UCD Access & Lifelong Learning

Strategy 2020-2024 – Enabling a University for All

![University College Dublin — University for All — Access and inclusion is everyone's business]

University College Dublin
University for All

Access and inclusion is everyone's business

Table of Contents

Introduction

In the past decade, UCD Access & Lifelong Learning has reshaped and reimagined the approach to access and inclusion, enabling UCD to pioneer the development of University for All - a whole-institution evidence-based, mainstreaming approach that recognises that all students feel welcome, belong and are valued. Underpinned by the philosophy of 'a student is a student', the University for All approach moves access and inclusion from the margins to mainstream, and is now regarded as everyone's business.

> **"Every student, wherever they come from and whatever their background, will have specific needs and requirements and we need to tailor what we do, to really meet the full range of requirements students have, without labelling them in any way"**
>
> Professor Mark Rogers, Ucd Registrar & Deputy President, September 2020

The UCD Access & Lifelong Learning strategy is grounded in the UCD strategy - Rising to the Future, (UCD 2020), EDI Strategy and Action Plan 2018 - 2020 – 2025, the Education and Student Success Strategy (UCD 2021), and the requirements of the Performance Compact agreed between UCD and the Higher Education Authority (HEA). In particular, Rising to the Future foregrounds the provision of 'an inclusive educational experience', highlighting the centrality of a mainstreaming approach in fostering inclusion, appreciating the contribution of all students, and removing barriers to access, participation and success (UCD 2020 p. 22).

The following principles guide University for All -

1. Mainstreaming inclusion is the responsibility of the entire university community.
2. Everyone has the right to equal participation and engagement in higher education.
3. The student body entering, participating in, and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of Ireland's population.
4. All students should be able to access higher education and have an equal opportunity to progress and succeed within and beyond University.
5. We will engage with all stakeholders - students, faculty, staff, practitioners, community partners, educators, researchers and policymakers.
6. We believe that excellence is achieved through diversity.

University for All is a unique response to national access policy, which envisions the student population as reflecting the diversity of Ireland's population (DES, 2011) and the goal

> **"to integrate the principle of equity of access more fully into the everyday life of the HEIs so that it permeates all faculties and departments, and is not marginalised as the responsibility of the designated access office"**
>
> HEA, 2015, p. 25

The development of this whole-institution mainstream approach was prompted by a series of reflections on how best to respond to the national policy imperatives, the changing nature of the student body, how to meet their diverse backgrounds, needs, and abilities and how to 'work smarter' in context of increased participation rates. It is informed by Kelly (2017), whose study of the implementation of access policy in Ireland's universities, found an absence of institution-wide policies and practices to foster and inculcate inclusion and diversity, notwithstanding the early signs of mainstreaming and embedding equality of access. Over the past ten years, the team of access professionals that comprises Access & Lifelong Learning has reshaped and reimagined the approach to access and inclusion. Critically, University for All is now embedded in the University's governance structures including, the UMT Education Group, chaired by the Registrar and Deputy President, with a 'dotted line' to Vice President for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. The University Widening Participation Committee (WPC) chaired by Professor Grace Mulcahy, oversees, monitors and promotes the University's achievement of a diverse and inclusive scholarly community.

In this context, UCD Access & Lifelong Learning is delighted to present this strategy, setting out ambitious goals for the next four years. These goals will be progressed and implemented in consultation with the academic and professional community. Key elements will be developed in collaboration with Colleges, Academic Schools, Teaching & Learning, Careers Network, Registry, Estates, Global, IT Services, Human Resources, Student Services and Supports, Bursar's Office, as well as UCD Foundation.

This strategic plan reflects the achievements of the past, consultation with staff, students and key internal and external partners, and incorporates recommendations of the quality process (QIP 2019). It has been developed during COVID-19, which has generated both opportunities and challenges for access and inclusion. It is accompanied by an Operational Plan.

