

Self-Evaluation Report 2025 Template

Template Guidance Note

- All sections of this template should be completed in full.
- The format of the template should not be altered.
- The template has been pre-populated with the agreed Performance Objectives, indicators and targets. Pre-populated elements of the template reflect the Performance Agreement and these entries should not be amended. Queries relating to pre-populated information should be submitted to systemperformance@hea.ie.
- Where word count limits apply, these limits should not be exceeded.
- Appendices are not permitted.
- Reporting should be clear, concise, and evidence based.
- Narrative or bullet point formats may be used, and the use of plain English is encouraged.
- Reporting should be cognisant of the information provided in the [System Performance Framework 2023–2028](#) and [System Performance Framework Glossary](#).
- Where institutional strategies, policies, or other institutional documents are referenced, these should be hyperlinked where possible.
- Data presented in the report should be the most recent data available to the institution (timeframe should be specified).
- It is the responsibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) to ensure that the information provided in the report is accurate.
- Redaction may be agreed with the HEA prior to publication, as appropriate.
- The report must be signed by the head of the institution prior to submission.
- The report should be submitted to systemperformance@hea.ie by the stated deadline.

Data Protection

The HEA as data controller will process personal data received via this form in compliance with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We will only process the data received via this form for the purposes of reviewing, evaluating, and reporting on the System Performance Framework 2023–2028 and data will be retained in line with our Records Management Policy only as long as is necessary to meet this purpose. For more information, please see the HEA's [Data Privacy Notice](#).

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University College Dublin Self-Evaluation Report 2025

Introduction

This Self-Evaluation Report will form the basis of the HEA’s assessment of the strategic performance of the institution with respect to the objectives and targets set in the Performance Agreement established between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and University College Dublin (UCD) in accordance with the System Performance Framework 2023–2028.

In line with the HEA’s mandate to measure and assess institutions’ strategic performance with a view to strengthening the performance of the higher education system and of designated institutions, and to ensure institutions’ accountability, this Self-Evaluation Report will be published on the HEA website. The HEA will engage with institutions regarding any required redactions prior to publication.

It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the information presented in the submitted report (including qualitative and quantitative data) is accurate.

Part A: Performance Indicators

Text should be added to the white boxes in each of the tables below. Text in the shaded boxes reflects entries in the Performance Agreement and should not be amended.

The most up-to-date data available should be reported in the ‘**Benchmark data**’ and ‘**2024/25 result**’ columns.

The year or range of years to which the reported data relates should be added after the data source in the ‘**Data source and timeframe**’ column.

Pillar: Teaching & Learning

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.

Transversal areas of impact: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Student Success; Enterprise.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
1.1	Proportion (%) of full-time undergraduate degree students undertaking work-integrated learning	UCD Careers Connect/ Banner AY 2024-25	2023/24: 24.1% (4,464) of total FT UG degree students (18,560)	Reduce gap to average, all universities (56.6% in 2023)	56.6% in 2023	25% (4,640)	28.3% (5,401)	26% (4,825)	27% (5,011)	28% (5,190)	3.9 p.p. increase (19,666 students over 4 years)

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
1.2	Graduate Outcomes Survey measure of course relevance for all undergraduate students	Graduate Outcomes Survey 24/25 result (for students who graduated in 2023)	2022¹ survey: 60% UG respondents indicated course was ‘Relevant/very relevant’ to their job.	Achieve average, all universities (62% in HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey 2022)	62.3% in 2023 Survey	60.5%	57.20%	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 24/25 result (for students who graduated in 2023)	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)	67% in 2023 Survey	63.5%	60.30%	64%	64.5%	65%	2 p.p. increase
1.4	Career readiness – Stage 2 undergraduate students’ perceptions on how career-ready	UCD Career Registration dashboard 2024	2022 career readiness survey: 60% of Stage 2 UG student responses indicated they felt they had a plan	Not available	N/A	62%	62.50%	64%	66%	68%	8 p.p. increase

¹ For indicator 1.2, UCD stated the baseline year as 2023, but it should have been 2022.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
	they are		(ranging from 'some' to 'sorted') in relation to their career.								

Technical note on indicator data for PO 1:

For the purposes of the data source/baseline and 2024-25 results for indicator 1.1, UCD has measured 'Work Integrated Learning' by students taking a module that is flagged as 'clinical, placement, fieldwork, internship or other'. Our benchmark is taken from the HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey. Consequently, there may be differences in how institutions classify work integrated learning.

Performance Objective 2

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

Transversal areas of impact: Student Success; Society; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Institutional Leadership & Culture.

Technical note on data for indicators 2.1-2.9:

