

Performance Agreement 2024–2028 between the HEA and University College Dublin



HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

Preamble

This Performance Agreement is established between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and University College Dublin (UCD) in accordance with the System Performance Framework 2023–28. The Agreement identifies University College Dublin’s performance objectives and the associated implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting processes.

This Performance Agreement will be used by the HEA to measure and assess the strategic performance of the institution via an annual cycle of reporting against the agreement and strategy and performance dialogue. University College Dublin should notify the HEA in writing of any proposed modifications to the Performance Agreement with a supporting rationale when submitting the annual report. Any agreed amendments to the Performance Agreement will be recorded by the HEA with the supporting rationale. This information may inform future monitoring and review processes and inform HEA reporting at a system level.

The HEA and University College Dublin acknowledge that policy underlying some or all of this Performance Agreement is subject to review from time to time by the HEA or Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The HEA and University College Dublin agree that if changes need to be made to the Performance Agreement because of such a review, the HEA will notify the institution in writing.

This Performance Agreement will be published on the HEA website in line with the HEA mandate to measure and assess institutions’ strategic performance with a view to strengthening the performance of the higher education and research system and of Higher Education Institutions, and to ensure institutions’ accountability. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the information presented in the Performance Agreement (including qualitative and quantitative data) is accurate.

The term of this Performance Agreement is from September 2024 to August 2028 unless terminated earlier by agreement.

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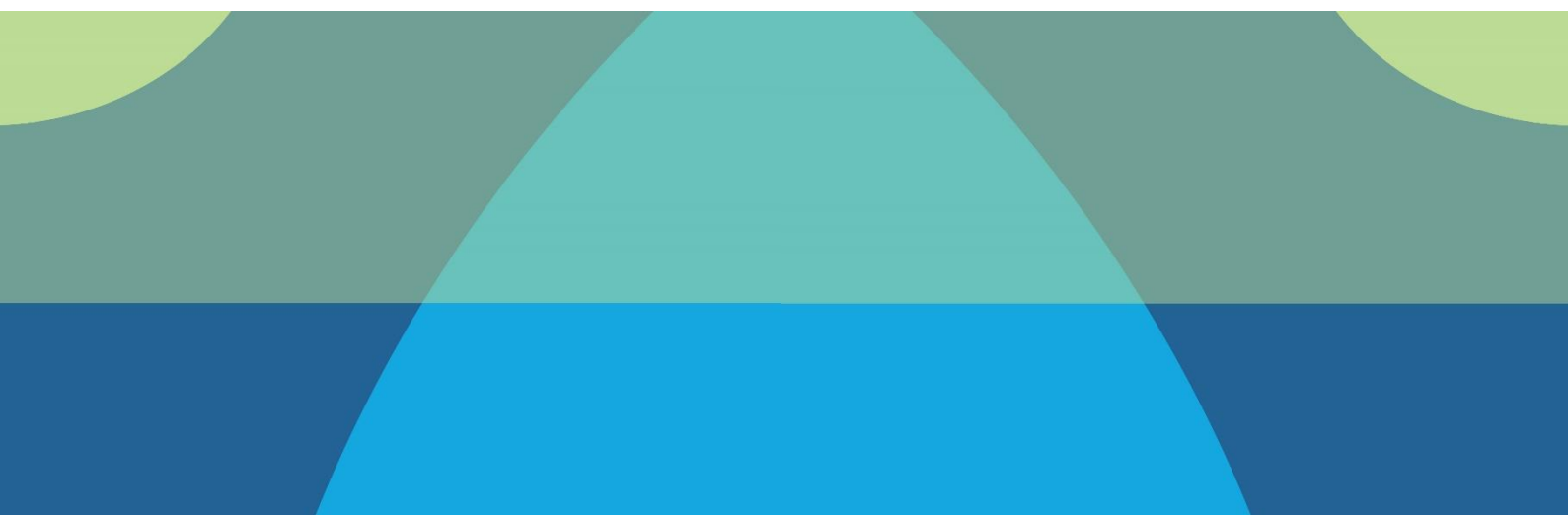
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Performance Agreement 2024–2028

Section 1: Context

Overview of the institution and its context

UCD has recently published its new institutional strategy to 2030 ‘Breaking Boundaries’. Further information on UCD’s strategy to 2030 can be found at <https://www.ucd.ie/strategy/>.

UCD’s mission is to create knowledge, to empower learning and to engage with partners to drive impact from education and research.

Furthermore, UCD’s vision is to be renowned as a dynamic, engaged university and a transforming force in Ireland, in the wider world, and in the lives of our students.

UCD is at the heart of Ireland’s vibrant economy, culture and society as the country’s largest and most influential university, with students from over 150 countries and over 300,000 alumni around the world. We are Ireland’s global university, the largest English-speaking university in the European Union, and an active partner in the Una Europa university alliance and other major university networks. We are a leader in research and innovation across our broad range of disciplines. Our 133-hectare main Dublin campus is among the finest parkland campuses in the world and a resource treasured by many. Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion has been recognised through the Athena Swan Silver Award, and in the QS Sustainability Ranking 2025 we are ranked 49th worldwide for sustainability and 10th worldwide for equality.

UCD, a high-level overview

A high-level overview of UCD, including total number of student enrolments by programme type and staff numbers by category of post, is set out tables 1, 2 and 3.

STUDENT PROFILE	
STUDENT HEADCOUNT: by Programme Level, 2023/24	
Undergraduate (UG)	20,222
Graduate Taught (GT)	8,648
Doctorate	2,058
Master’s Research	133
Occasional UG	2,635
Occasional GT	629
TOTAL	34,325

Table 1: Student numbers by programme level [Source: HEA SRS March 2024]

STUDENT HEADCOUNT: Overseas, 2023/24	
Undergraduate	4,957
Graduate Taught	240
TOTAL	5,197

Table 2: Numbers of students from overseas [Source: HEA SRS March 2024]

UCD Staff Profile		
Category	Sub-category	FTE
Academic	Full Professor	191
	Professor	129
	Associate Professor	307
	Lecturer/Assistant Professor Above Bar	706
	Lecturer/Assistant Professor Below Bar	27
	Other Academic & Teaching	149
	Academic Total	1,510
Research	Research Support	433
	Researcher	552
	Research Total	984
Support	Academic Administrative / Professional	521
	Administrative / Professional	735
	Technical	257
	Other Support	314
	Support Total	1,827
UCD TOTAL		4,321

Table 3: Staff numbers (full-time equivalents, FTE) by category of post [Source: HEA Quarterly Return March 2024]

Approach to the development of the Performance Agreement

UCD has been fully engaged with the performance agreement process both in terms of the development of this 2024–2028 Agreement and in terms of previous agreements. UCD views the strategy and performance dialogue process as an appropriate and valuable element in the setting of our strategic objectives and the monitoring of achievements against those objectives.

The following key points should be noted in terms of UCD’s development of the Performance Agreement.

- The development and finalisation of the UCD Performance Agreement 2024–2028 has been managed directly by the President and University Management Team (UMT).
- The UCD Governing Authority has been consulted at important stages of the process including, particularly, the development of later drafts of the Performance Agreement. The UCD Governing Authority signed off the Performance Agreement at its meeting in June 2024.

- UCD has put in place objectives which are clearly measurable and based on consistent data. For each objective, a clearly defined measure of success is identified, with the data source set out. UCD has set ambitious but achievable goals for each of our objectives. Our indicators of success are set out in the sections below.
- Sustainability, climate change, and the environment form a key part of UCD’s Strategic Plan. It is intended that these issues will continue to be given the highest priority as we implement our new Strategic Plan and also in our Performance Agreement.
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is also given highest priority by the University. UCD has in place for several years a Vice-President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and an [EDI Strategy and Action Plan](#).

Structures in place for evaluation

The objectives set out in the UCD Performance Agreement 2024–2028 are of central importance to the strategic direction of UCD over the coming years. This Performance Agreement will be clearly aligned to UCD’s Strategic Plan, and the Strategic Plan and the Performance Agreement will work together in an entirely complementary way. Thus, monitoring, assessment, and reporting of both will work in a unified manner. Accordingly, the following should be noted:

- Monitoring, assessment, and reporting against the Performance Agreement will be conducted under the immediate direction of the President and the UMT, and reporting will be conducted on a regular and consistent basis. It is planned that this reporting will be conducted together with monitoring and reporting of progress against UCD’s Strategic Plan.
- Similarly to the point above, monitoring and reporting to the UCD Governing Authority will be conducted on a regular basis and the UCD Governing Authority will be kept fully informed of progress. Again, it is planned that this process will work in a manner in keeping with the monitoring and reporting of progress against UCD’s Strategic Plan.
- The data used to support the monitoring and assessment of the Performance Agreement is clear and consistent. For each objective, a clearly defined measure of success is identified, with the data source set out, and monitored consistently.

