



University College Dublin
University for All

UCD Widening Participation Committee **Annual Report 2023-2025**



Student Access Leaders at the ALL Welcome 2024



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University for All

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Chair's Foreword

Welcome to the latest report of the UCD Widening Participation Committee covering the period from 2023 to 2025. The Committee is the primary formal mechanism to monitor and promote the University's ambition to be accessible, inclusive, and welcoming. It consists of dedicated members of academic and professional staff as well as student representatives, and we are supported and driven forward by the expertise and passion of the UCD Access and Lifelong Learning team.

At UCD, we can take much pride in our achievements in widening participation over many years. In the previous strategic plan for the University we set ourselves the ambitious target of having 35% of our students coming from underrepresented groups. This report shows that in the last two years we have not only met, but exceeded this target. The key reason for this achievement is the commitment right across the University, in every academic and professional unit, to integrate widening participation goals and initiatives into everything we do. As a university we have made widening participation the business of every member of our community.

There are many challenges that remain to be addressed, particularly in the unevenness of our achievements. We have been successful in increasing access and participation for some underrepresented groups, but there is more we can do to improve access for HEAR and mature students. Open Learning is an access route that is working on some programmes, but not on others. Some programmes have been very successful in increasing access and participation, while others are still significantly below the University target.

The new strategic plan for UCD to 2030, *Breaking Boundaries*, provides us with an opportunity to push further to address these challenges, and to extend UCD's role as a national leader in widening participation. UCD has led the way in adopting Universal Design principles and practices in teaching and learning, but we can build on this by ensuring that there is an equally warm embrace of Universal Design beyond the classroom. In the new strategy, we have aimed higher by changing our key performance indicator for widening participation to measure the proportion of new entrants coming from underrepresented groups. This will ensure that we stay focused on achieving greater access to a UCD education for all. The strategy also places emphasis on continuing to enhance UCD's commitment to being an inclusive community, and to foster a strong sense of belonging. This is a key element of the work of the widening participation committee. In the 2024/25 academic year we devoted much attention to addressing classism – both the socio-economic and cultural barriers to participation in university life. A summary of our work on classism is contained in this report, including recommendations on how the University can do more to break those boundaries.

Professor John Brannigan, Chair, University Widening Participation Committee

Commentary

This bumper report offers a comprehensive and encouraging overview of our progress in widening participation and embedding a "University for All" ethos across UCD. The data and narrative presented in the initial pages highlight significant achievements while also clearly indicating areas for our collective focus on the Widening Participation Committee. The individual member reports from programme boards and unit areas highlight significant progress made by our colleagues in creating a more inclusive university by embedding the principles of Universal Design and broadening access for a diverse student body.

Data

The data on our access pathways provides a critical lens for our work. We can see significant increases in participation figures which is a reflection of the institutional commitment to access and inclusion. As we review the specific target groups, however, we can see that the DARE quota continues to be exceeded, with a notable increase in acceptances from 2023 to 2024. We do not see this pattern elsewhere, with low acceptance rates for many of the other cohorts. The HEAR quota is of particular concern, with the proportion of acceptances at 50%. While the number of QQI-FET quotas has increased, the percentage filled has seen a decrease since 2021.

The data presented in the report, when viewed through the "burning platform" analogy, reveals a critical imbalance that demands action. The analogy, born from a real-life crisis on an oil rig, describes a situation where staying on the platform is no longer an option and change, or a step off that platform, is required. Our burning platform is both the gap in our access pathways and the uneven distribution of access entrants across different programmes. This suggests patterns of selectivity and hierarchy in widening participation.

The data from this Widening Participation Committee Report, seen through the lens of a "burning platform," finds a positive and strategic response in UCD's Breaking Boundaries to 2030 Strategy, particularly through its focus on a key performance indicator (KPI) for new entrants. The UCD Strategy, in its commitment to "support an ever more diverse range of students to realise their potential through an enriched and empowering education," directly addresses this issue. The inclusion of an explicit KPI for new entrants provides the institutional mechanism to respond to the burning platform. This KPI is not just about increasing overall student numbers but about ensuring the University's growth is aligned with its values of inclusivity and diversity.

The KPI for new entrants serves as a welcome driver for change, turning the goal of widening participation into a measurable, accountable objective. It further prompts the University to move beyond tracking data towards active, targeted interventions to improve the performance of underperforming pathways.

Universal Design and Partnership Programmes

The report demonstrates commendable progress in embedding the principles of Universal Design (UD). The "University for All" Professional Staff and Student Partnership Programmes, launched in 2023, are particularly noteworthy. These initiatives have successfully built capacity and awareness, with over 5,000 colleagues nationally completing the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning, 515 of whom are from UCD. The new "Beyond the Classroom" Digital Badge for professional staff is a crucial development that acknowledges the vital role of all colleagues in creating an inclusive environment. The Student Partnership Programme has been instrumental in making this work student-focused and student-centered, effectively using creative campaigns to raise awareness among their peers.