Vision

That UCD will be a University for All, where all students, regardless of background or circumstances, feel welcome, belong and are valued. In doing so, all students can undertake their studies, participate fully in the life of the University, and realise their academic, professional, career and personal goals.

University for All

Mission

To enable the University fully to realise its ambition to be a University for All, where access and inclusion is everyone's business.

Impact Metrics

UCD Access & Lifelong Learning will provide expertise, guidance and advice to enable the University to achieve the following -

1. **Underpinning Policies & Foundations** - mainstreaming access and inclusion will be embedded and reflected in key institutional policies and core leader responsibilities, including:
   - Quality review and enhancement
   - Faculty promotions
   - Recruitment, admissions and enrolment
   - Reasonable accommodations

2. **Programmes, Curriculum Design, and associated Teaching and Learning** - Universal Design (UD) will be embedded in programmes and curriculum design, and associated teaching and learning.

3. **Student Supports and Services** – the principles of Universal Design will be embedded enabling all students to participate fully, enhance their study experience, and act as a platform for their success and well-being.

4. **Physical Campus and the Built Environment** - a Universal Design approach will be embedded and reflected in the development of new and refurbished buildings.

5. Information Technology Systems and Infrastructure - a Universal Design approach will be embedded and reflected in the development of new and existing information technology systems and infrastructure.

6. University for All Implementation Action Plans will be developed and a progress report submitted by all UCD Programmes and UCD Policy and Support units.

7. The development of an integrated data portal that offers ready availability and dissemination of widening participation data.

8. The University for All approach is embedded in all induction and orientation processes, for faculty, staff and students.

9. 35% of the student population is drawn from communities that are distant from higher education, and participation rates are aligned with the National Access Plan (NAP) targets.

10. Provision of an evidence-base to include regular access and inclusion surveys are conducted with faculty, staff and all students.

11. Ensure students from under-represented cohorts participate in committees across the University to influence the direction and creation of policy.

12. Influence, shape, the access and inclusion narrative and promote the recognition of University's contribution to inclusion in higher education.

Goal

35% of the student population is drawn from communities that are distant from higher education, and participation rates are aligned with the National Access Plan (NAP) targets