As stated above, UCD has recently launched its Strategic Plan. Throughout this process, UCD has consulted with a wide range of stakeholders. The plan is also informed, as appropriate, by national and international policy objectives.

As the implementation of the plan develops, UCD may wish to amend some of the objectives and targets set out in this document. UCD will, of course, discuss and agree any such amendments with the HEA.

Section 2: Performance Objectives

Performance Objective 1

To support growing numbers of undergraduate and graduate students to engage with work-integrated learning (WIL) and other experiential learning modes to deepen applied subject knowledge and acquisition of transversal skills.

Pillar: Teaching and Learning

Transversals: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Student Success; Enterprise.

Rationale for Performance Objective 1

The rationale for selecting this objective is twofold. Greater participation in work-integrated learning and the enhancement of our students' career readiness aligns with the *National Skills Strategy: 2016 to 2025* and the *OECD Skills Strategy Ireland: Assessment and Recommendations (2023)*. The former envisages employees of the future with enhanced “21st-century skills” in areas such as communication, resilience, creativity and problem solving. Greater opportunities for work-integrated learning (WIL) will provide UCD graduates with the capacity to meet current and future skills needs in areas such as ICT and entrepreneurship. The UCD Career Registration Survey 2024 shows that the Medical and Healthcare, Consulting and Management, Banking, Investment Banking and Finance, Engineering and IT sectors are among the top ten industry sectors sought after by UCD students. Further development of WIL will facilitate the progression of more graduates into employment settings in skill shortage areas.

This objective also aligns with further national policy objectives outlined in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, the *Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030*, and *Global Citizens 2030 – Ireland's Talent and Innovation Strategy*. It is a stated objective of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* that higher-education institutions will have strong engagement with communities, societies and enterprise. Growing work-integrated learning builds relationships between the University and employers across private, public, and voluntary sectors, enhances mutual understanding of needs and of opportunities, and underpins the acquisition of an enhanced range of transversal skills for students by providing opportunities to enable and empower creativity and innovation. It also promotes active engagement with our alumni who are part of communities, who are decision-makers and who are employers and enterprise leaders. UCD has evidenced its commitment to building durable relationships with employers at university level through the appointment of a Vice-President for Strategy and External Engagement, and the establishment of University-level groups such as the Clinical Placement Strategy Group and the recently approved Academic Internships Framework Implementation Group.

UCD has also identified a number of additional measures that support the selection of this objective:

- The 2023 HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey (class of 2022) reveals that 37.2% of UCD graduates reported participating in some form of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) as a mandatory or optional part of their studies (undergraduate studies), which is below the sector average of 56.6%. UCD is aiming to grow the proportion of full-time undergraduate students undertaking WIL from 24.1% to 28% by 2027/28 [indicator 1.1].
- The 2023 HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey (class of 2022) indicates that 60% of UCD undergraduate (UG) respondents found their course was ‘Relevant/very relevant’, which is lower than the sector average of 62%. UCD will achieve the sector average (62%) by the end of this Performance Agreement period [indicator 1.2].
- The 2023 HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey (class of 2022) indicates that 63% taught postgraduate (PGT) respondents found their course relevant/very relevant. This is below the sector average of 68.5%. UCD will work towards the sector average, seeking to achieve 65% of respondents indicating that their course was relevant/very relevant by 2027/28 [indicator 1.3].
- 60% of Stage 2 undergraduate respondents to UCD’s Career Readiness Survey indicated that they felt they had ‘a plan’ (ranging from ‘some’ to ‘sorted’) in relation to their career. Stage 2 is a key point at which students consider internships and placements and UCD is committed to supporting students to engage in WIL and experiential learning and to ensuring the career readiness of our graduates [indicator 1.4].

Focus on this performance objective represents continuing development of a priority area and will be underpinned by review and revision of university policy on internships and placements. This work will be complemented by the UCD Career Mentoring programme, run collaboratively by UCD Careers Network and UCD Alumni Relations.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 1

In implementing this objective, UCD is conscious of the need for effective implementation, monitoring, and assessment of the success of the initiative. UCD will:

- Continue to report on the proportion of undergraduate students undertaking internships and clinical placements. Build engagement across programme areas in support of growing availability of internships and clinical placements as an aspect of programme design, working collaboratively with UCD Careers Network, UCD Teaching and Learning and UCD’s Internship Manager. The proportion of programmes offering internships and clinical placements will be overseen by the University Programmes Board, reporting to the Academic Council.
- Build student expectations to embrace the undertaking of internships and clinical placements across programme areas, to encourage take-up. This will be complemented by the UCD Career Mentoring programme, which gives students the opportunity to meet and network with

professional UCD alumni mentors who can offer support in developing their career ideas, clarifying their goals, and improving their employability.

- Ensure continuing strong support for students preparing for internships and clinical placements, during the internship or placement period, and on completion of internship and clinical placement periods.
- Develop a suite of supports for students who are at different stages in their career readiness, based on our Career Registration Data collected by [UCD Careers Network](#).
- Support up to four two-year Teaching Fellowships for UCD faculty with the theme “*Embedding Employability in the Curriculum through Work-Integrated Learning*”, which will see an interdisciplinary research team undertake practice-/policy-based research on this strategic theme.
- Evaluate progress in embedding Work-Integrated Learning using both qualitative and quantitative indicators of achievements against objectives.
- Deploy and develop key indicators of student participation and success, including numbers of students undertaking internships and clinical placements, contributions to learning and skills, and graduate outcomes.

In addition to the University Internships Manager, UCD is resourcing internship managers across each College of the University to support the building of relationships with employers and supports for students and the monitoring of internship activity. Each internship module is assigned an academic coordinator.

Key challenges include building support from stakeholders, including employers; ensuring sufficient resources to support the ambitions, including both staffing and systems; and assuring the quality of internships and placements. Key risks include a lack of engagement with the proposed initiatives by students and faculty, notably where the integration of WIL requires significant curriculum review. A broad engagement campaign to promote understanding and support of the actions will be a key element to mitigate these challenges and risks, complemented by streamlined administrative processes and a robust internships framework.

From 2025, all actions will be incorporated into the successor to UCD’s Education and Student Success Strategy, which will be the subject of regular monitoring and reporting both in line management and to the key University Committees, notably the UMT Education and Student Experience Groups. Reporting from these groups is to UMT and Governing Authority.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 1

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
1.1	Proportion (%) of full-time undergraduate degree students undertaking work-integrated learning	UCD Careers Connect/ Banner	Quantitative	2023/24: 24.1% (4,464) of total FT UG degree students (18,560)	Reduce gap to average, all universities (56.6% in 2023)	25% (4,640)	26% (4,825)	27% (5,011)	28% (5,190)	3.9 p.p. increase (19,666 students over 4 years)
1.2	Graduate Outcomes Survey measure of course relevance for all undergraduate students	Graduate Outcomes Survey	Quantitative	2023 survey: 60% UG respondents indicated course was 'Relevant/very relevant' to their job.	Achieve average, all universities (62% in HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey 2022)	60.5%	61%	61.5%	62%	2 p.p. increase
1.3	Graduate Outcomes Survey measure of course relevance for taught postgraduate (PGT) students	Graduate Outcomes Survey	Quantitative	2022 survey: 63% PGT respondents indicated course was 'Relevant/very relevant' to their job.	Work towards average, all universities (68.5% in HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey 2022)	63.5%	64%	64.5%	65%	2 p.p. increase

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
1.4	Career readiness – Stage 2 undergraduate students’ perceptions on how career-ready they are	UCD Career Registration dashboard	Quantitative	2022 career readiness survey: 60% of Stage 2 UG student responses indicated they felt they had a plan (ranging from ‘some’ to ‘sorted’) in relation to their career.	Not available	62%	64%	66%	68%	8 p.p. increase

Performance Objective 2

To promote a supportive learning environment which enables all students to learn effectively and to thrive.