StudentSurvey.ie paused its taught student survey in 2024 and 2025 to undertake a Strategic Review. Reporting on indicators that draw on StudentSurvey.ie results will recommence in 2026. Where the relevant survey questions have changed, indicators will be updated accordingly.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	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?)	2023: 50.8% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey results)	Not available	51.5%	N/A	52%	52.5%	53%	2.2 p.p. increase on baseline
2.2	Proportion (%) of final-year undergraduate students reporting experience of	Student Survey.ie (Question: During the current academic year how often have you worked with other students on	2023: 61% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Exceed Irish University sector average: (2023 survey results: 58.4%)	Not available	61.5%	N/A	62%	62.5%	63%	2.0 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
	collaborative learning	projects or assignments?)									
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?)	2023: 64.6% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Exceed Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 59.4%)	Not available	64.5%	N/A	65%	65.5%	66%	1.4 p.p. increase on baseline
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?)	2023: 10.4% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 10.4%)	Not available	10.5%	N/A	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	2023: 17.7% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey	Not available	17.5%	N/A	18%	18.5%	19%	1.3 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
		performance with academic staff?)		results: 17.3%)							
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?)	2023: 21.1% responded 'often' or 'very often.'	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 21.2%)	Not available	21.5%	N/A	22%	22.5%	23%	1.9 p.p. increase on baseline
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?)	2023: 67.2% responded 'very much' or 'quite a bit.'	Exceed Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 63.8%)	Not available	67.5%	N/A	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	2023: 48.3% responded 'very much' or	Match Irish University sector average (2023 survey	Not available	48.5%	N/A	49%	49.5%	50%	1.7 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
		students succeed academically?)	'quite a bit.'	results: 50.6%)							
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?)	2023: 59.7% responded 'very much' or 'quite a bit.'	Exceed Irish University sector average (2023 survey results: 59.5%)	Not available	59.5%	N/A	60%	60.5%	61%	1.3 p.p. increase on baseline
2.10	Student-faculty ratio	UCD KPIs (2024-25)	2022/23: 20.4:1	HEA institutional profiles: 2019/20 shows 21:1 across institutions	21:1 in 2019/20	20	20.2	19.6	19.2	18.8	Decrease of 1.6 in number of students per member of faculty

Pillar: Research & Innovation

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.

Transversal areas of impact: Student Success.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
3.1	Number of PhD graduates (full-time)	SRS (2023/24)	2022/23: 286 PhD graduates	No direct comparison data available ²	N/A	295	298	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	2022/23: 7.3%	National average 8.6% for 2022/23	N/A	N/A	N/A	8.5%	N/a	10%	2.7 p.p. increase on baseline

Technical note on indicator data for PO 3:

StudentSurvey.ie paused its taught student survey in 2024 and 2025 to undertake a Strategic Review. Reporting on indicators that draw on StudentSurvey.ie results will recommence in 2026. Where the relevant survey questions have changed, indicators will be updated accordingly.

² 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.

Transversal areas of impact: Climate & Sustainable Development; Enterprise; Society; Digital Transformation.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
4.1	Number of LOAs	NovaUCD and KTI Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey 2024	2022/23: 27	The 8 IUA universities (128 LOAs, which equates to an average of 16 LOAs per university, in 2022/23)	130 LOAs, which equates to an average of 16 LOAs per university cited in KTI Report (2024)	28	27	29	30	31	118 LOAs over 4 years 15% increase on baseline
4.2	Cumulative number of impact case studies	UCD Research	80 case studies (cumulative) as of 2023	No appropriate benchmark data is available	N/A	90	91	100	110	120	40 additional case studies over 4 years, for a new total of 120 50% increase on baseline in 2027/28

Pillar: Access & Participation

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.

Transversal areas of impact: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Student Success; Enterprise; Society; International; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	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, 2024/25	2023/24: 4% (215)	Match average, all HEIs (4.2% HEAR entrants in 2022/23)	2023/24: All HEIs, 3.8% UCD, 4%	4.3% (230)	3.8% (197)	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, 2024/25	2023/24: 11.3% (597)	Exceed average, all HEIs (6.1% DARE entrants in 2022/23)	7.4%	11.5% (610)	13.2% (697)	11.8% (625)	12% (640)	12.3% (650)	1 p.p. increase on baseline (2,525 new entrants over 4 years)

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
5.3	Proportion (%) of new entrants through Mature Entry	UCD Admissions, 2024/25	2023/24: 4.1% (217)	Exceed average, all HEIs (2.8% new entrants through Mature Years Entry in 2022/23)	2.7%	4.3% (225)	4.2% (218)	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, 202022/23	2022/23: 85.4%	Close gap to overall UCD Year 1 progression rate (89.1% in 2022/23)	89.1%	86%	88.3%	86.5%	87%	87.5%	2.1 p.p. increase on baseline
5.5	Completion rate (%) of HEAR entrants	UCD Retention Reports, 2024	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)	88.4%	90%	86%	90.5%	91%	91%	1.5 p.p. increase on baseline
5.6	Completion rate (%) of DARE	UCD Retention	2023: 89.5% of	Match overall UCD	88.4%	90%	82.10%	90.5%	91%	91%	1.5 p.p. increase on

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
	entrants	Reports, 2024	DARE students completed their degree 'on time'	on-time completion rate (2023: 90.1%, all UCD UG students)							baseline
5.7	Completion rate (%) of mature entrants	UCD Retention Reports 2024	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)	88.4%	87%	88.30%	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 2023	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)	70.4%	72.0%	67.60%	72.5%	73%	73.5%	1.5 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
5.9	Career readiness – perceptions of students with a disability of how career ready they are	UCD Career Registration Dashboard 2023	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)	70.4%	66.5%	60.70%	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 2023	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)	70.4%	77%	78.20%	77.5%	78%	78.5%	1.5 p.p. increase on baseline

Pillar: Engagement

Performance Objective 6

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

Transversal areas of impact: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Student Success; Society; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Climate & Sustainable Development.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	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	2023: 60.2% responded 'quite a bit' or 'very much.'	Irish University sector (2023 survey results: 58.1%)	Not Available	60.5%	N/A	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	2023: 43.7% responded 'quite a bit' or 'very much.'	Irish University sector (2023 survey results: 48.4%)	Not Available	43.5%	N/A	44%	44.4%	45%	1.3 p.p. increase
6.3	Number of students achieving UCD	UCD Careers Network, AY	2022/23: 531	Not available	N/A	600	797	650	700	750	2,700 over 4 years