Insights from the 2024 University for All Survey

The 2024 survey results provide invaluable feedback. It is heartening to see that awareness of our "University for All" strategy has increased significantly, from 59.5% to 78.5% since 2020. This confirms that our efforts are resonating with the student population. However, the feedback on perceptions of campus accessibility shows that as we make improvements, students become more aware of the areas that still present accessibility issues. The survey is an important mechanism to prevent complacency and to highlight areas for work for our WP Committee.

Addressing Class and Classism

One of the most rewarding aspects of our WP Committee work this year was the Committee's decision to explicitly address classism in higher education. The use of real student scenarios, based on the research of our colleague Marlene Douglas, proved to be an effective and powerful way to challenge our collective practices. The "Fit in or Lose out" symposium was an excellent example of how we can use a Universal Design for Learning framework to explore and tackle everyday casual classism. This work is essential for cultivating a sense of belonging for all students.

In conclusion, while the report highlights significant successes, it also indicates areas for our focus and development. Ultimately, our vision is that the adoption of Universal Design principles will move us from an aspect of a "burning platform" to an environment where the design of all aspects of our institutional work is inclusive. And then our work is done!

Dr Bairbre Fleming, Director, UCD Access and Lifelong Learning

Data Picture

The data presented from Table 1 and Figures 1–7 offer an overview of the ongoing growth of UCD's widening participation initiatives. Collectively, these visuals chart the University's progress in creating equitable access pathways, while also tracking persistent imbalances across different cohorts. They illustrate how institutional ambition, expressed through growing quotas and diversified routes of entry, translates into actual student acceptances. Analysing each dataset allows the Widening Participation Committee to identify the structural successes, areas of concern, and opportunities for strategic intervention that underpin UCD's "University for All" vision. Critically, the data evidence suggests how future strategies might best target underrepresented groups.

Table 1: Access Pathways Quotas and Accepts 2018-2024

| Admission Year | Quota | Accepts | Quota Filled % | Quota | Accepts | Quota Filled % |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|----------------|-------|---------|----------------|
| DARE (below points) | | | | | | |
| 2024 | 306 | 386 | 126.1% | 286 | 144 | 50.3% |
| 2023 | 276 | 284 | 102.9% | 286 | 138 | 48.3% |
| 2022 | 272 | 291 | 107.0% | 288 | 149 | 51.7% |
| 2021 | 269 | 281 | 104.5% | 279 | 163 | 58.4% |
| 2020 | 260 | 224 | 86.2% | 271 | 147 | 54.2% |
| 2019 | 249 | 202 | 81.1% | 254 | 138 | 54.3% |
| 2018 | 218 | 154 | 70.6% | 224 | 129 | 57.6% |
| Mature | | | | | | |
| 2024 | 208 | 118 | 56.7% | 300 | 215 | 71.6% |
| 2023 | 232 | 137 | 59.0% | 273 | 223 | 81.7% |
| 2022 | 228 | 113 | 49.6% | 273 | 208 | 76.2% |
| 2021 | 266 | 146 | 54.9% | 240 | 226 | 94.2% |
| 2020 | 312 | 222 | 71.2% | 227 | 264 | 116.3% |
| 2019 | 322 | 169 | 52.5% | 216 | 217 | 100.5% |
| 2018 | 342 | 155 | 45.3% | 179 | 181 | 101.1% |
| UAP | | | | | | |
| 2024 | 72 | 27 | 37.5% | 59 | 20 | 33.9% |
| 2023 | 53 | 18 | 34.0% | 47 | 19 | 40.4% |
| 2022 | 55 | 27 | 49.1% | 46 | 12 | 26.1% |
| 2021 | 58 | 49 | 84.5% | 37 | 14 | 37.8% |
| 2020 | N/A | N/A | | N/A | N/A | |
| 2019 | N/A | N/A | | N/A | N/A | |
| 2018 | N/A | N/A | | N/A | N/A | |

Table 1 tracks quota allocations and acceptances across the six access pathways — DARE, HEAR, Mature, QQI-FET, University Access Programme (UAP), and Open Learning (OL) — over a seven-year period. Overall, the data show significant expansion in quotas and sustained participation across most pathways, yet also reveal disparities in how effectively each pathway converts opportunities into enrolments.

A quarter of undergraduate places are reserved for students coming in through access pathways. Quotas are agreed by Programme Boards with UCD Admissions during enrollment planning. It must be noted that agreed quotas are for entrants below the points only and not the total number of eligible entrants.

DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) remains the largest access cohort, with quotas consistently exceeded since 2021 and a record 126% filled in 2024. This reflects a well-established infrastructure for students with disabilities and successful institutional engagement. The Irish Universities Association is beginning the process of reviewing the DARE scheme to ensure it continues to work in the way in which it was intended.

In contrast, **HEAR (Higher Education Access Route)** continues to underperform, with only half the number of available places filled. The shortfall suggests that the number of HEAR applicants is significantly lower for the HEAR scheme than for the DARE scheme. There is a clear need for yet more outreach and awareness among low-income and underrepresented communities. The upcoming revised HEAR application process (from 2026) offers an important opportunity to reverse this pattern.

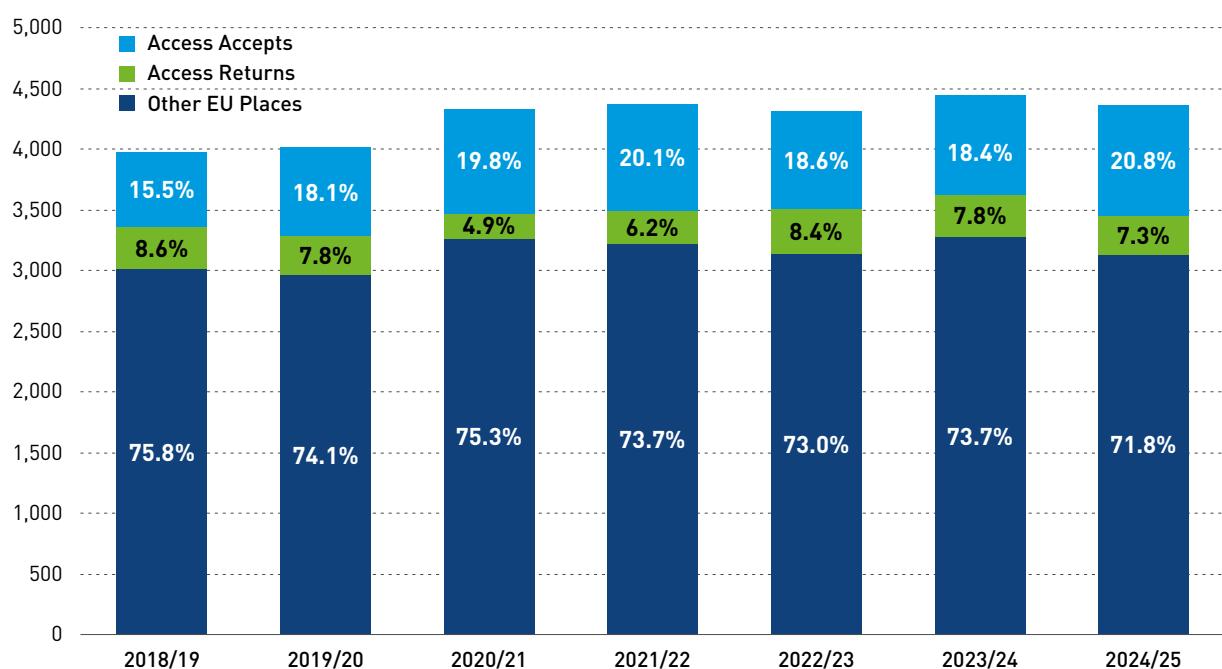
Mature Entry data fluctuate year to year, with acceptance rates between **45% and 71%**, suggesting moderate stability but also barriers linked to balancing study, work, and family commitments. The relatively low number of mature applicants is consistent with the national trend, where the numbers of mature applicants is falling at a time of high employment and limited opportunities for students with care responsibilities to study flexibly or part-time.

QQI-FET (Further Education and Training) presents a concerning trend: quotas have expanded substantially (from 179 to 300), yet acceptance rates have fallen from over 100% in 2018–2021 to 71.6% in 2024. This pattern is inconsistent across programmes. A key development in this context is the **UCD FET/HE Project** in collaboration with DDLETB, which seeks to monitor and enhance progression from FET providers into UCD programmes by mapping pathways, standardising entry criteria, and strengthening collaborative partnerships with the FET sector. The initiative aims to improve the visibility, transparency, and viability of progression routes for FET learners. The project has the potential to address the declining QQI-FET fill rates highlighted in Table 1 by ensuring a more coherent, supported transition pipeline from FET to UCD programmes.

Finally, **UAP and Open Learning** figures, though modest, represent meaningful growth potential. There are opportunities to increase the number of programmes that offer a UAP and/or Open Learning places. Their relatively low acceptance rates (33-38%) reflect the early stages of development for these flexible and part-time pathways.