Pillar: Teaching and Learning

Transversals: Student Success; Society; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Institutional Leadership & Culture.

Rationale for Performance Objective 2

UCD considers a “supportive learning environment” to be one that prioritises collaborative learning, student–faculty interaction and student feedback — all factors which underpin student success, and which support students to programme completion. This objective reflects several of the recommendations of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* with respect to teaching and learning, including the systemic capture of student feedback, the provision of a high-quality learning environment, and the provision of generic skills needed for effective engagement in society. Key enablers of success are also identified in the substantial evidence-based work undertaken by the National Forum for Teaching and Learning, and UCD has drawn on this work to inform this objective and associated actions. We have placed emphasis on (i) engagement and student partnership, (ii) assessment and feedback, (iii) the professional development of those who teach, and (iv) cultivating belonging. There are synergies between this objective and those under the Access and Participation pillar, which aim to engender a sense of belonging in students through participation outside the formal learning environment.

The prioritisation of this objective is also supported by StudentSurvey.ie data, which shows that UCD students have rated collaborative learning opportunities, student–faculty interaction and supportive environment at levels that demonstrate opportunities to enhance performance in these key areas. UCD aims to significantly enhance performance in these priority areas, which have shown only static or marginal increases across 2022 and 2023. Analysis of baseline and benchmarking data has informed the following targets for improvement by the end of this Performance Agreement:

- 17.7% of UCD final-year undergraduate students responded 'often' or 'very often' to the question relating to student–faculty engagement. This is above the average for the University sector (17.3%). UCD is aiming to exceed the sector average by growing the number of final-year students who respond ‘often or ‘very often’ to 19% [indicator 2.5].
- 21.1% of UCD PGT students responded 'often' or 'very often' to the question relating to student–faculty engagement, which is in line with the sector average of 21.2%. UCD aims to exceed the sector average by growing the number of PGT students who respond ‘often or ‘very often’ to 23% [indicator 2.6].

- 67.2% of first-year undergraduate students responded 'very much' or 'quite a bit' to the question on supportive environment, which is above the sector average of 63.8%. UCD aims to achieve a 1.8 percentage point (p.p.) increase on the current baseline [indicator 2.7]. A 2-p.p. increase from a baseline of 48% is also targeted for final-year undergraduate students (sector average 50.6%) and PGT students (59.7% → 61%) [indicators 2.8 and 2.9].

In the absence of nationally collated data during the redevelopment of the national student survey, UCD will implement local arrangements to ensure the maintenance of trend data in this key area.

As part of this performance objective, UCD is also seeking to improve its student–faculty ratio from a baseline of 20.4 (2022/23) to 18.8 during the timeframe of this Performance Agreement [indicator 2.10]. Student voice, partnership and engagement are key to our institutional strategy to create a supportive learning environment. The recent development of the new UCD Student Feedback System introduces new IT-focused approaches to feedback and allows the feedback loop to be closed through faculty communicating to students the nature of the feedback and how it is being addressed. This objective will support UCD in monitoring trends in relation to student module feedback, which tentatively suggest an increased response rate based on our new system.

Finally, the new UCD Centre for Future Learning (CFL) will come on stream in 2025. It will provide an additional 11,580 m² of floor space that has been designed with active learning as its core objective and in adherence to the principles of universal design. The CFL will facilitate active and collaborative learning, continuity of learning between classrooms and public/social spaces, and technology-enhanced learning.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 2

UCD will develop collaborative student learning opportunities as a core aspect of its educational strategy overseen by UMT Education Group. Data on student experience of collaborative learning, student–faculty interaction and supportive environment is collected on *StudentSurvey.ie*.

We will continue developing teaching facilities that are designed to support collaborative learning, including opening the Centre for Future Learning (2025) and adapting existing classroom spaces to better support collaborative learning. The CFL will facilitate collaboration as follows:

- All classrooms have been designed to maximise peer interaction and to facilitate interaction between students and faculty. For example, student seating will be at shared tables so that students can work collaboratively during class on tasks set by the lecturer/instructor.
- The m² per student is significantly greater than in traditional classrooms, giving lecturers/instructors space to move easily between groups of students and engage with them.
- The building has extensive 'learning commons' where students can work individually or in groups outside of the traditional classroom setting.

UCD will build on current strengths in collaborative learning at all levels, through a range of instruments including:

- Formal and informal educational development opportunities for teaching staff, with a focus on
 - developing peer-learning/peer-review approaches (in-person and enabled through technology)
 - creating supports and resources in relation to design and assessment of group work
 - developing peer-assisted learning programmes (i.e. peer tutoring).
- Supports for faculty to redesign learning to incorporate active and inclusive learning opportunities.

UCD will also build on current strengths in student–faculty interaction to develop a range of mechanisms to further enhance this aspect of students’ experience, including:

- Mainstreaming Academic Advising across the University using approaches that are appropriate to disciplinary and subject areas.
- Ensuring wider availability of field trips and related forms of experiential learning.
- Supporting up to four two-year Teaching Fellowships for UCD faculty to conduct strategic research on the theme “Engagement through Partnership: Students as Partners in Teaching & Learning”.
- Encouraging and supporting ‘students as partners’ approaches to learning enhancement projects funded through SATLE (Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement).
- Introducing a new [UCD Student Feedback System](#) that enables a ‘closing of loop’ within which students are notified of actions responding to module feedback.

Through this new feedback system, we aim to increase the number of students providing feedback across all programmes. The system will introduce two new surveys — a Module Feedback Survey and a Lecturer Teaching Survey — to support faculty in enhancing their teaching.

UCD will deploy additional government grant funding to enhance faculty–student ratios and supports to faculty, and thereby enable stronger provision of collaborative learning and faculty advising through strategic recruitment of faculty into areas of priority.

We will further enhance the work of UCD’s Student Partnership Forum to monitor and review the current UCD [Student Charter](#) and identify priority areas that will drive change.

We will develop supports to enhance student and faculty learning in the appropriate use of Generative AI for teaching, learning and research.

Maintaining our focus on enhancement of assessment, including programmatic approaches to assessment, assessment as/for learning, digital assessment and assessment for inclusion, we will:

- Enhance our reporting capability on assessment strategies.
- Pilot novel approaches to assessment using technology.
- Develop and implement a UCD Assessment for Inclusion framework.
- Develop policies and procedures to tackle challenges of academic misconduct in all its forms at all levels of the institution.

Key challenges include building support from stakeholders, including faculty, professional staff, and students. A broad engagement campaign to develop and implement the new Education and Student Success plan, to enhance and support the actions, will be a key element.

A key risk to achieving this objective is a lack of resources. Enhancement of integrated student supports and of the faculty–student ratio is dependent on sufficient resourcing, and the demands on academic time may pose an impediment to the success of this objective. This risk will be addressed through targeted focusing of resources.

All actions will be incorporated into UCD’s strategy and action plans, which will be the subject of regular monitoring and reporting, both in line management and to the key University Committees, notably UMT Education Group, Teaching and Learning Forum, and Dean’s Forum. Reporting from these groups is to Academic Council, UMT and Governing Authority.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 2