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
	Advantage Award	2023/24									41% increase on baseline
6.4	Student participation in student clubs	UCD Student Society Records, AY 2023/24	2022/23: 6,829 unique club memberships	Not available	N/A	6,829	6,889	6,900	6,950	7,350	28,029 memberships over 4 years 7.6% increase on baseline
6.5	Student participation in student societies	UCD Student Society Records (Societies Council), AY 2023/24	2022/23: 14,573 unique students with membership of one or more societies	Not available	N/A	14,700	15,382	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)	2023: 46% of final-year students were categorised as 'struggling'	Not available	N/A	45.5%	N/A	45%	44%	43%	3 p.p. decrease on baseline

Technical note on indicator data for PO 6:

StudentSurvey.ie paused its taught student survey in 2024 and 2025 to undertake a Strategic Review. Reporting on indicators that draw on StudentSurvey.ie results will recommence in 2026. Where the relevant survey questions have changed, indicators will be updated accordingly.

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.

Transversal areas of impact: International.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
7.1	Number of non-EU enrolments (FTE)	UCD Registry, 2024/25	2022/23: 6,469 (22.6% of total student FTE)	All HEIs (10% in 2022/23)	11.8%	6,570	7,611	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	2022/2023: 1,089	Data is not available, but a recent IUA report that may have captured the data required has been requested.	Not available	1,095	1,377	1,140	1,230	1,320	4,785 students over 4 years 21% increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
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	2022/2023: 1,094	Data is not available, but a recent IUA report that may have captured the data required has been requested.	Not available	1,100	1,186	1,145	1,220	1,300	4,765 students over 4 years 19% increase on baseline

Part B: Performance Evaluation and Strategic Reflection

Text should be added to the white boxes in each of the tables below. Word count should be recorded as indicated. Guidance on the information required in each table is provided in the shaded boxes. Pre-populated elements of Part B reflect the Performance Agreement and these entries should not be amended.

Section 1: Context

Provide an update on the context for the implementation of the institution's Performance Agreement in academic year 2024/25. This should include information on the following, as relevant:

- Institutional strategy, including stage of development and/or implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- Changes to the organisation's structure and/or senior leadership.
- Changes to the profile of the institution, i.e. significant changes to the number of staff and/or students or to programme delivery.
- Improvement or development of data collection and evaluation systems and processes, e.g. action taken to address data challenges or gaps, or any new challenges or data gaps that have been identified since the development of the Performance Agreement or submission of the previous SER.
- Any modifications (requested or approved) to the Performance Agreement.

Word limit: 500

UCD published its institutional strategy to 2030 '[Breaking Boundaries](#)' in November 2024.

UCD's mission is to create knowledge, to empower learning, and to engage with partners to drive impact from education and research. We are Ireland's global university, the largest English-speaking university in the EU, and an active partner in Una Europa and other major university networks. We are a leader in research and innovation across our range of disciplines.

Since the publication of our strategy, UCD has made significant progress in its implementation. We have set up structures to support an integrated programme of work across the major areas of our strategy. Early progress is already visible, including through the following:

- Under the strategy, UCD aims for excellence in learning, a student experience which emphasises purposiveness and sense of belonging, and strong research performance. A reduction in our student-faculty ratio (SFR) supports all of these objectives. As a first action under the new strategy, we commenced the recruitment of fifty early-career faculty through

our Ad Astra Fellows programme. These appointments span all Colleges of UCD and are focused in areas of national impact.

- We have planned a five-year strategic investment fund to back transformational projects that will deliver on our strategy.
- Our ambitious strategic capital development programme continues to ensure that UCD's physical resources meet the highest international standards. Major developments in progress include the final phase of the UCD O'Brien Centre for Science, the new UCD O'Connor Centre for Learning, and significant improvements in sports and student leisure facilities.

Student and staff profile

In 2024/25, UCD's student numbers continued to grow, reaching a total of 41,089 across all locations. This figure includes 35,846 students in Ireland, an increase of 1,521 students.

Undergraduate degree provision accounts for the majority of the student body and continues to grow, adding 463 degree students nationally (over 900 including occasional and certificate/diploma students). The number of students on graduate taught programmes is increasingly significant, with an additional 479 students (657 including occasional students) this year.

Research performance is very strong. To take one example, UCD is the national leader by some margin in Horizon Europe funding, and within that programme is currently ranked 12th among all EU universities for success in the highly prestigious European Research Council grants.

In summary, UCD is a dynamic, engaged, strategic and high-performing university and a transforming force in Ireland, in the wider world and in the lives of our students.

STUDENT PROFILE		
STUDENT HEADCOUNT : by Programme Level		
	2023/24	2024/25
Undergraduate Degree	18,639	19,102
Undergraduate Cert/Dip	1,583	1,644
Graduate Taught	8,648	9,127
Doctorate	2,058	2,008
Masters Research	133	120
Occasional UG	2,635	3,038
Occasional GT	629	807
TOTAL	34,325	35,846
STUDENT HEADCOUNT : Overseas		
	2023/24	2024/25
Undergraduate	4,957	5,055
Graduate Taught	240	188
TOTAL	5,197	5,243

Source: HEA SRS

UCD Staff Profile			
Staff FTE			
Category	Sub-category	March 2024	March 2025
Academic	Full Professor	191	193
	Professor	129	131
	Associate Professor	307	323
	Lecturer/Assistant Professor Above I	706	710
	Lecturer/Assistant Professor Below I	27	29
	Other Academic & Teaching	149	158
Academic Total		1,510	1,544
Research	Research Support	433	452
	Researcher	552	597
Research Total		984	1,049
Support	Academic Administrative / Professio	521	542
	Administrative / Professional	735	779
	Technical	257	277
	Other Support	314	330
Support Total		1,827	1,927
UCD TOTAL		4,321	4,520
Source: HEA Quarterly Return March each year			

The UCD Performance Agreement 2024–2028

- Monitoring and assessment of the Performance Agreement is conducted under the immediate direction of the President.
- Monitoring and reporting to the UCD Governing Authority will be conducted regularly.
- 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.

