UCD DUBLIN

Graduate Studies
**Strategy &
Action Plan**
2021-2025

RISING
TO THE FUTURE
UCD Strategy 2020-2024

The 2021-2025 Graduate Studies Strategy and Action Plan has, at its core, our mission to bring students into an accountable, research enriched, student-focused learning environment; support the student's academic advancement; foster student's personal and professional development; and provide effective oversight of university graduate education quality processes and procedures.

Building on 2015-2020 Graduate Studies Strategy, this Graduate Studies Strategy and Action Plan outlines the key initiatives we are taking to underpin the four themes of the **UCD Strategy for Education & Student Success 2020-2024** i.e. that UCD will provide a Student-Centred Educational Experience, encourage Student Engagement, Diversity And Wellbeing, promote an Education for our students that Connects, Inspires & Transforms and enable Technology Enhanced Learning

UCD is committed to the principles of the **Irish National Framework for Doctoral Education** in the delivery of graduate research education to the highest standard. Graduate Studies upholds the goals of the **UCD Research Culture Initiative** including the valuing of the unique and essential role of research supervisors in the university to guide and support our students. We are working with colleagues across the University to enable a diversity in research student and supervisor populations.

Barbara Dooley

Professor Barbara Dooley,
Dean of Graduate Studies & Deputy Registrar

Vision:

Our vision is to provide an educational experience for graduate students that defines international practice; to graduate excellent independent researchers who are aware of their unique attributes and value; that our graduates make a significant impact in their chosen career and make a valuable contribution to society by addressing global challenges; that our research supervisor community is vibrant, supported, recognised and rewarded with access to career-long professional development.

Mission:

Our mission is to recruit the best candidates into an accountable, research enriched, student–focused learning environment; support the student's academic advancement though the delivery of excellent teaching and committed, quality, supervision from academic staff who are leaders in their research field; foster student personal and professional development; provide effective oversight of university graduate education quality processes and procedures and be responsive to the needs of the students.

Strategic Objective/Actions/Targets

THEMES	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
01 UCD Education Strategy: A student centred educational experience	**1.** Underpin ongoing professional development and career readiness in the PhD at UCD
	2. Embed an integrated quality assurance culture where student, supervisor and support staff are fully informed of, and engage with, quality enhancement procedures
	3. Internationalise the PhD
02 Student engagement, diversity, and wellbeing	**4.** Build an Inclusive Community for our research students that celebrates/values diversity
	5. Prioritise wellbeing and mental health of students by promoting UCD supports and providing a research environment which encourages students to flourish and thrive
03 Education that connects, inspires, and transforms	**6.** Support excellence in research supervisory practice through career long professional development, recognition and reward
	7. Maintain and develop active graduate research education networks. Collaborate with national and international academic and non-academic partners to develop and promote UCD's lead in research.
04 Technology Enhanced Learning	**8.** Enhancement of online training provision, workshops and consultation fora with research students and supervisors

THEME
01

UCD Education Strategy: A student centred educational experience

We aim to ensure that our students are well prepared for further academic study, to contribute to society and for career success in a global context, and for a lifetime of continuing personal development.

Strategic Objective 1:

Underpin ongoing professional development and career readiness in the PhD at UCD

Action	Activities
Fully develop and embed the structural elements of UCD PhD	• Promote timely Stage Transfer Assessment in the Doctoral programme • Support culture of engagement with supports/structures related to the PhD at UCD • Develop research student skills portfolio • Optimised data analytics • Embed Research and Professional Development Planning (RPDP) in monitoring and professional development culture • Support uptake and demonstration of skills engagement through RPDP. Work with UCD Careers Network in this regard. • Investigate online supports (e.g. Epigeum, Inkpath). • Implementation of online training supports • Support research supervisors in mentoring, career development of research students and use of RPDP • Explore stage specific bundling of skills training provision • Advertise on Graduate Studies website • Build awareness and highlight relevance of skills training opportunities for research students • Transferable Skills operational management: bookings, feedback, data analytics
Inducting research students into University community - University for All	• Achieve 100% attendance at orientation for incoming research students as reported in PGR studentsurvey.ie • Establish orientation as a mandatory component of the research degree • Continue delivery of GradsCONNECT welcome event for all incoming graduate students at the start of each academic year
Ongoing development of policies for research students	
Student Teaching & Learning Support	

Strategic Objective 2:

Embed an integrated quality assurance culture where student, supervisor and support staff are fully informed of, and engage with, quality enhancement procedures