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
2.1	Proportion (%) of first-year undergraduate students reporting experience of collaborative learning	Student Survey.ie (Question: During the current academic year how often have you worked with other students on projects or assignments?)	Quantitative	2023: 50.8% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey results)	51.5%	52%	52.5%	53%	2.2 p.p. increase on baseline
2.2	Proportion (%) of final-year undergraduate students reporting experience of collaborative learning	Student Survey.ie (Question: During the current academic year how often have you worked with other students on projects or assignments?)	Quantitative	2023: 61% of responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Exceed Irish University sector average: (2023 survey results: 58.4%)	61.5%	62%	62.5%	63%	2.0 p.p. increase on baseline
2.3	Proportion (%) of PGT students reporting experience of collaborative learning	Student Survey.ie (Question: During the current academic year how often have you worked with other students on projects or assignments?)	Quantitative	2023: 64.6% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Exceed Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 59.4%)	64.5%	65%	65.5%	66%	1.4 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
2.4	Proportion (%) of first-year undergraduate students reporting student–faculty engagement	Student Survey.ie (Question: During the current academic year, about how often have you discussed your performance with academic staff?)	Quantitative	2023: 10.4% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 10.4%)	10.5%	11%	11.5%	12%	1.6 p.p. increase on baseline
2.5	Proportion (%) of final-year students reporting student–faculty engagement	Student Survey.ie (Question: During the current academic year, about how often have you discussed your performance with academic staff?)	Quantitative	2023: 17.7% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 17.3%)	17.5%	18%	18.5%	19%	1.3 p.p. increase on baseline
2.6	Proportion (%) of PGT students reporting student–faculty engagement	Student Survey.ie (Question: During the current academic year, about how often have you discussed your performance with academic staff?)	Quantitative	2023: 21.1% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 21.2%)	21.5%	22%	22.5%	23%	1.9 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
2.7	Proportion (%) of first-year students reporting a supportive environment	Student Survey.ie (Question: How much does your institution emphasise providing support to help students succeed academically?)	Quantitative	2023: 67.2% responded 'very much' or 'quite a bit.'	Exceed Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 63.8%)	67.5%	68%	68.5%	69%	1.8 p.p. increase on baseline
2.8	Proportion (%) of final-year students reporting a supportive environment	Student Survey.ie (Question: How much does your institution emphasise providing support to help students succeed academically?)	Quantitative	2023: 48.3% responded 'very much' or 'quite a bit.'	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 50.6%)	48.5%	49%	49.5%	50%	1.7 p.p. increase on baseline
2.9	Proportion (%) of PGT students reporting a supportive environment	Student Survey.ie (Question: How much does your institution emphasise providing support to help students succeed academically?)	Quantitative	2023: 59.7% responded 'very much' or 'quite a bit.'	Exceed Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 59.5%)	59.5%	60%	60.5%	61%	1.3 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
2.10	Student-faculty ratio	UCD KPIs	Quantitative	2022/23: 20.4:1	HEA institutional profiles: 2019/20 shows 21:1 across institutions	20	19.6	19.2	18.8	Decrease of 1.6 in number of students per member of faculty

Performance Objective 3

To build on UCD’s exceptional track record as a recognised leader in the provision of PhDs across all disciplines by providing an excellent PhD experience at increasing scale.

Pillar: Research and Innovation

Transversals: Student Success.

Rationale for Performance Objective 3

Research and Innovation (R&I) is at the heart of UCD’s strategy and mission, as set out in the UCD Strategic Plan. Increasing the quality and scale of the PhD student experience is an essential element of enhancing our research activity, which aligns with UCD’s strategic objective to advance research and innovation. Increasing our PhD student numbers also aligns with UCD’s strategic objective to ‘attract, retain, and develop an excellent and diverse cohort of students, faculty, and staff’.

As set out in *Impact 2030*, ‘People lie at the heart of Ireland’s national R&I performance and its international reputation [...] The availability of R&I talent will be a key component in addressing the disruptive impacts of digitalisation, adopting climate-friendly business practices, driving new scalable start-ups, and winning FDI in the future’. Increasing the quality and number of PhDs in Ireland builds up the human capital in Irish society that can make remarkable contributions to the public and private sectors. It also creates the foundations for future growth in the research activity that underpins Ireland’s knowledge economy.

The European Innovation Scoreboard is a framework provided by the EU to make comparative assessment of the Research and Innovation performance of EU Member States. The number of PhD graduates is one of the measures of assessment, the only one which universities are uniquely positioned to address. The most recent edition ranks Ireland as fourth in production of PhDs, up from eighth five years ago. In line with the ambitions of Ireland’s *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, there is clear scope for further ambition nationally.

The number of PhD graduates is a core measure for a research-intensive university and for a knowledge economy. It is a long-standing metric of our performance and represents a continuation of an established priority rather than a departure from our traditions. UCD has invested significantly in supports to provide an excellent PhD experience for our students. Student awareness of these supports will be a crucial metric to ensure that the investment in supports is utilised. The setting of specific graduation targets is based upon the projection of growth trends at UCD, and contingent upon a research funding environment that continues to support this ambition. The March 2024 HEA SRS return for UCD showed 286 PhD graduations in 2022/23, which we are using as our baseline year. UCD is targeting approximately 3% growth in PhD graduations each successive year for the duration of the Performance Agreement. This growth is in line with the trend of UCD’s growth in academic full-time equivalents (FTEs). UCD plays a major role in total national PhD graduation, and our intention is to build on this, year on year. UCD has invested in supports for PhD students, and their awareness of the available supports is vital to ensure that they are used when needed. According to StudentSurvey.ie data, 32.3% of PhD students in Ireland selected ‘very much’ or

‘quite a bit’ when asked of their awareness of student supports, whereas UCD achieved 56.1% in this measure, notably ahead of that national average. However, when looking solely at the category ‘very much’, the national average is 8.6% while the UCD-specific figure is 7.3%. UCD will target this specific category for improvement, targeting 10% by 2027/28.

UCD is also working to develop targets for PhD completion rates. Clear definitions have yet to be agreed nationally for these data and UCD will work closely with the HEA and our partner HEIs to agree and put in place appropriate targets as soon as possible.

UCD is growing as an institution in terms of the number of academics and students, and it is therefore crucial to grow our PhD student numbers to reinforce our recognised identity as a research-intensive university. This represents a continuation of an established priority for UCD.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 3

Many Schools and Colleges across UCD have academic and administrative resources to support and develop the suite of PhD education experiences at a central level. UCD Graduate Studies has a team of senior professionals reporting to the Dean of Graduate Studies to support key activities to achieve excellence in doctoral provision aligned with the national framework for doctoral education. The UCD Careers Network has a Career & Skills Consultant for graduate research students to support their development and future career success.

UCD Research provides comprehensive supports to the academic community to identify, plan, and secure external funds to create the research programmes and scholarships that enable the majority of UCD’s PhD positions to be created.

UCD currently invests substantially in PhD scholarships through a combination of central and School-level programmes. In particular, the UCD Ad Astra Fellows are provided with a PhD student as part of their startup package.

UCD Graduate Studies monitors the number of PhD graduations in the University annually and has systems in place to report this metric to the HEA. UCD will use the data from StudentSurvey.ie to evaluate PhD student experience, specifically student awareness of supports.

UCD will invest in measures to increase the visibility of supports to students. This will include revising the student health and wellbeing hub on our website to make key information more accessible and navigable for students, piloting a peer-mentoring scheme for PhD students, raising awareness of the student advisor role, and increasing internal communication on the supports available.

The evolution of the national and international research funding environment presents a risk to this objective. Fundamentally, it is up to funding agencies and policymakers to determine the level of funds available to support PhD-oriented research. The levels of stipends available, the terms and conditions that apply to matters such as maternity leave or illness, and the applicable visa terms can all have a significant effect on the quality and quantity of our PhDs.

UCD will monitor, evaluate, and improve the performance of this objective through external benchmarking and matching international best practice. This monitoring and evaluation will be further supported through peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, formal quality reviews, external site reviews (as part of funder oversight), and via our strategic planning processes.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 3

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
3.1	Number of PhD graduates (full-time)	SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 286 PhD graduates	No direct comparison data available ¹	295	305	315	325	1,240 PhD graduates over 4 years 14% on baseline
3.2	Proportion (%) of PhD students “very aware” of student supports	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2022/23: 7.3%	National average 8.6% for 2022/23	N/a	8.5%	N/a	10%	2.7 p.p. increase on baseline

¹ Please note that the data available to UCD for other Irish universities is based on Level 10 awards, not specifically just PhDs. Consequently, UCD cannot draw a direct comparison with other HEIs based on the available data.

Performance Objective 4

To grow the societal and economic impact of our research and innovation, particularly in areas of major global challenge and change, such as sustainability and digital transformation.

Pillar: Research and Innovation

Transversals: Climate & Sustainable Development; Enterprise; Society; Digital Transformation.

Rationale for Performance Objective 4

UCD strives to transform lives and positively influence the world through our research, innovation and education. Our impact aligns with grand challenges such as the National Research Priorities, the Horizon Europe missions and clusters, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This ensures UCD's contribution to impact in transversal areas including Climate and Sustainable Development, Enterprise, Society, and Digital Transformation. With our Una Europa partners, UCD will drive impactful research in Cultural Heritage, Sustainability, Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, Europe and the World, One Health, and Future Materials.