UCD completed its Performance Agreement with the HEA in September 2024. Since then, we launched 'Breaking Boundaries', our Strategy to 2030. Given this, and as flagged when submitting the Agreement, we would now welcome a discussion with the HEA on the Agreement so that it more directly supports our strategy, reflects performance under the strategy rather than prior performance, and is aligned with key performance indicators agreed in September 2025 with UCD's Governing Authority.

Conclusion

UCD is pleased to discuss our institutional priorities with HEA on a formal and regular basis and in the light of national objectives for higher education and publication of related national strategies. This process helps to ensure that there is an appropriate alignment between UCD's objectives, national priorities and the best use of resources.

[Word count: 602]

Section 2: Evaluation of Performance

Provide an evaluation of the institution's performance in relation to each Performance Objective, with reference to the indicator data provided in Part A. This should include:

- Analysis of the indicator data for this Performance Objective, e.g.:
 - Trend analysis and benchmarking of performance with reference to baselines, benchmarks, and targets. Graphs or charts to illustrate the analysis provided should be labelled and cross-referenced in the commentary.
- Assessment of implementation, e.g.:
 - Effectiveness of the specific actions related to the Performance Objective as demonstrated by the analysis of the indicator data.
 - Internal or external factors that have supported or impeded the achievement of targets.
 - Any additional evidence of performance, e.g. qualitative evidence of outcomes.
- Strategic reflection, e.g.:
 - Any learning from the analysis of the institution's performance.
 - How learning is being applied to maintain and/or enhance implementation and outcomes in future.
 - How learning is being used to inform decision making, strategy development, policy, and/or strategic planning.
 - New or emerging opportunities, challenges, and risks related to the Performance Objective.
 - Priority(s) in relation to this Performance Objective for the year ahead, with reference to any new actions or initiatives to support implementation.

Word limit: 1,000

Pillar: Teaching & Learning

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.

Transversal areas of impact:

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

UCD is pleased to have exceeded the target set and expects further upward trajectory of Work Integrated Learning opportunities (1.1). The outcome of a major internal review led UCD to establish a Work Integrated Learning Implementation Group, chaired by the Dean of Students and Deputy Registrar. The Implementation Group is working across several projects to enhance the experience for students, staff and hosts in areas such as assessment, systems, and pedagogy. This work supports Strategy 2030: Breaking Boundaries, enabling “*Students to be reflective practitioners with strong transversal skills, through enhanced opportunities for experiential learning, work-integrated learning and global engagement*” ([Breaking Boundaries p17](#)).

The Graduate Outcomes Survey at UCD is issued to about 9,000 graduates annually with a return rate of around 50%. As such it is a reliable measure, particularly around broad responses of “employed”, “further study”, “seeking work” and “unavailable”. While the survey effectively captures broad outcomes, it is less effective at assessing the direct relevance of a course to a graduate's career. For some graduates, the connection between their degree and a specific profession is clear from the start. For others, particularly those in disciplines with a wide range of career options, it is often challenging to link their skills and competencies to a career path. This year, UCD did not reach its targets in indicator 1.2 and 1.3. We note that the survey findings reported this year relate to students who graduated in 2023, so actions taken under our current strategy will not show up in this indicator for another two to three years. This is one of the areas where we would welcome discussion with the HEA.

UCD offers a diverse range of programmes, from vocational and professionally aligned courses to those driven by academic interest. Reflecting on the gap to target in 2024–25 for course relevance among graduate-taught students, while noting again that this finding related to studies undertaken prior to our current strategy period, we believe several factors contributed.

Short, intensive 12-month programmes can limit graduate student time for career development. Additionally, their career plans may shift as students gain new knowledge, and external factors like AI and remote work reshape the job market. For many, a degree driven by academic passion may not directly align with a specific job, and linking their skills to a career path requires a level of abstract thinking that is difficult to navigate while balancing a demanding academic schedule and job search.

To address this gap for undergraduate and graduate students, UCD has launched a new project to help students better develop, recognise, and articulate their skills, with a specific focus on essential interdisciplinary knowledge and skills—e.g., digital technologies, sustainability, leadership and wellbeing - needed for life, work, and further study. This project, which is a priority initiative under the leadership of the Registrar, will be developed in 2025/26.

Finally, the career registration process is allowing UCD to better understand the student experience as it relates to career readiness (1.4). The data gathered is being leveraged at all levels across UCD, in programmes, Schools, Colleges and by members of the University Management Team. As UCD continues to roll out the use of this data in module and programme planning and review, the Careers Network is piloting initiatives designed to enhance students' career readiness.

Reflecting on this objective, UCD is confident that our strategic focus on **Work Integrated Learning** and **skills development** will improve students' perception of course relevance for both undergraduate and graduate cohorts. While the historic nature of the data associated with the targets in this space does not yet allow us to measure progress, these results confirm that we are focusing on the right areas.

A key priority is to help students, especially those in non-vocational fields, better articulate the skills they gain. This will allow them to connect their academic learning to a wider variety of career paths. By creating a more explicit skills framework, we can differentiate UCD graduates and contribute to the **National Skills Strategy 2025**. This approach also aligns with broader sector-wide initiatives.