35%
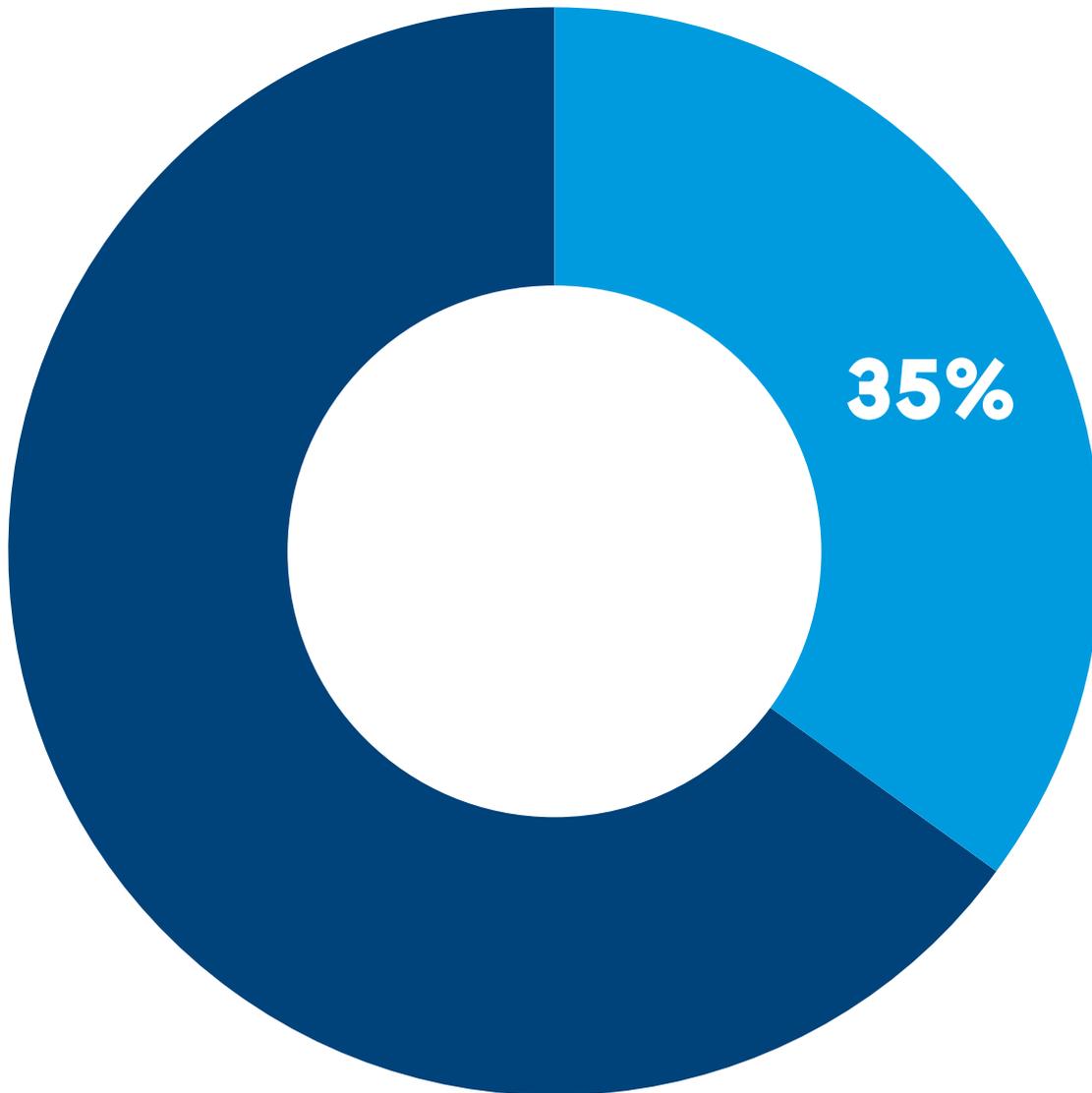
Key Objectives - Institutional Pillars

The Key Objectives in this document mirror the format described in the [Toolkit for Inclusive Higher Institutions](#) and focuses on the four institutional pillars -

1. Programme & Curriculum Design, Teaching & Learning
2. Student Supports and Services
3. Physical Campus and the Built Environment
4. Information Technology Systems and Infrastructure

- as well as the Foundation and Scaffolding components, necessary to support and develop a whole-institution approach to mainstreaming and inclusion - each of these is specified below.

Foundations & Scaffolding

Aim: Foundations & Scaffolding

To ensure that the University's underpinning strategies and policies bolster and reinforce the development of a systemic institution-wide approach to access and inclusion.

Objectives: Foundations & Scaffolding

- Provide expertise and support to the Widening Participation Committee (WPC), and the WPC Outreach Coordination Network.
- Support the implementation of the University for All initiative In collaboration with the WPC.
- Identify key strategies and policies and in collaboration with the policy holder, review them for alignment with the principles of access, inclusion and Universal Design, including those relating to admissions and enrolment; teaching and learning; careers networks; Erasmus, study abroad, and placements; recruitment; 'fitness to study'; support animals; and quality.
- Continue to enhance the access student data system -
  - ensuring the collection and dissemination of access student data to inform practice, tracks admissions, participation, progression and retention
  - tracking and reporting on students studying at all levels, including undergraduate and graduate levels
  - identifying trends and patterns
  - evaluating impact
  - gathering data on pre-entry, admission, participation, completion and post-graduation
  - meeting the information needs of internal and external stakeholders
- Identify key institutional systems and in collaboration with the system owner, reconfigure these to meet the needs of all students.
- Develop a university-wide communications strategy in collaboration with the UCD Communications unit, and the University Widening Participation Committee.
- Develop a university-wide outreach and mentoring approach in collaboration with the University Widening Participation Committee.