This objective aligns with *Impact 2030* Pillar 3, 'Innovation Driving Enterprise Success', specifically section 3.2 where the government seeks to accelerate research commercialisation via the 'implementation of a new Knowledge Transfer Ireland programme to drive licensing and knowledge diffusion from our universities and new technological universities'. This objective is also well aligned with *Impact 2030* Pillar 1, 'Maximising the impact of research and innovation on the economy, society and the environment'. Monitoring, evaluating, and showcasing the impact of research and innovation will directly demonstrate UCD's contribution to this broad national strategic priority, but also incentivise and support the wider and deeper participation of our researchers in societal impact activities.

The 2020 report of the European Commission Expert Group, *Knowledge Transfer Metrics: Towards a European-Wide Set of Harmonised Indicators*, highlights licences, options, and assignments as key indicators of knowledge transfer activity. Increasing the quantity of licences, options, and assignments (LOAs) is critical to translating our research activity into innovation and impact through partnerships with enterprise. This also aligns with UCD's strategic objective to advance research and innovation. Furthermore, increasing our licences, options, and assignments builds our direct partnerships with companies, from early start-ups to large corporations, which aligns with our strategic objective to "continue to build our engagement locally, nationally, and internationally". However, LOAs alone are insufficient to span the breadth of our impacts.

As highlighted in the December 2022 report, *Harnessing the Metric Tide: indicators, infrastructures and priorities for responsible research assessment in the UK*, 'it is unlikely that an all-metric approach will deliver what the research community, government and stakeholders need from the exercise. This pertains with particular force to the assessment of research impacts, where (despite some

developments with potential) available indicators or infrastructure cannot approximate the richness of the current case study format'. Growing the number of impact case studies in UCD will provide evidence of the successful translation of research activity into wider impact. This aligns with UCD's strategic objective to increase the quality, quantity, and impact of our research, scholarship and innovation and aligns with our strategic objective to 'continue to build our engagement locally, nationally, and internationally'.

The number of LOAs is a standard measure for an innovation-oriented university, and for Ireland as an "Innovation Island". Impact case studies are well recognised as a key measure internationally and by the HEA. UCD has achieved particular success in developing such case studies and has emphasised them as an indicator of impact over a number of years. UCD's LOA baseline is 27, and increasing this in line with the growth trend of UCD's academic FTEs sets a target of cumulative growth of one additional LOA per annum for the duration of the Performance Agreement, as set out in the indicator table below. Appendix B1 of the 2023 KTI Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey shows that the eight universities produced 128 LOAs in 2022/23, which equates to an average of 16 per institution, therefore UCD's targets are ahead of sectoral averages. UCD Research has capacity to support an additional 10 impact case studies per annum, producing 40 over the period, which will bring UCD's cumulative total to 120 from the existing baseline of 80. No suitable external comparator was identified for this metric.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 4

Every College in UCD has a Vice Principal (VP) for Research, Innovation and Impact, and these are all members of the University Management Team Research, Innovation and Impact Group (UMT RIIG). This group has a responsibility to oversee the research and innovation performance of the University. LOA activity is reported to this group by the Director of Enterprise and Commercialisation. The Senior Manager for Research Impact and Analytics also reports on impact activity to the UMT RIIG.

UCD's technology transfer team provides comprehensive supports to the academic community to identify, protect and commercialise intellectual property arising from our research programmes. This team comprises five case managers led by a Senior Manager for Knowledge Transfer. UCD Research has established an Impact and Analytics team to support and manage impact activity at UCD in coordination with the College VPs for Research, Innovation and Impact.

UCD Research Impact and Analytics has developed comprehensive supports for impact activity generally, and the development of case studies specifically. This support culminates in an annual impact case study award ceremony where participants from across the University put forward our most compelling impacts for evaluation by expert panels. UCD has invested in the Impact and Analytics team to support impact, lead the creation of tools and training, and manage the sponsorship and operation of the impact case study competition itself. These supports will expand to enable the further growth and evaluation of our impact over time.

UCD, with support from Enterprise Ireland and KTI, has created extensive supports and facilities for innovation. These include investments in broad-based supports for the whole University, such as the case managers, but also targeted supports such as the recent AgTech accelerator on UCD Lyons Farm.

UCD has already set up online dashboards that show LOA metrics, and the performance over the last five years, at a School, College, and University level. This data is monitored as part of our ongoing strategic management and as part of annual planning for all Colleges and Schools, and it is reviewed externally as part of our periodic quality reviews. UCD's impact case studies are published [online](#) and are publicly visible. The case study competition acts as a catalyst to drive the creation of new case studies, which are then captured on this online portal.

The evolution of research and innovation funding available to the University, and the incentives for companies to work with universities to license intellectual property, are key determinants of UCD's ability to achieve this objective. The priority placed on impact in research and innovation funding has a strong effect on the extent of its inclusion as part of funded research programmes. The centrality of impact in proposal evaluation and site reviews will affect the focus on impact from the academic community and, subsequently, the level of interest in case studies. Consequently, there is a risk that changes to the research and innovation funding environment, for example through the establishment of the new funding agency, Research Ireland, could materially alter the resources available to support industry collaboration and wider impact activity. This could reduce the level of activity and thereby affect UCD's ability to reach its targets.

UCD will monitor, evaluate, and improve the performance of this objective through external benchmarking via Knowledge Transfer Ireland and by matching international best practice as EU-wide approaches to research assessment including impact are developed. This monitoring and evaluation will be further supported through peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, formal quality reviews, external site reviews (as part of funder oversight), and via our strategic planning processes.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 4

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
4.1	Number of LOAs	NovaUCD and KTI Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey	Quantitative	2022/23: 27	The 8 IUA universities (128 LOAs, which equates to an average of 16 LOAs per university, in 2022/23)	28	29	30	31	118 LOAs over 4 years 15% increase on baseline
4.2	Cumulative number of impact case studies	UCD Research	Quantitative	80 case studies (cumulative) as of 2023	No appropriate benchmark data is available	90	100	110	120	40 additional case studies over 4 years, for a new total of 120 50% increase on baseline in 2027/28

Performance Objective 5

To support growing numbers of undergraduate students from underrepresented groups through admission and successful progression through their degree programmes, and towards completion and entry into graduate education and employment.

Pillar: Access and Participation

Transversals: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Student Success; Enterprise; Society; International; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging.

Rationale for Performance Objective 5

UCD is committed to broadening entry to undergraduate higher education and to supporting all students to succeed with their studies, benefit from a wide range of learning experiences including internships and international exchange, and progress into graduate education and/or employment. A recent survey of Access students has highlighted the need to establish more support and options, including financial supports, to ensure that socioeconomic status and/or disability are not barriers to this type of learning. This has informed our plans to establish more supports and has also informed the metrics chosen to monitor the impact of these supports.

UCD will continue to be a leader in developing and implementing strategic actions and operational activities which advance the National Access Plan 2022–2028. Through this objective, UCD will reinforce its commitment to widening access and monitoring trends on HEAR, DARE and Mature entry routes, while specifically addressing a noted decline in HEAR applicants. This performance objective furthers the Plan’s stated objectives to ‘support students from priority groups to access higher education’.

UCD is fully committed to supporting a diverse community of learners to access, progress, and thrive at UCD, and we will continue our ambition to develop modes of study that provide the flexibility that supports this commitment. This is an important strategic priority for our institution. Our commitment includes learners from a wide range of underrepresented backgrounds, including socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, but not exclusively. In particular, UCD’s commitment includes all mature learners, and we will measure our success accordingly.

UCD has prioritised the development of a *University for All* strategy to mainstream widening participation practices in UCD. The strategy encompasses wide-ranging actions including the development and dissemination of a Toolkit for Inclusive Practice in Higher Education and the development of local *University for All* initiatives at college and programme level. UCD’s Widening Participation Committee reports to UMT Education Group and provides the formal mechanism to oversee, monitor and promote the University’s *University for All* initiatives.

UCD has systematically tracked and monitored undergraduate student admission, progression and completion using a range of indicators, including entry route, for over 20 years, giving a very rich and robust dataset to help inform objectives. For example, data shows that UCD has:

- Prioritised more diverse entry into undergraduate programmes with a range of standard entry routes: CAO points, HEAR, DARE, Mature entry, Open Learning, University Access programmes, QQI FET, transfer from a Level 8 programme. This is supported by UCD's internal access quota, set at 25% of all places, which facilitates transferable targets across access groups to allow for maximum diversity of admissions, as part of undergraduate enrolment planning. The graph below shows the proportion of underrepresented students entering UCD since 2012/13, with strong growth in all cohorts between 2018/19 and 2020/21. The 'other' category, which includes new routes such as Open Learning, is performing strongly. HEAR entrants have now declined to 4% of entrants; we will work to increase this to 5.2% by 2027/28.