However, there are challenges. We need to ensure all students engage with the new skills project, which is particularly difficult for graduate students given their short timeframe. A potential risk is that the current **Graduate Outcomes Survey** may not be detailed enough to fully capture the positive impact of these new initiatives.

[Word count: 727]

Performance Objective 2

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

Transversal areas of impact:

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

UCD prioritises a supportive learning environment that will enable all our students to learn effectively and to thrive. The fact that StudentSurvey.ie did not run in the 2024/25 academic year means that we do not have access to the data required to report on 2.1–2.9. We can, however,

report here on steps being taken under our strategy to improve our student learning environment, inform decision-making and implement best practice approaches.

For the 2025–26 academic year, we are focused on enhancing collaborative learning (2.1–2.3), especially for first-year students. First-year students will be the primary users of the new O'Connor Centre for Learning, which is specifically designed for collaborative work. We are supporting faculty to further integrate collaborative learning into their courses by providing a new series of online resources and a professional development credential (digital badge). Additionally, we will fully implement [Feedback Fruits](#), a new digital peer-learning platform. A successful pilot showed this tool can effectively support collaborative learning for all students, with a particular focus on first-years

UCD is actively addressing the challenge of student engagement with faculty (2.4–2.6), particularly for first-year undergraduates. Recognising the significant transition students make from secondary school, we launched an [Academic Advising Pilot Programme](#) in 2024–25. Using a new IT platform, the programme expanded from 5 to 10 schools, now serving over 2,200 students. We have supported participating faculty with training from sources such as NACADA and UKaT and created the new role of Senior Academic Advisor in each school to provide leadership and embed the approach. Faculty participation in academic advising is also now a recognised factor in our promotion process.

We will evaluate this pilot at the end of the 2025–26 academic year to inform future development. Additionally, a [Teaching Fellowship Programme 2023-25](#) focused on student–faculty partnerships will provide further insights in 2026, helping us find new ways to engage students and enhance their understanding of the value of interacting with faculty.

The student faculty ratio (SFR) (2.10) is key to ensuring a positive and engaging academic experience. Like other HEIs in the national system, UCD has a high SFR relative to comparator institutions internationally (20.2 to a Russell Group average of 15.9). We continue to invest in new faculty, but this capacity is quickly absorbed by student growth. Under our strategy, UCD has committed significant central funding, to supplement planned faculty growth in our colleges.

During the academic year 2025/26, fifty new Ad Astra Fellow (Assistant Professor) colleagues will join the University under the centrally-funded scheme. The University has planned for additional centrally funded faculty positions in each year of the five-year plan. The target SFR of 18.8 by the end of the Agreement will be challenging to achieve and require sustained deployment of financial resources and additional government support.

[Word count: 468]

Pillar: Research & Innovation

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.

Transversal area of impact:

Student Success.

Number of full-time level 10 doctoral graduates (3.1)

UCD has met its target for full time level 10 doctoral graduates in the period, with 298 graduations in the 2024 SRS return versus a target of 295. The target for the next period is 305, and our data indicates that we are on track to exceed this, putting UCD on an excellent trajectory to deliver on an important national objective to increase PhDs as a % of population. The increase in numbers reflects the success of UCD's faculty in attracting high quality research funding.

It is critical that we can deliver a positive research environment at scale for our PhD students and specific actions to support this include:

- Development of School Student Experience Quality Enhancement Plans through the provision of School-specific data derived from the national biennial Postgraduate Research (PGR) student survey. The data serves to inform and guide the strategic enhancement of the student experience at the School level.
- Enhanced research reports to Schools enable them to effectively monitor the academic progress of their research students from admission through progression to completion, helping them to support students to meet key milestones and achieve timely completion of their studies.
- Dedicated clinics for School administrators and faculty, providing updates and guidance on regulatory changes ensuring staff are well-informed and equipped to support and advise students.
- Roll out of the Research Supervisor Support and Development Programme, in collaboration with TCD and RCSI, to new and experienced supervisors to promote best practices and a high-quality student experience.

The University will continue to strengthen these initiatives toward the continued success and competitiveness of the University's doctoral programmes.

Proportion (%) of PhD Students "Very Aware" of Student Supports as per PGR StudentSurvey.ie (3.2)

Our PhD students are now significantly more aware of available supports, surpassing both national and university targets. The PGR StudentSurvey.ie, measures student engagement every

two years, and although we are not scheduled to formally report on this indicator until next year, early access to results shows a substantial improvement in PhD student awareness of supports. At the 2023 baseline, only **7.3%** of PhD students were “very aware” of supports, falling below the national benchmark of **8.6%**.

Our early results show this figure has jumped to **10.3%** (this result will be formally reported in the 2025/26 return), a **36% relative increase**. This not only exceeds the national benchmark but also our own internal target of **8.5%**. These positive results reflect our efforts to improve the visibility and clarity of student support services and is a direct result of comprehensive initiatives by the Graduate Studies Unit:

- The student support website was fully redesigned for improved navigation, accessibility, and professional appearance resulting in increased engagement rates. New pages were also launched, including a “Staying Well” page for mental and physical well-being and a dedicated page for graduate studies with a disability, launched in collaboration with the postgraduate researcher advocacy group *Launchpad*.
- The monthly Dean’s email to graduate students was redesigned for better clarity and visual appeal. The role of the [Graduate Research Student Advisor](#) was also actively promoted through emails and induction sessions.

Reflections on our performance in this objective

The rise in doctoral completions reflects effective coordination between Graduate Studies, Schools, and support units. It signals that quality doctoral education at scale is achievable through strategic, data-informed planning using HEA and institutional metrics.

Clarity and visibility of support structures has delivered results to date and we will continue to be guided by student feedback, ongoing reviews, and collaboration with advocacy groups.