Action	Activities
Use validated data to drive quality enhancements in Schools and Colleges and at University Level	• Use PGR StudentSurvey.ie to produce University level support with detail for all Schools and Colleges with ≥ 10 respondents • Use PGR StudentSurvey.ie to produce a "You Said-We Did" report subsequent to each survey • Use surveys, focus groups, feedback forms, interviews etc. when necessary
Annual report of student progression and completion to be submitted to University Programme Board (UPB)	• Report submitted for 2021
Graduate Research Board (GRB) to liaise closely with the College Quality Enhancement Fora toward shared goal of a quality experience for research students	• Report on College Quality Enhancement Fora activity to be produced annually
Develop inclusive culture for all stakeholders supporting graduate research at UCD - with a view to informing, advising & training in line with UCD Research Culture Initiative	• Information session provided for Graduate Research Administrators and faculty members on items such as roles and responsibilities of Research Studies Panel (RSP), Stage Transfer Assessment (STA) Panel, Graduate Research Board (GRB), Examination Panels

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Strategic Objective 3:

Internationalise the PhD

Action	Activities
Increase and promote awareness re. UCD PGR Student mobility and exchange (virtually or in-person) so that every student benefits from some experience of international networking	• Drive an increase in conference attendance as reported in PGR StudentSurvey. ie by 10% • Promote more opportunities for mobility with online offerings post pandemic • Liaise with UCD Global • Partner with members of networks such as Universitas 21 (U21) on Graduate Studies Mobility Initiatives e.g. U21 mobility scholarship • Record an uptake in uptake of Erasmus plus opportunities. Liaise with UCD Global (Global Networks and project Manager)
Support existing and emerging international partnerships e.g. UCD CSC Scholarship Scheme	• Showcase the UCD research global story. UCD Graduate Studies website to host testimonials, news and pieces reflecting the international community
Promote networking opportunities	• Induction event, Coffee Mornings, UCD Global events

THEME 02

Student engagement, diversity, and wellbeing

We aim to recognise, promote, and value diversity; foster the spirit of inclusion; appreciate the breadth of talent, experience, and contribution of all; and strive to remove barriers to access, participation, and success. Timely supports, services and facilities, data driven approach toward wider access, retention and progression of all students.

Strategic Objective 4:

Build an Inclusive Community for our research students that celebrates/values diversity

Action	Activities
Physical Hub for students in UCD Village	• Dedicated space provided for research students for skills training activities, and a social space for informal meetings
Conflict Resolution - Trusted Person Project towards early intervention	• Identify pool of Trusted Persons. • Develop user friendly guide from current Conflict resolution policy • Secure budget for training of Trusted Persons
Student participation in governance and selection panels e.g. in selection of Dean's award	• Every committee/panel convened by Graduate Studies members has a student representative
Signpost to Maternity Leave Support for students and Leave of absence	• Increase awareness of University and national supports for research students on maternity leave
Establish a Research Student award	
PhD Scholarships for diverse student body	• e.g. Ad Astra Scholarships
Research Student Council to be established	
Collaborate with Access and Lifelong Learning (ALL) and Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) units to support students and supervisors e.g. use of assistive technologies	• Improved visibility for supports on the Graduate Studies Website and integrate into induction for students and supervisors
Update Graduate Studies Website to reflect the community, diversity and inclusion philosophy	
Use UCD VLE to enable access to modules for part-time, off-site research students	• Record Graduate Studies activities, make available online where possible

Strategic Objective 5:

Prioritise wellbeing and mental health of students by promoting UCD supports and providing a research environment which encourages students to flourish and thrive