- Ensure the University's pre-entry, outreach and admission pathways initiatives contribute directly to developing a pipeline of excellent and diverse students.
- Provide an integrated and aligned Mentoring and Outreach programmes ensuring that a coherent continuum of activities that target under-represented students.
- Ensure that a pipeline of target under-represented students, in collaboration with Student Recruitment.
- Continue to offer the Student Experience programme, using the University community and facilities to maximum effect.
- Promote the visibility of good practice in pre-entry activity through publications, conference papers, etc.
- Further enhance engagement with community groups, in collaboration with Widening Participation Committee Outreach Network sub-group, and the PATH Dublin Learning City initiative.
- Identify further opportunities and potential collaboration with external stakeholders.
- Develop and implement a community partners feedback process.
- Develop a Reasonable Accommodation policy for students with disability.
- Develop a university policy for the support of Sanctuary Programme students.
- Implement the recommendations of the Quality Review, June 2018, as set out in the Quality Implementation Plan, June 2020.
- Lead and contribute to inter-institutional collaboration, e.g. PATH, Access Steering Group for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- Use experience, practice and research to inform and influence the development of national access and inclusion policy.
- Represent the University at a range of fora, e.g. AHEAD, AONTAS, MSI.

Programme & Curriculum Design, Teaching & Learning

Aim:
Pillar 1 -

**Programme &
Curriculum Design,
Teaching & Learning**

To support the development of an inclusive educational experience, informed by student feedback, ensuring that teaching, learning, including modules and assessments, incorporate the principles of Universal Design.

Objectives: Pillar 1

Programme & Curriculum Design, Teaching & Learning

- Enable and support the implementation of Pillar 1 University for All initiative through:
  - A Universal Design approach to teaching, learning, modules and assessment
  - A policy approach to inclusive and choice of assessment
  - A policy approach to the development of inclusive of teaching materials
  - Further develop the range of support modules available through Brightspace Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

- Develop a flexible approach to ensuring that all students can participate fully, including –
  - installation of equipment to enable recording of lectures
  - provision of accessible lecture notes and presentations
  - provision of captions for video content
  - provision of live and recorded sessions
  - development and communication of a schedule of assessment

- Continue to design and deliver the University Access courses, in collaboration with the College of Social Sciences & Law, and the College of Science, and to examine the potential for expansion, including possible enablers and challenges.

- Develop a systemic approach to support, embed and expand Open Learning, and enhance the range of part-time flexible under-graduate study.
- Further enhance and promote the University's Age-Friendly designation.
- Expand the Lifelong Learning programme to showcase the research and scholarship of the University, and review its cost structure and student diversity.
- Grow our partnerships with Schools and Colleges to create a diverse and varied programme for our students. Continue to promote the principles of Universal Design within the Lifelong Learning programme.
- Continue to advise and support faculty and staff on Universal Design for inclusive practice, and promote and facilitate Universal Design training for the university community.
- Ensure that the principle of affordability is considered in approaches to teaching and learning, for example, access to books, compulsory field trips and technology.
- Include a standard question on inclusion and accessibility in the Module Feedback process.
- Develop strategies and approaches to address and underpin inclusion in the assessment administrative systems.
- Promote the visibility of good practice in access and inclusion, including publication of case studies, conference papers, etc.

Student Supports and Services

Aim:

Pillar 2 -

Student Supports and Services

To ensure that students from under-represented groups are offered appropriate, integrated support and services, which enable them to participate fully, enhance their study experience, and act as a platform for their success and well-being.