Opportunities:

UCD’s growing doctoral output and enhanced student experience position it to:

- Compete globally for top-tier PhD talent
- Leverage its Graduate Studies infrastructure in strategic partnerships
- Influence national policy discussions on graduate education

Challenges/Risks:

The primary challenge is securing extra funding to increase all PhD student stipends to €25,000 annually, along with access to housing and general cost of living pressures. Without this, the number of available studentships will likely decrease, potentially impacting research capacity in some areas. UCD will address this through adaptive planning, national-level advocacy, and seeking diversified funding sources. Our 2030 Strategy commits to sustained investment in graduate education, ensuring UCD remains a national leader. We will also continue to engage with international networks to ensure our graduate education practices align with international best practice. Strategic Priorities for the Graduate Studies Unit include the following:

- Maintain momentum in doctoral output while safeguarding quality and equity of access
- Strengthen supervisor development to meet growing demand and diverse student needs
- Deepen student engagement/sense of belonging through inclusive, accessible, and targeted actions indicating the value that UCD places on providing a high-quality PGR experience
- Continue to build on the success of our communications approaches to ensure that the supports provided to staff and PGRs are effective, e.g. enhance PGR awareness of the value of transversal skills training
- Mitigate recruitment challenges via strategic budgeting, funding diversification, and national-level engagement on PhD funding models
- Enhance monitoring and benchmarking by embedding robust KPIs and continuing external reviews

[Word count: 847]

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.

Transversal areas of impact:

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

Number of Licenses, Options and Assignments (LOAs) (4.1)

Licenses Options and Assignments (LOAs) are a key measure of innovation and impact in Irish Universities and internationally. LOA activity represents clear evidence that the knowledge created in the University is being transferred into the market for societal and economic good. The number of LOAs achieved within the period was 27, one less than the target of 28. However, it is not unusual to have some variance in such targets — the precise timing of when a specific LOA is executed is not entirely within UCD's control as each licensee company works to their own timelines and requirements. Despite such variances, we remain confident that the cumulative LOA target of 118 will be achieved over the total reporting period.

These targets are also consistent with what UCD has committed to under the Knowledge Transfer Boost (KTB) that is funded by Enterprise Ireland (EI) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The targets agreed under the KTB have been benchmarked against international best practice and the UCD technology transfer team based in NovaUCD report on these quarterly to EI. Furthermore, continued funding under KTB is subject to a performance review by an international panel. UCD has consistently achieved an A or A+ rating in previous reviews and UCD's performance in various KT metrics, including LOAs, exceeds that of Irish and international peers.

In summary, UCD is committing significant resources, improving processes and continuously monitoring outputs to achieve the overall cumulative targets for the performance agreement.

Cumulative number of impact case studies (4.2)

UCD has published an additional 11 impact case studies in the period, taking the cumulative total to 91, which is slightly ahead of the target of 90. The additional case study arose from the creation of a new case study category in ‘engaged research’. UCD wishes to grow the profile of engaged research, and the addition of this as part of our impact case study awards will contribute to this goal.

Leading Universities in the UK (e.g. Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh) routinely showcase research impact case studies on their research websites. UCD's catalogue of impact case studies is comparable with leading Universities in the UK, and we are not aware of any Irish university with targets for impact case studies that are comparable to UCD.

The Engaged Research Impact Prize was introduced to highlight and reward projects that go beyond traditional research by collaborating deeply with public stakeholders, embracing co-creation, mutual learning, and community-driven design.

Each year the impact case studies are developed and supported via a competition format, and the set of 2024 awards were as follows:

- EIRSAT-1 team, School of Physics, UCD Centre for Space Research: “Ireland’s first satellite: transforming the national space landscape with the launch of EIRSAT-1”
- Dr Edward Burke, UCD School of History: “Investigating loyalist paramilitarism and cross-border bombings during the Troubles”
- Dr Alison Connolly, UCD Centre for Safety and Health at Work, UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science: “Using human biomonitoring to understand chemical exposures among the population”
- Associate Professor David Coyle, Dr Claudette Pretorius, UCD School of Computer Science: “Providing resources for young people seeking help online for mental health”
- Professor Judith Harford, Dr Rachel Farrell and Amalia Fenwick, UCD School of Education: Power2Progress: “building educational resilience in DEIS schools”
- Dr Andrew Hines, UCD School of Computer Science, SFI Insight Centre for Data Analytics: “Sound check: audio quality technologies for entertainment, communication, and accessibility”
- Associate Professor Carl Ng, Dr Joanna Kacprzyk, Patrick Quille, UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science: “Reducing chemical fertiliser use for improved sustainability in agriculture”
- Dr Lucía Tiscornia, UCD School of Politics and International Relations: “Understanding the behaviour of criminal gangs and influencing policymaking”

- Professor Gerry Wilson, UCD School of Medicine, UCD Centre for Arthritis Research: “Identifying a new severe inflammatory disorder”
- Dr Jufan Zhang, UCD Centre of Micro/Nano Manufacturing Technology, UCD School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering: “Anywhere, anytime, anybody: administering medication at home with microneedle injections”

UCD was delighted to be notified by the HEA of the success of the EIRSAT-1 case study after its independent review for HEA IACS Performance Funding. The independent panel noted that “*This case study presents a high-quality and distinctive account of the design, creation, and launch of Ireland’s first satellite, EIRSAT-1 – a landmark achievement in Irish higher education and national innovation that has made a distinct and impactful contribution to Ireland’s growing presence in the space sector. The case study is clear, focused, and original, combining technical delivery, student development, and broad public engagement into a coherent and compelling narrative.*”

The engaged research case study award went to Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick, UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science for “Supporting cancer patients to quit smoking post diagnosis”. We expect to maintain this additional category for the duration of the performance agreement and therefore expect to exceed targets in future years accordingly. The full cumulative set of UCD impact case studies are published online at: <https://www.ucd.ie/research/portal/ucdimpactcasestudies/>

Our assessment is that the impact case study competition and the tools and supports we provide to underpin it, are working well and this is supported by the success of our research case studies in the HEA’s national competition in recent years. UCD runs 5-10 tailored impact workshops and 3-4 seminars focused on various aspects of impact planning per year. The attendance at the workshops averages about 20-30 people while attendance at seminars is in the 50 to 70 range.