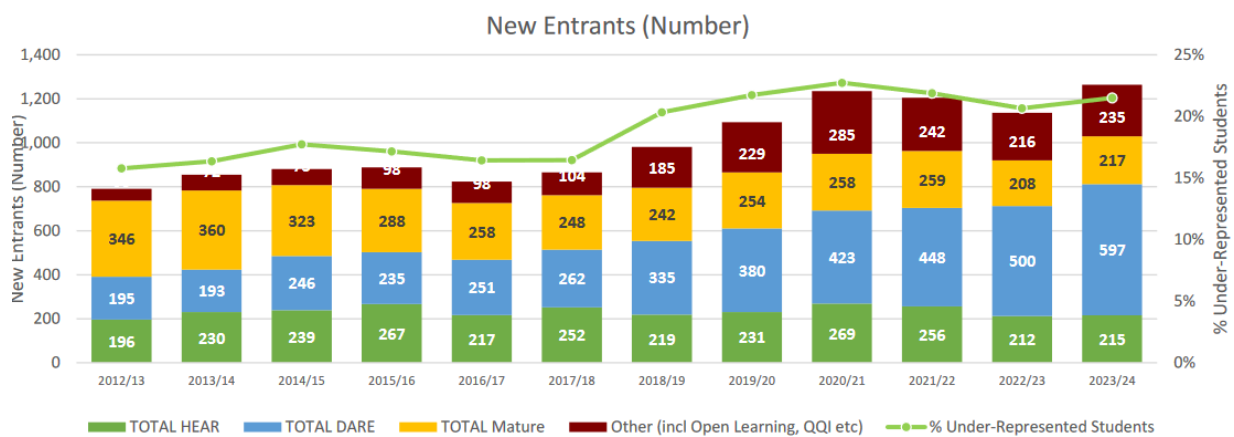


Figure 1: UCD new entrants — underrepresented students [Source: UCD Institutional Research]

- Supported underrepresented students to progress effectively with their studies and to complete their degrees.
 - 86.3% of Mature entry students completed their undergraduate degree on time in 2023, an increase from 85.2% in 2019. UCD aims to further improve the 'on time' completion rates to 88.5%, closer to the UCD average of 90.1%.
 - In 2023, 89.5% of HEAR students completed their degree on time, a clear indicator of the impact of the *University for All* strategy, and in line with the overall undergraduate completion rate of 90.1%.
- Supported underrepresented students to progress into graduate education, with scholarship support and graduate programmes, and into employment. 66% of students registered with a disability reported feeling that they have a career plan (in 2022 survey). UCD aims to increase this to 68% by 2027/28, closer to the all-UCD student response of 70%.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 5

In developing this objective, UCD’s activities will include the following:

- Building more and stronger outreach relationships with DEIS schools and FE colleges, with a view to engaging potential students from the most economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Scaling up existing activities focusing on “Pathways to the Professions” for underrepresented students. The University will develop better data on graduate outcomes for underrepresented students.
- Collecting and publishing data on the participation of underrepresented students in key aspects of experiential learning, including internships and exchange study.
- Further developing supports for broadening participation in internships and exchange study, examining and addressing barriers to participation, and ensuring greater variety of supports to assist a wider range of students (for example, financial supports and short and virtual mobility options).
- Further developing part-time study options (complementing government decisions to enhance financial support for part-time study), which enable effective learning for a wider cohort including those from socioeconomically disadvantaged and disability backgrounds.
- Deploying and developing key indicators of student participation and success (including proportion of underrepresented students retained, progressing, undertaking internships, and undertaking exchange, short mobility and virtual mobility), and graduate outcomes including progression to graduate study and progression into employment (and the subset of those undertaking graduate programme schemes with professional employers).
- Continuing capturing data on admission and progression of underrepresented students. For example, Widening Participation data is maintained and distributed through UCD Access and Lifelong Learning. Data on graduate outcomes is collected and published annually by UCD Careers Network.

Key challenges include building support from stakeholders, including employers, and ensuring sufficient resources to support the ambitions. A broad engagement campaign to promote understanding and support of the actions will be a key element. Key risks include lack of engagement and a lack of resources. These risks will be addressed through an engagement campaign and targeted focusing of resources.

All actions will be incorporated in UCD’s new strategy and action plans, each of which will be the subject of regular monitoring and reporting both in line management and to the key University Committees, notably the University Widening Participation Committee and UMT Education and Student Experience Groups. Reporting from these groups is to UMT and Governing Authority.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 5

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
5.1	Proportion (%) of new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds through HEAR scheme (Higher Education Access Route)	UCD Admissions and National access data	Quantitative	2023/24: 4% (215)	Match average, all HEIs (4.2% HEAR entrants in 2022/23)	4.3% (230)	4.6% (245)	4.9% (260)	5.2% (275)	1.2 p.p. increase on baseline (1,010 new entrants over 4 years)
5.2	Proportion (%) of new entrants with a disability through DARE scheme (Disability Access Route to Education)	UCD Admissions and National Access Data	Quantitative	2023/24: 11.3% (597)	Exceed average, all HEIs (6.1% new entrants through DARE in 2022/23)	11.5% (610)	11.8% (625)	12% (640)	12.3% (650)	1 p.p. increase on baseline (2,525 new entrants over 4 years)
5.3	Proportion (%) of new entrants through Mature Entry	UCD Admissions	Quantitative	2023/24: 4.1% (217)	Exceed average, all HEIs (2.8% new entrants through Mature Years Entry in 2022/23)	4.3% (225)	4.5% (240)	4.8% (253)	5% (263)	0.9 p.p. increase on baseline (981 new entrants over 4 years)
5.4	Progression rate (%) of new entrants through DARE scheme	UCD Retention Reports	Quantitative	2022/23: 85.4%	Close gap to overall UCD Year 1 progression rate (89.1% in 2022/23)	86%	86.5%	87%	87.5%	2.1 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
5.5	Completion rate (%) of HEAR entrants	UCD Retention Reports	Quantitative	2023: 89.5% of HEAR students completed their degree 'on time'	Match overall UCD on-time completion rate (2023: 90.1%, all UCD UG students)	90%	90.5%	91%	91%	1.5 p.p. increase on baseline
5.6	Completion rate (%) of DARE entrants	UCD Retention Reports	Quantitative	2023: 89.5% of DARE students completed their degree 'on time'	Match overall UCD on-time completion rate (2023: 90.1%, all UCD undergraduate students)	90%	90.5%	91%	91%	1.5 p.p. increase on baseline
5.7	Completion rate (%) of mature entrants	UCD Retention Reports	Quantitative	2023: 86.3% of Mature students completed their degree 'on time'	Reduce gap to overall UCD on-time completion rate (2023: 90.1%, all UCD UG students)	87%	87.5%	88%	88.5%	2.2 p.p. increase on baseline
5.8	Career readiness – low-income students' perceptions of how career ready they are	UCD Career Registration Dashboard	Quantitative	2022: 72% of responses from low-income students indicated they feel they have a career plan	Match overall rate for all UCD students (2022: 70% of students have career plan)	72.0%	72.5%	73%	73.5%	1.5 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
5.9	Career readiness – perceptions of students with a disability of how career ready they are	UCD Career Registration Dashboard	Quantitative	2022: 66% of responses from students with a disability indicated they feel they have a career plan	Close gap on overall rate of career readiness for all UCD students (2022: 70% of students have career plan)	66.5%	67%	67.5%	68%	2 p.p. increase on baseline
5.10	Career readiness – mature students’ perceptions of how career ready they are	UCD Career Registration Dashboard	Quantitative	2022: 77% of responses from mature students indicated they feel they have a career plan	Exceed overall rate of career readiness for all UCD students (2022: 70% of students have career plan)	77%	77.5%	78%	78.5%	1.5 p.p. increase on baseline

Performance Objective 6

To engender a sense of belonging through participation and meet the variety of needs of all UCD students.

Pillar: Engagement

Transversals: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Student Success; Society; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Climate & Sustainable Development.