Objectives: Pillar 2

Student Supports and Services

- Enable and support the implementation of Pillar 2 University for All initiative -
  - embedding a Universal Design approach
  - developing student feedback mechanisms to assess access and inclusion progress
- In collaboration with the Dean of Students, Student Advisers, Programme Offices, Student Health, Student Services, Global, Careers Network, Maths Support Centre, Writing Centre, and Library promote the development of
  - A comprehensive range of supports, which address personal, financial, academic and social needs, offered on a face-to-face and online basis, and available in a range of formats, during core and out-of-hours
  - Enhanced visibility of supports so all students know at a glance, what is available
  - Learning analytics to assist with identification of students with additional support needs to prevent potential challenges with progression or retention.
  - Coherent student referral systems and processes
  - Childcare facilities
  - Access to IT equipment and infrastructure, ready availability of technology-related student support, including mainstreaming of 'digital ambassador' scheme

- In collaboration with Careers Network
  - Support the development of a model of career support to address the unique employment barriers encountered by under-represented groups
  - Promote the inclusion of under-represented students in career mentoring, internships, and placements
  - Promote alumni mentoring programme to provide students with the opportunity to meet professional mentors for guidance and support improving employability outcomes
  - Support the development and implementation of the Pathways to the Professions Project
- Student financial aid -
  - Develop a coherent equitable efficient approach to student financial aid for access students
  - in collaboration with Agile, lead in the development of a coherent, visible, streamlined students focused system for application, processing and reporting for student finance
  - Continue to develop the Cothrom na Féinne Scholarship programme for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, to include scholarship and mentoring support for students
  - Continue to streamline the financial assessment and eligibility processes
  - Develop a streamlined approach to awarding the 1916 Bursaries
  - Promote the suite of scholarships and financial supports available through outreach and pre-entry initiatives
  - Promote a suite of scholarships and financial supports to target groups, e.g. social media, brochures, flyers, advertising, promotional materials, posters, campaigns

- Further enhance the philanthropic funding available for Cothrom na Féinne scholarship, in collaboration with UCD Foundation and provide the necessary data to support approaches to potential donors.

- Specialist Student Support
    - Expand the range of Assistive Technology offerings available, increasing its visibility.
    - Increase the visibility, understanding and awareness of the services for students with disabilities.
    - Increase understanding and awareness of the Occupational Therapy service.
    - Continue to expand the Brightspace module, offering a range of interactive workshops to address the challenges, through the acquisition of a range of techniques and approaches.
    - Enhance the range of support modules available through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
    - Review the Learning Support service, and enhance if required.
    - Review the range of pre-entry information for international students and signpost disability supports for this cohort.
    - Provide individual student information, assessment of needs and guidance for all, front-loading specialist support for new access students.
    - Continue to offer a range of social and engagement supports to facilitate networking and informal mentoring.
    - Continue to offer the Digital Ambassador programme, whereby supports are available to develop students digital literacy skills.

- Integrate all student leadership training and ensure that the Access Leadership Programme supports the student life cycle of all pre and post-entry activity of Access Lifelong Learning.
- Utilise the Access Leadership programme where possible to co-create and contribute to pre-entry initiatives.
- Continue to facilitate study sessions to assist students to focus on their studies and getting work done and to facilitate social interaction, such as All in Common Structured Study Session, and Chatterbox Cafes.
- In collaboration with the University-wide Sanctuary Programme Operations group to provide an integrated suite of supports to this student cohort.
- Continue to provide the HEA ICT Covid grant scheme.
- Continue to offer the Access Boot Camp to the University Access students to address the study 'building blocks' necessary to advance to higher education.
- Continue to offer a 'drop-in triage' service for all students.
- Review the protocols surrounding student response times and communication methods and channels, and enhance if needed.
- Provide an integrated student welcome and transition programme.
- Develop and implement a student feedback mechanism.

- Promote the visibility of good practice in student support through publications, conference papers, etc.
- Continue to offer staff training on Universal Design principles.

Physical Campus and the Built Environment

Aim:
Pillar 3 -

Physical Campus and the Built Environment

To support the development of an inclusive built campus, which ensures that the design and composition of the environment are universally designed and can be readily accessed, understood and used independently.