The impact case study competition has raised the profile of impact activity at UCD, provides critical material for our communications and public engagement activity, and helps UCD to build external partnerships by showcasing our effectiveness.

[Word count: 954]

Pillar: Access & Participation

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.

Transversal areas of impact:

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

UCD's undergraduate population is diverse, with **38%** from under-represented backgrounds. The university has successfully integrated access and inclusion across its operations, guided by a '[University for All](#)' approach. We use data on admissions, progression, retention, and graduate outcomes to identify and address inequalities, inform strategic planning, and highlight areas for improvement.

Student Entry (5.1, 5.2, 5.3)

While DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) applications continue to grow annually, HEAR (Higher Education Access Route) applications have not met their target for 2024-25, reflecting a national trend of decreasing numbers. We recognise the cost-of-living crisis, particularly in Dublin, is a significant compounding factor for HEAR-eligible students. We anticipate that recent enhancements to the HEAR application process will increase future entry numbers.

Mature student numbers remain consistent with national trends, likely due to a strong economy and full employment. These students often struggle to commit to full-time study because of work, caring, and other responsibilities. This is compounded by the limited availability of part-time degrees and a lack of corresponding financial support from SUSI.

These three cohorts do not tell the whole story, since other access routes, notably direct entry from FET-QQI programmes and Open Learning, have been growing, supporting growth in the KPI now agreed by UCD's Governing Authority which measures the proportion of underrepresented students by reference to numbers entering undergraduate degrees through access pathways. We will welcome a discussion of how the indicators in the Performance Agreement can better match the KPI in this area.

Student Progression and Completion Rates (5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7)

These, like some other indicators flagged earlier, reflect outcomes before the current strategy commenced and continue to be affected by patterns of heightened disadvantage for underrepresented cohorts during the pandemic period.

DARE students are well-supported at UCD and typically progress at the same rate as their peers, consistent with previous years. However, many manage complex needs and may take longer to

complete their degrees. Students with multiple learning difficulties find managing multiple assessment requirements challenging, which can lead to incomplete grades and requests for extenuating circumstances. A wider adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) practices across the institution could help alleviate this.

The HEAR completion rate remains lower than that of the general undergraduate population. Students from low-income households are more likely to work, manage complex commitments, and face long commutes. For example, 62% of HEAR students commute for 60 minutes or more, compared to 35% of all undergraduate students, leaving them with less time for studies and campus life. UCD is undertaking a number of actions to address this.

- The [Access Leader Programme](#) employs over 160 students from access backgrounds as mentors and ambassadors. They support incoming students and help them feel a sense of belonging, while also boosting their own career readiness. After receiving a UCD offer, all HEAR students get a phone call from an Access Leader. They are invited to the ALL Student Welcome Programme, which focuses on building connections and provides key information on financial aid, including the Cothrom na Féinne scholarships and the HEAR Student Support Fund.
- The “[Relentless Welcome](#)” continues throughout the first trimester with social events and information sessions. Additionally, a dedicated Senior Student Support Officer provides one-on-one meetings and organises social gatherings for HEAR students.
- UCD ALL and the UCD Foundation are increasing scholarship awards to reduce financial pressure on students, giving them more time to engage with university life.

Enhancing Career Readiness (5.8, 5.9, 5.10)

UCD has not met its target for the percentage of low-income students with a developed career plan. The Director of Careers, Employability and Skills is a member of the UCD Widening Participation Committee, and dedicated Career and Skills Consultants support access students, so these students are offered bespoke, dedicated support over and above mainstreamed services offered in each college and school. A pilot initiative on interventions and their impact on career decision making will report in Autumn 2025 to inform future targeted planning.

Career readiness for students with disabilities is a complex issue, often involving concerns about disclosure and difficulties accessing internships and suitable graduate jobs. The Careers Network partners with UCD ALL to engage employers and create transparent opportunities through initiatives like the [Pathways to Professions](#) project. All Careers Network staff have also undertaken the [Digital Badge in Universal Design for Learning](#).

Mature students come to university with valuable life and work experience. With proper support, coaching, and confidence-building, they can translate this personal capital into career success.

Future plans

UCD is compiling data to examine the engagement of access students with Work Integrated Learning (WIL) to inform targeted interventions and planning for 2025-26. This is part of our wider

Work Integrated Learning programme previously mentioned. We look forward to collaborating with our IUA partners to ensure these initiatives meet the objectives of the National Access Plan.

[Word count: 803]

Pillar: Engagement

Performance Objective 6

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

Transversal areas of impact:

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

Student participation in extracurricular activities is key to fostering a sense of belonging, reducing isolation, and improving mental well-being. Although the StudentSurvey.ie was not conducted this year, preventing us from reporting on indicators 6.1 and 6.2, other data shows positive trends.

