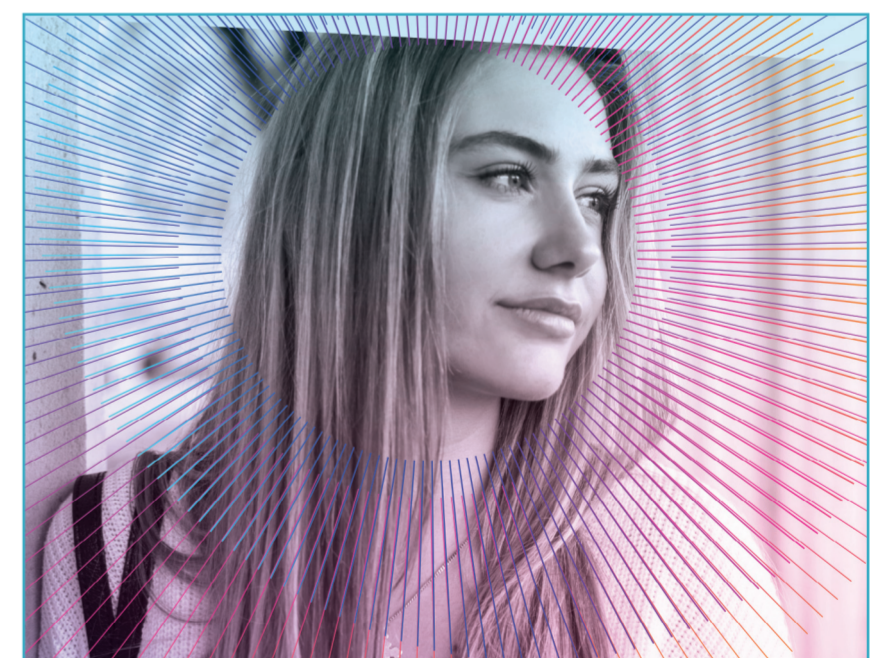
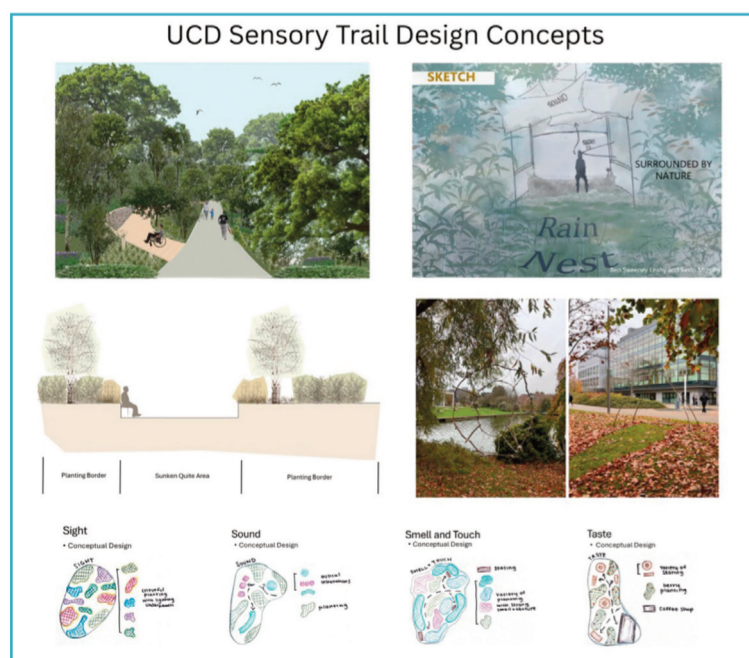
An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

Using Experiential Learning to Design a Sensory Trail in the UCD Woodland – A Collaboration with UCD Landscape Architecture

Institution/ Organisation
University College Dublin
Who leads/ led the project?
A collaboration between Healthy UCD and UCD Landscape Architecture
Date and timeframe
Academic year 2024 (ongoing)
Project Rationale
The UCD EDI Neurodiversity Working Group, established in 2021, identified the need for more inclusive sensory environments through its 2024 <i>Making UCD a Neurodiversity Friendly Campus</i> report. One recommendation focused on developing indoor and outdoor sensory spaces to support inclusion, a core goal of UCD's Breaking Boundaries Strategy to 2030. With limited indoor space available, Healthy UCD explored using the campus's 40 acres of woodland to create a sensory trail benefiting staff, students, and the wider community.

Project Overview/ Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy UCD collaborated with students from UCD Landscape Architecture (Socio-Environmental Studies module) from September-December 2024 to explore how the UCD woodland might be developed to include additional sensory spaces. Healthy UCD facilitated sessions with the students each week of term, with presentations from the various stakeholders helping to inform their work. The students presented an overview of their designs to the key stakeholders in Spring 2025. Healthy UCD and UCD Landscape Architecture collated the designs and presented them to the UCD Foundation in Summer 2025, to discuss the potential for funding. The
<p>project concept was well received by the UCD Foundation, who advised the team to (a) secure a potential site for the sensory trail on campus and (b) to develop the students' designs into one overarching design concept.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy UCD and the incoming group of students from the UCD Landscape Architecture Socio-Environmental Studies module 2025/2026 met with UCD Estates Services in Spring 2026 to identify suitable areas for the sensory trail within the UCD Woodlands. The students are currently developing the work of the previous group to design an overall concept, including costs, for the sensory trail, based on the site identified within the UCD woodland.

Key Learning Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborating with faculty on campus provides an opportunity for experiential learning within the curriculum, where students can apply what they are learning in a practical way and feel like they can make an impact. Identify and engage with all relevant stakeholders, both internally and externally, is key to project success. Patience is required as it can take time to develop concepts, engage with stakeholders and secure the relevant approval and required funding. <p>Some student Feedback:</p> <p><i>"This project was a fascinating challenge and an opportunity to explore how inclusive design can intertwine with environmental sustainability."</i></p> <p><i>"The project flexibility encouraged us to think critically and creatively, tailoring our approaches to address the unique challenges and potential solutions we identified."</i></p>



Limerick Framework for Action			Whole Campus Approach	Type of Evaluation
Ethos	Leadership	Partnership	Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) (Pillar 2)	Formative Evaluation
Act	Policies	Students	Health Focused Area (Pillar 5)	Summative Evaluation
Localise	Culture			