Objectives: Pillar 3

Physical Campus and the Built Environment

- Accommodation
  - Provision of affordable accommodation options for low-income students
  - Provision of flexible, short term accommodation
  - Provision of affordable accommodation for students with disabilities who require a Personal Assistant
  - Provision of designated student rest areas
  - Review and enhance the mechanisms to provide, inform and publicise the availability of accessible accommodation for students with disabilities
  - Provide training for Residences' staff on supporting students with disabilities
  - Mainstream the accommodation allocation for under-represented students, including students with disabilities
  - Review and enhance the arrangements for the development of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)

- Minor Works
  - Continue to support the implementation of schedule of accessible minor works in collaboration with dedicated UCD Estates' Project Lead
  - Continue to support the UCD Estates inclusion strategy and the use of accessibility design experts in the design phase for new buildings and refurbishments
  - Provision of accessible external environment, including, ramps, internal and external uniform directional signs, information, maps, auditory guides
  - Undertake an accessibility audits of remaining buildings
  - Undertake a campus sensory audit
  - Develop an open list of classrooms outlining their accessible features eg. loop systems, in order to facilitate appropriate room bookings when supporting students with disabilities.
  - Review of UCD's maps for accessible wayfinding eg. colour contrasts.
  - Develop the Sensory Spaces Project
  - Develop a campus map of accessible toilet facilities
  - Expand the availability of adult changing places on campus
  - Advise and support University staff in the development of an inclusive built campus environment
- Promote the visibility of good practice in an inclusive built campus through publications, conference papers, etc.
- Provision of staff training for implementation of Universal Design principles.

Information Technology Systems and Infrastructure

Aim:

Pillar 4 -

Information Technology Systems and Infrastructure

To support the development of inclusive information technology systems and infrastructure, which incorporate the principles of Universal Design, ensuring that they can be readily accessed, understood and used independently.

Objectives: Pillar 4

Information Technology Systems and Infrastructure

- Enable and support the implementation of Pillar 4 University for All initiative -
  - Provision of accessible user-friendly websites, VLEs, systems and social media platforms, etc
  - Mainstream the systems that support Open Learning, and University Access courses
  - Provide for increased VLE accessibility, including text-to-speech functionality, and universal auto-captioning on all live or recorded lectures.
  - Develop systems to support a range of initiatives, including, student financial aid, scholarships, mentoring, and student supports
  - Promote the use of Sensus Access
  - Promote Web Accessibility Directive, which mandates the procurement of accessible software
  - Promote awareness and understanding of the use, range and availability of Assistive Technologies

- Provide staff and student training for the inclusive technology systems and infrastructure.
- Use UniShare to gather relevant student-related issues, trends and themes to inform service development, measure impact and inform future needs.
- Increase availability of information on students' Reasonable Accommodation via Infohub class lists.
- Provision of staff training for implementation of Universal Design principles.

Key Enablers

Aim

To support and enable the UCD Access & Lifelong Team in their roles, skills, structures, processes and technologies to deliver on this strategy.

Objectives: Key Enablers

- Provide staff with opportunities for development and further training, as identified through the Performance for Growth process.
- Promote a collegial culture that values commitment to the University's strategy.
- Foster creativity and innovation in service development and delivery.
- Provide facilities and flexible working arrangements to enable staff and students to work and engage effectively, embodying UCD EDI policy.
- Further enhance the development of operational systems and processes.
- Workload
  - Examine the use of a project initiation template to identify aims and objectives, resource requirements, targets and outcomes
  - Develop a project structure that reflects staff workloads and responsibilities, which enables progress to be made and facilitates development and reflection
  - Explore a process to carry out a benchmarking exercise, in collaboration with the HR partner

- Investigate the benefit of a College/Programme 'partnering' model, which would enhance and align with the University Widening Participation Committee.
- Design and implement a staff well-being strategy.
- Budget
  - Using an evidence base, continue to advocate for increased staff allocation
  - Ensure that the financial allocations and associated budgets are used effectively and efficiently
- Further develop the Unit's communications plan to continue to build awareness and develop understanding, through the use of social media, website, video, student testimonials, and other promotional mechanisms.