Rationale for Performance Objective 6

This objective builds on a diverse set of priorities in UCD, including universal design, co-curricular learning, campus life, and student mental health.

‘Embedding a whole-of-institution approach to student success and universal design’ is a stated objective under the National Access Plan’s goal of “inclusivity”. In support of this, UCD is committed to engendering a sense of belonging by creating an inclusive education experience and recognising students’ individuality — by fostering a university experience that all UCD students participate in. This objective also supports the *Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development — ESD to 2030*, which seeks the promotion of inclusive principles and practices.

UCD has made significant progress in recent years in demonstrating its commitment to embedding the principles of universal design across all activities in the University and across campus facilities. A suite of training and development opportunities, including Introduction to Universal Design Training, Faculty Partnership Programme and the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching and Learning, are now widely available to all staff in the University. These provide a framework and tools that support reflection and redesign of existing services and formation and delivery of new services. In 2023, nearly 400 UCD employees had completed the Digital Badge in Teaching and Learning. Further development over 2023 has introduced a new Digital Badge for Universal Design Beyond the Classroom, focusing on universal design in support services, administration, communications, and outreach. The newly launched Student Partnership Programme directly involves students in the work of breaking down barriers to inclusion in UCD through universal design. It has delivered several universal design training sessions to the heads of UCD’s societies and to UCD Student Ambassadors. These interactive workshops give participants practical examples and advice on how to provide a more inclusive experience for students on campus.

UCD’s diverse and active campus community is key to supporting a student’s sense of belonging — however, StudentSurvey.ie data suggests that UCD students’ engagement with campus activities and events (such as speakers and performances) diminishes over the duration of their programme. Student Survey data for 2023 indicates that 60.2% of UCD first-year students responded 'quite a bit' or 'very much' to the question on engaging with campus activities, in comparison to 43.7% of final-year students (Irish University sector average, respectively, 58.1% and 48.4%). UCD is seeking improvements of 1.8 and 1.3 p.p., respectively, in first- and final-year responses to this question [indicators 6.1 and 6.2].

The objective also aligns with the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, which sets an objective for students to ‘experience an education that is excellent, relevant and responsive to their personal development and growth as fully engaged citizens within society.’ To this end, UCD has developed extensive forms of co-curricular learning which are not formally part of modules, nor are they assessed, but which may be part of a process under which students register for and may attain a UCD Advantage Award, which is then reflected in a Diploma Supplement. Co-curricular learning promotes and supports both learning and a sense of purpose and belonging with wide-ranging mission-led activities, and UCD is keen to continue this upward trajectory.

- The number of students completing the UCD Advantage Award more than doubled between 2021 and 2023, with 351 students completing this award in 2023. UCD is aiming to increase the number of students who complete this award by 48% by 2028/29 [indicator 6.3]. In addition, clubs and societies also play an important role in promoting a sense of belonging, and UCD is focused on achieving steady growth in membership numbers where membership numbers have shown inconsistent trends in the post-pandemic years. Unique club memberships in 2022/23 were 6,829 and UCD aims to support students to grow this by 7.6% to 7,350 [indicator 6.4], while unique society members in 2022/23 were 14,573 and UCD aims to support students to grow this by 11.5% to 16,250 over the duration of the Performance Agreement to 2027/28 [indicator 6.5].
- Furthermore, through this objective, UCD will strengthen its alignment to the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework and the [U21 University Mental Health Declaration](#) by taking a ‘whole-institution’ approach to supporting our students in participation in campus life. In addition, UCD has a Healthy Campus Strategy, overseen by a Healthy UCD Steering Committee, and is aligned to the Government-sponsored Healthy Ireland project and to the HSE effort to promote the WHO ‘Healthy Campus’ concept. UCD Strategy is concerned with the development of the whole person and providing opportunities to establish lifelong habits and attitudes for learning, welfare, community awareness, health and wellbeing. When our students were presented with a Cantril-scale wellbeing assessment through StudentSurvey.ie, 46% of final-year students were categorised as ‘struggling’, yet 83% felt they would be ‘thriving’ in five years’ time. UCD aims to improve this statistic with a reduction to 41% of final-year students categorised as struggling.

UCD will prioritise engendering a sense of belonging to meet the needs of all students throughout their study and beyond.

UCD students have contributed to how UCD has reflected on, prioritised, and developed these indicators through a number of important fora including the UCD Student Partnership Forum, student representation on the UMT Student Experience Group, and student experience surveys conducted by UCD Access and Lifelong Learning. UCD students have been part of the consultation for UCD’s next strategy, with a specific focus on prioritising the many steps which further support building a sense of belonging. Students consulted showed strong interest in this orientation in the next UCD strategy.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 6

UCD's activities to deliver on this objective will include:

- Further embedding its *University for All* strategy and universal design as a basis for supporting student learning and campus life more broadly.
- Further developing research and training in universal design, seeking to reach all faculty and professional staff, tutors, peer mentors and student ambassadors. This will include assessing impact and embeddedness of universal design principles through a wide range of standard procedures including quality review, module and programme review, student feedback, student survey data, etc.
- Further development of orientation activities for students at all levels, to ensure commencing students are familiar with expectations and supports, have good engagement with faculty and professional staff at an early stage, and have opportunities to engage with their peer groups.
- Monitoring student engagement trends where increased online activity might impact participation e.g. postgraduate taught provision.
- Increasing the number of students attaining the UCD Advantage Award reflected in a Diploma Supplement.
- Further development of peer mentoring to encourage new students to participate in campus life.
- Continued development of EDI initiatives and campaigns that emphasise belonging, and addressing inappropriate behaviours, for example those which breach dignity and respect policies.
- Further enhancement of interrelated support for students with respect to health and welfare, mental health, finance, and accommodation including:
 - Further embedding of bystander intervention training for both students and employees.
 - Continued delivery of the UCD Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Project, which includes a review of UCD's Student Mental Health and Wellbeing policy. New principles are being devised with reference to the themes of the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework, and the U21 University Mental Health Declaration.
 - Review and enhancement of opportunities for participation in student societies, clubs, and UCDSU and other representational activities such as the Student Partnership Forum.

Key challenges include building support from stakeholders and ensuring sufficient resources to support the ambitions. A broad engagement campaign to promote understanding and support of the actions will be a key element. Key risks include lack of engagement with the proposed initiative and lack of resources. These risks will be addressed through an engagement campaign and targeted focusing of resources.

All actions will be incorporated in UCD's new strategic plans and action plans, which will be the subject of regular monitoring and reporting both in line management and to the key University Committees, notably the University Widening Participation Committee and UMT Education and Student Experience Groups. Reporting from these groups is to UMT and Governing Authority.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 6

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
6.1	First-year students' engagement with campus activities and events (special speakers, cultural performances, sporting events, etc.)	Student Survey.ie Question on engaging with campus activities	Quantitative	2023: 60.2% responded 'quite a bit' or 'very much.'	Irish University sector (2023 survey results: 58.1%)	60.5%	61%	61.5%	62%	1.8 p.p. increase
6.2	Final-year students' engagement with campus activities and events (special speakers, cultural performances, sporting events, etc.)	Student Survey.ie Question on engaging with campus activities	Quantitative	2023: 43.7% responded 'quite a bit' or 'very much.'	Irish University sector (2023 survey results: 48.4%)	43.5%	44%	44.4%	45%	1.3 p.p. increase
6.3	Number of students achieving UCD Advantage Award	UCD Careers Network	Quantitative	2022/23: 531	Not available	600	650	700	750	2,700 over 4 years 41% increase on baseline
6.4	Student participation in student clubs	UCD Student Society Records	Quantitative	2022/23: 6,829 unique club memberships	Not available	6,829	6,900	6,950	7,350	28,029 memberships over 4 years 7.6% increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
6.5	Student participation in student societies	UCD Student Society Records	Quantitative	2022/23: 14,573 unique students with membership of one or more	Not available	14,700	15,215	15,750	16,250	61,915 students over 4 years 11.5% increase on baseline
6.6	Student self-assessment of their wellbeing	Student Survey.ie (institution-specific question)	Quantitative	2023: 46% of final-year students were categorised as 'struggling'	Not available	45.5%	45%	44%	43%	3 p.p. decrease on baseline

Performance Objective 7

To enhance opportunities for students to engage with intercultural learning opportunities, including opportunities arising via international mobility, and to increase the numbers of international students from diverse backgrounds coming to study at UCD and the numbers of UCD students travelling to study abroad.