Action	Activities
Promoting mental health of research students	• In collaboration with the Student Advisor, highlight existing provision e.g. UCD Counselling Service, SilverCloud etc • Inclusion of student wellbeing and mental health supports in Supervisor Development Workshops • Inclusion of student wellbeing and mental health supports in Student Development Workshops
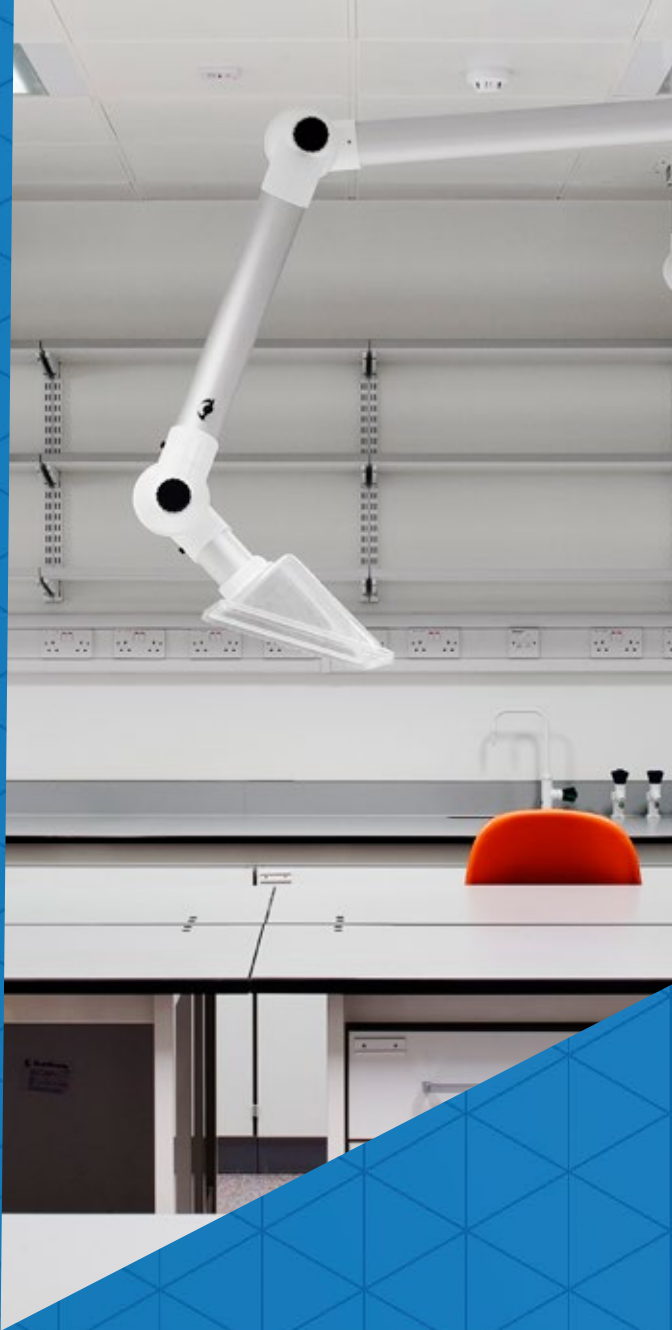
THEME
03

Education that connects, inspires, and transforms

We aim to support our faculty and staff who support research students to develop teaching, learning and assessment approaches that are research-informed, inclusive, intercultural in the broadest sense and that will promote student success. i.e. Professionalism & excellence in research supervision, digital skills development, partnering with non-university sector to meet their training and development needs.

Strategic Objective 6:

Support excellence in research supervisory practice through career long professional development, recognition and reward

Action	Activities
Develop Continuing Professional Development (CPD) supports for research supervisors in line with best practices internationally and National Framework for Doctoral Education to enhance CPD	• Develop and implement Induction and Refresher Research Supervisor Development Programme online • Develop cross institutional pilot collaboration with Irish Universities Association (IUA) • Explore Certification of Research Supervisor Support an Development Programme (RSSDp)
Drive a community of exemplary Supervisory practice ethos, through the establishment of a working group to ensure UCD is in line with international best practice	• Drive forward the excellence agenda to achieve deliverables
Scope, develop and implement the UCD Research Supervisor Register via the RSSD working group.	• Supervisor Register is defined, in place and being used.
Reward excellence in doctoral supervision through the Dean's Award scheme	• Annual increase of high-quality applications from UCD research supervisors to the Dean's Award scheme
Review and develop research supervision policy/guidelines	

Strategic Objective 7:

Maintain and develop active graduate research education networks. Collaborate with national and international academic and non-academic partners to develop and promote UCD's lead in research.

Action	Activities
Build active graduate education networks in Ireland, Europe and the world	• Work with the IUA Deans Group and National Advisory Forum toward realisation of the aims of the National Framework for Doctoral Education, **IUA PhD Skills Statement** • Continued active participation in international networks such as Universitas 21, the UK Council for Graduate Education, the European Universities Association-Council for Doctoral Education, Orpheus and others. • Work with Careers Network and UCD Foundation toward non-academic partner relationships

THEME
04

Technology Enhanced Learning:

We aim to embed technology enhanced learning in ways that are educationally appropriate, programme-focused, accessible, innovative and impactful across all modes of teaching and learning.

Strategic Objective 8

Enhancement of online training provision, workshops and consultation fora with research students and supervisors

Action	Activities
Make enhancements to the Research Student Management System to improve reporting and functionality	• Schools using improved functionality to enhance their oversight of research student activity • GRB to monitor student progression and compliance with academic regulations
Develop workflows in Infohub for complex processes e.g. extensions to registration	• Online processes for routine task to be introduced
Leverage functionality of UCD VLE Brightspace	• Enable access to modules for part-time, off-site students • Use VLE to house Graduate Studies activity e.g. orientation, Transferable Skills training provision • Certification of Supervisor Training