Bibliography

Coogan, T., & Sweeney, F. (2017). Collaborative Outreach with Southside Traveller Action Group. UCD Access Symposium 2017. In UCD Access Symposium 2017 (pp. 43–48). UCD Access & Lifelong Learning.

Fleming, B. (2010). Mature student access to higher education in Ireland. UCD. University College Dublin.

Fleming, B. (2013). Fish in water: Is mature student access to Irish higher education experienced equally and fairly? How equal? Access to higher education in Ireland [Research Paper]. HEA National Access Office.

Fleming, B. (2017). From the margins to mainstream - adapting programmes for part-time learners. In UCD Access Symposium Proceedings 2017. University College Dublin.

Fleming, B., & Tracey, M. (2018). From the bench to centre field: celebrating 30 years of supports for students with disabilities in UCD. University College Dublin.

HEA. (2015). National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2015-2019. Dublin: Higher Education Authority.

HEA. (2018). Progress Review of the National Access Plan and Priorities to 2021. Higher Education Authority

Kelly, A. (2017). An Analysis of the Implementation of National Access Policy to Integrate and Mainstream Equality of Access in Irish Universities - through the Lens of Inclusive Design [PhD]. University College Dublin, Dublin.

Kelly, A. (2018). From the margins to mainstreaming - a universally designed and inclusive approach to access and participation in UCD. In Ireland's Yearbook of Education. Mapping the past. Forging the future 2017-2018. Education Matters. http://educationmatters.ie/

Kelly, A. & Padden, L. (2018) Toolkit for Inclusive Higher Education Institutions – From Vision to Practice. Dublin: UCD Access & Lifelong Learning.

Kelly, A., & Padden, L. (2018). University for All: embedding equality of access, participation and success in higher education. In Universal Design & Higher Education in Transformation Congress: Conference Proceedings. Centre for Universal Design/IOS Publications.

Padden, L., O'Connor, J., & Barrett, T. (Eds.). (2017). Universal Design for Curriculum Design. Dublin: UCD Access & Lifelong Learning.

Padden, Lisa, Tonge, Julie, Moylan, Therese, O'Neill, Geraldine (Eds) (2019), Inclusive Assessment and Feedback: Case Studies from University College Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology. Dublin: Access and Lifelong Learning University College Dublin

Padden, Lisa & Tonge, Julie. (2017) A Review of the Disability Access Route to Education in UCD 2010-2013. International Journal of Disability, Development and Education. https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2017.1341042

UCD Education Strategy 2015–2020. Our Students' Education and Experience. University College Dublin. Retrieved 19 April 2018, from https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCD17023%20 UCD%20Education%20Strategy%20online.pdf

UCD. (2018). UCD Widening Participation Report Committee Annual Report-201718. University College Dublin.

UCD. (2020). UCD Widening Participation Committee Annual Report 2018/19.

UCD To the Rising Future, UCD Strategy 2020-2024. University College Dublin. https://strategy.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/UCD_2024_Strategy_Document.pdf

UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, 2018-2020-2025, University College Dublin.

UCD. (2018). UCD Access Symposium Proceedings 2018. University College Dublin. UCD. (2021a). Education and Student Success Strategy. University College Dublin.

UCD. (2021b). UCD response to the public consultation process announced by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Mr Simon Harris TD. on the development of the HEA National Access Plan 2022-2016. University College Dublin.

Contact

UCD Access & Lifelong Learning
Level 1, James Joyce Library Building
University College Dublin,
Belfield, Dublin D04 V1W8.

Website: www.ucd.ie/all
Phone: +353 (0)1 716 7123
Email: all@ucd.ie or disability@ucd.ie

Published 2021

University College Dublin
University for All

Access and inclusion is everyone's business