Pillar: Engagement

Transversals: International.

Rationale for Performance Objective 7

Internationalisation of the student cohort is a key strategic objective of the University, with increased enrolment of non-EU students by 2030 as a key target. In addition, the University encourages our Dublin-based students to travel and to take the opportunity to study abroad. This is to ensure that our students have access to a truly global educational experience while at UCD. UCD is committed to supporting students with intercultural learning opportunities, both at UCD and through exchanges, that support acquisition of wider knowledge and transversal skills that prepare them for lifelong learning.

This objective aligns with the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, which sets out that HEIs should consider global engagement and internationalisation and should ensure that Irish research has global impact.

UCD is determined to fully exploit the capabilities of its international networks in developing opportunities for UCD students to study abroad and for international students to study at UCD. In particular, UCD will exploit the extensive reach of the Una Europa network. Una Europa ensures that graduates are future-ready in an interconnected and rapidly changing world. Una Europa offers the opportunity to build broad mobility pathways for students and staff, with a focus on accessible, inclusive and sustainable physical, blended and virtual mobility.

UCD has already made intercultural learning a significant aspect of many of its educational programmes and faculty teaching fellowships. UCD will put in place wider community supports such as networks for students and staff that highlight and support cultural diversity.

The main challenges to this objective relate to the increased competition from other higher education institutions seeking to grow international student numbers, and the high cost of living in the Dublin market. On the other hand, significant opportunities exist in the opening up of new regions, for example in Africa, from which international students may come to UCD. Another challenge relates to encouraging Irish students to take up the opportunities to study abroad.

Analysis of baseline and benchmarking data has informed the following targets for improvement by the end of this Performance Agreement:

- **Increase the number of non-EU enrolments.** In 2022/23, the number of non-EU enrolments (FTE) in UCD was 6,469, which was 22.6% of total enrolments. This percentage is higher than the university sector average, which was 12% for the same year. We aim to increase the annual number of non-EU enrolments in UCD to 7,420 FTEs in 2027/28, an increase of 12% [indicator 7.1].
- **Increase the number of outgoing students undertaking exchanges, short mobility, virtual mobility, and Internationalisation at Home.** In 2022/2023, 1,089 outgoing UCD students undertook one or more of the following options as part of their programme of study: exchanges; short mobility; virtual mobility; Internationalisation at Home. This number represents 3% of the total student cohort. We aim to increase this number to 1,320 students in 2027/28, a substantial increase of 21% [indicator 7.2].
- **Increase the number of incoming students undertaking exchanges, short mobility, virtual mobility and Internationalisation at Home.** In 2022/2023, 1,094 incoming UCD students undertook one or more of the following options as part of their programme of study: exchanges; short mobility; virtual mobility; Internationalisation at Home. We aim to increase this number to 1,300 students in 2027/28, a substantial increase of 19% [indicator 7.3].

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 7

UCD has established an international office, UCD Global, with a clear strategic vision for engagement with international students and for student exchange. This is well resourced. In addition, UCD has in place five global centres and regional leads in key markets to enable interaction with potential students and to build recognition of UCD as an education provider. UCD's global centres are also actively engaged in building relationships with partner universities, where Irish students can travel to participate in programmes related to their own disciplines. UCD will continue to collect data on intercultural learning achieved through inward and outward mobility and learning abroad experiences.

UCD will develop additional intercultural learning opportunities as a core aspect of the Education and Student Success Strategy overseen by UMT Education Group. At present, a diversity of modalities at the School, College, and University level enable students to develop intercultural competencies. Examples include access to language modules, virtual exchange programmes like NICE (Network for Intercultural Competence to facilitate Entrepreneurship), the Smurfit Graduate Business School's Global Leadership Programme, and Global Classroom modules hosted in the School of Politics & International Relations and elsewhere. Student participation in these programmes is recorded by the University and supported by clear programme descriptions and wide-ranging signposting and supports. A project is currently underway to catalogue the full extent of offerings, both curricular and co-curricular, as well as levels of student participation; outputs from this project are anticipated in January 2025.

We will build on current strengths and UCD expertise in intercultural learning including:

- Dissemination of the research and resources developed by our Fellows in Teaching and Academic Development on the theme of ‘teaching and learning across cultures’.
- Support for intercultural learning for faculty and professional staff.
- Inclusivity in formal and informal support for educational development of those who teach, with a focus on promoting intercultural learning in teaching practices and curriculum design. Formal professional development is offered to faculty through our ‘Teaching Across Cultures’ module.
- Development of a UCD Inclusive Assessment Framework.

UCD will build on current strengths in student–faculty interaction to further develop a range of mechanisms to strengthen this aspect of students’ experience, including:

- More opportunities for student exchanges.
- More opportunities for other forms of student mobility, including short and virtual mobility.
- Greater opportunities for sustaining and developing language acquisition for students and staff, both as an aspect of formal programmes and as co-curricular activities.
- Further development of UCD’s Internationalisation at Home project, which is undertaking a comprehensive assessment of current curricular and co-curricular activities related to intercultural competencies. A report is anticipated by January 2025, which will include recommendations for further enhancing the opportunities available to students.
- Deployment and development of key indicators including numbers on exchange (both incoming and outgoing) and wider data on students coming to UCD from overseas for both full degree and study abroad programmes.

The nationality of students registered in UCD is recorded by UCD Registry and will be reported each year. In addition, the number of students engaged in international mobility (learning abroad, Erasmus etc.) is also recorded by UCD Registry each year.

UCD will strive to ensure that students clearly understand the significant advantages and learning opportunities that arise from studying in different cultures and different institutions.

Key risks include lack of support and lack of resources. Global education inherently entails additional risks related to the potential for geopolitical shifts, financial vulnerability, operational challenges, and reputation. UCD maintains risk registers reflecting these factors in detail, which it monitors using Key Risk Indicators on a regular basis. Registers are facilitated by UCD’s Chief Risk Officer and reviewed by a Risk Management Advisory Committee. Mitigation measures are used to address identified risks, most notably the diversification of engagement across geographies and academic programmes, the incorporation of local insight from our Global Centres, and the targeted use of resources. Additionally, UCD Global is well established and well positioned with a dedicated Learning Abroad team to support international students and those undertaking mobility. The team has built up high levels of expertise to respond to changes and to modify approaches to ensure success.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 7

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
7.1	Number of non-EU enrolments (FTE)	UCD Registry	Quantitative	2022/23: 6,469 (22.6% of total student FTE)	All HEIs (10% in 2022/23)	6,570	6,808	7,018	7,240	27,636 non-EU enrolments over 4 years 12% increase on baseline
7.2	Number of outgoing students undertaking any of the following options as part of their programme of study: exchanges, short mobility, virtual mobility, Internationalisation at Home	UCD data already maintained for exchanges	Quantitative	2022/2023: 1,089	Data is not available, but a recent IUA report that may have captured the data required has been requested.	1,095	1,140	1,230	1,320	4,785 students over 4 years 21% increase on baseline
7.3	Number of incoming students undertaking any of the following options as part of their programme of study: exchanges, short mobility, virtual mobility, Internationalisation at Home	UCD data already maintained for exchanges	Quantitative	2022/2023: 1,094	Data is not available, but a recent IUA report that may have captured the data required has been requested.	1,100	1,145	1,220	1,300	4,765 students over 4 years 19% increase on baseline

Section 3: Matrix and Signatures

Framework Matrix

		Pillars			
		Teaching & Learning	Research & Innovation	Access & Participation	Engagement
Transversal areas of impact	Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning	PO 1		PO 5, PO 6	
	Climate & Sustainable Development		PO 4	PO 6	
	Student Success	PO 1, PO 2	PO 3	PO 5, PO 6	
	Enterprise	PO 1	PO 4	PO 5	
	Society	PO 2	PO 4	PO 5, PO 6	
	Region				
	International			PO 5	PO 7
	Digital Transformation		PO 4		
	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging	PO 2		PO 5, PO 6	
	Institutional Leadership & Culture	PO 2			
	Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion				

Signatures

On behalf of University College Dublin



Professor Orla Feely
President

Friday, 10 January 2025



Michael Beary
Chair of the Governing Authority

Friday, 10 January 2025

On behalf of the Higher Education Authority



Dr Alan Wall
Chief Executive Officer

Friday, 10 January 2025



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