Increased Participation in Extracurriculars

UCD has seen significant increases in student engagement beyond the classroom:

- **Advantage Award (6.3):** Participation grew from 531 to 797 students, well above the 600-student target. This is a notable achievement given the challenges students face with commuting and part-time work. The programme's value is increasingly recognised by both students and employers, which is driving further interest in participation.
- **Sports Clubs (6.4):** Unique membership increased from 6,829 to 6,889, surpassing the target. This reflects the levels of engagement and interest in sport across our campus at both elite and participative levels. Our performance in this area is supported by UCD's excellent sports facilities and structures.
- **Societies (6.5):** Society memberships grew from 14,573 to 15,382, exceeding the 2024/25 target.

These increases can be partially attributed to increased funding for student clubs and societies and for the student's union, as well as the waning effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the cost-of-living crisis and accommodation shortage mean many students, particularly those with long commutes or part-time jobs, have less time to spend on campus. To address this, UCD is working to lower on-campus food costs, increase access to facilities for students who bring their own food and extend building opening hours for key facilities supporting students.

Mental Health and Well-being

UCD has allocated targeted funding to implement recommendations from its [Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention project](#). This includes a revised university policy to align with the HEA's framework, promoting a more holistic approach to student well-being.

An early commitment in UCD's strategy is the establishment of a **Directorate of Student Experience and Well-being**. This new directorate will integrate support services and develop new initiatives aimed at supporting well-being. The performance indicators will help us measure the impact of these developments on our students' sense of belonging and overall well-being.

[Word count: 350]

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.

Transversal area of impact:

International.

Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, non-EU student FTE (7.1) increased from **6,960 to 7,611 FTEs**.

This growth was achieved through targeted market engagement, enhanced conversion activities, and a focus on improving pre-arrival and on-campus student supports. This strong growth is significant over a baseline of 6,469.

Top markets (USA, India and China) each increased more than 10% YoY and our diversification strategy proved successful with increases in Kuwait (+14% YoY), Pakistan (+22% YoY) and Hong Kong (+79%). However, Nigeria experienced a decline in new starters due to the devaluation of the Nigerian naira in 2024 coupled with Central Bank restrictions on foreign currency access.

This recruitment success was achieved despite growing uncertainty and complexity, driven by geopolitical volatility, policy changes, strong global competition, shifting visa regimes, and the rising quality and capacity of higher education in source countries. Insights from this period have reinforced the importance of aligning recruitment activity with market intelligence and agility in response to policy or geopolitical shifts.

Opportunities include leveraging alumni networks in high-growth markets, deepening partnerships (looking to high yield collaborative programmes), and expanding in-country events.

Challenges include intensifying competition from other English-speaking destinations, evolving visa policies, increasing cost sensitivities in key markets and reports indicating a less welcoming Irish environment.

Risks centre on geopolitical instability, competitor policy shifts (e.g., UK and Australia), and capacity constraints in high-demand programmes.

For the next reporting period, priorities include:

- Launching specialist recruitment posts in priority markets (UAE, Indonesia, Nigeria, India).

- Expanding immigration advisory capacity for our students.
- Enhancing the digital and peer-to-peer recruitment model.
- Increasing market diversification.

Increases in **outbound mobility numbers (7.2)** are attributed to the introduction of short-term (e.g. BIPs) and virtual mobility options facilitated by UCD's membership in international networks and the European University Alliance which has facilitated many of these opportunities.

UCD Volunteers Overseas numbers increased YOY in 2025, reflecting the expansion and diversification of its portfolio. This includes new initiatives including a pilot project in Uganda related to the GAA, a south-north ecosystem restoration project, a new elective placement for the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics, and a new education project in collaboration with the Holy Union Sisters in Tanzania, an existing partner.

Overall, the demand for outbound mobility continues to grow, and the action plan for internationalisation at home, which is underpinned by a detailed review and will launch in September 2025, will further support the appetite for innovative and diverse global educational experiences.

[Word count: 408]

Section 3: System Learning and Policy Development

Comment on any learning or insights arising from the institution's self-evaluation of performance in relation to the Performance Agreement that may contribute to system learning and/or national policy development and implementation.

Word limit: 300

The primary driver of UCD's institutional priorities is and will continue to be our Strategic Plan. UCD's Strategy to 2030 responds to the challenges and opportunities of this disruptive decade and aims to prepare UCD, and its students, for the decade to come. It was developed through extensive consultation across our university community and with external stakeholders. Distinctively and recognisably of UCD, it reflects our values and our ambition to make a difference to Ireland, to the lives of our students and to the wider world.

We reiterate our earlier point that since the submission of the Performance Agreement preceded the launch of the Strategy in November 2024 and the approval of the associated KPIs in September 2025, it is now timely to see how these can be brought into alignment.


We would like to take this opportunity to express UCD's support for the strategic dialogue process which has improved in both its quality and efficiency since its inception over ten years ago. In UCD's view, the performance framework is now more focussed on overall improvement of the system while ensuring that the differing profiles and ambitions of individual institutions are effectively recognised. UCD has fully contributed to this process and intends to continue this contribution into the future.

However, the ongoing efficacy of the process must be seen in the context of a sustainable funding model for the higher education sector as a whole. Numerous reports have now highlighted this issue and there is no need to reiterate the arguments here but if the next phase of national development is to be secured, and if Ireland is to continue to be a destination of choice for high quality investment and employment, our national higher education system must be competitive with the highest international standards.

[Word count: 295]

Section 4: Signature of the Head of the Institution

The SER should be signed by the Head of the Institution prior to submission.

On behalf of University College Dublin , I declare that the particulars supplied in this report are true and correct.	
Signature:	
Print Name:	Professor Orla Feely
Date:	25 September 2025