Overall, Table 1 highlights a dual reality – progressive expansion of opportunity alongside uneven participation rates across the equity groups. It underscores the need for targeted, data-informed strategies to improve outreach, particularly for low income and mature cohorts, and to align institutional growth with equity objectives.

Figure 1: Access Accepts, Returns and non-Access Places 2018-2024



The overall university quota increased from 2023 to 2024 which is positive but as we can see from figure 1, the number of returned places also increased. Increasing the quota alone will not result in more access students coming in and Programme Boards and Schools need to consider what additional targeted outreach opportunities they can focus their energy on.

This figure illustrates the overall trend of WP versus General Entry entrants and returned places across seven admission cycles. The data show a welcome rise in total quotas for WP entrants, reflecting UCD's institutional commitment to widening participation. However, the simultaneous increase in returned places signals a persistent structural problem that simply raising quotas has not translated into filled access places. The gap between quotas and offers potentially highlights a pipeline issue, which is that there may be insufficient eligible applicants or barriers to conversion from offer to enrolment. The most important approach to increasing the number of potential applicants comes from outreach initiatives across the under-represented cohorts, and across the pre-entry applicant's lifecycle.

Figure 2: Access Pathways Accepts as Percentages of Quotas 2018-2024

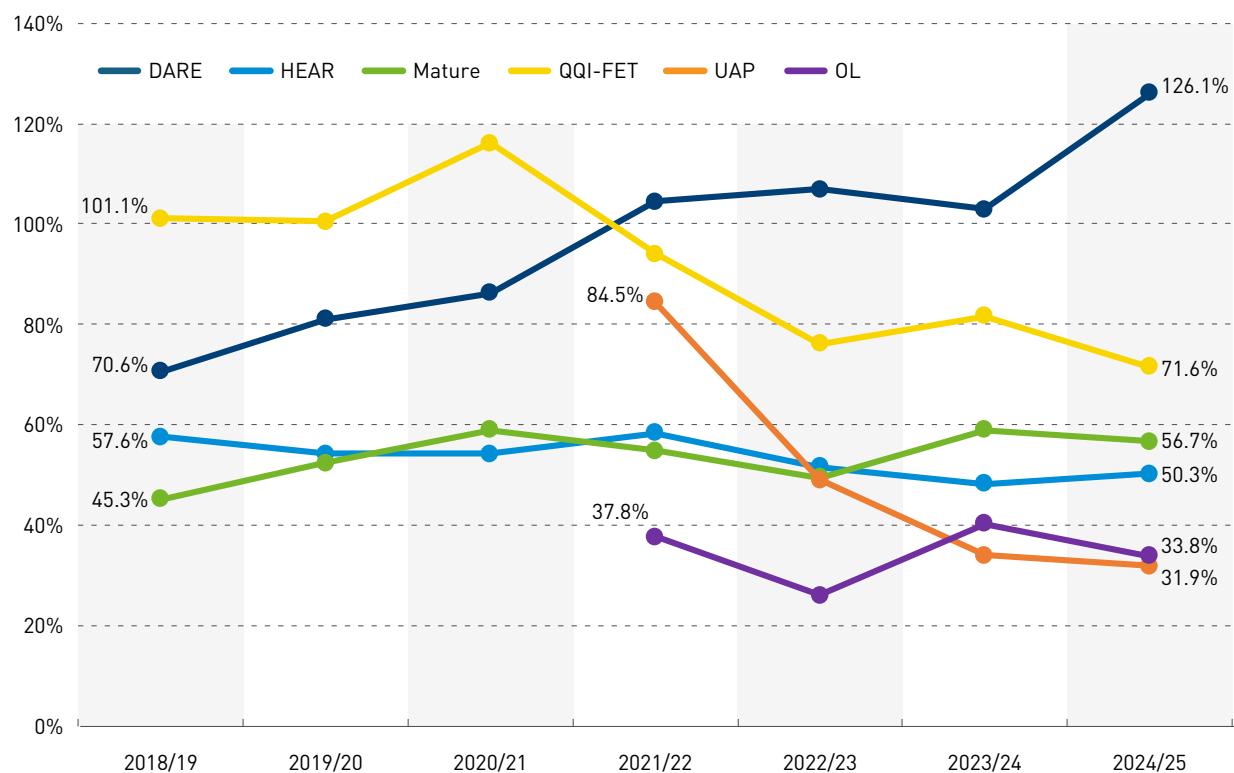


Figure 2 highlights the comparative success rates of individual pathways (DARE, HEAR, Mature, QQI-FET, UAP, Open Learning) in filling their allocated quotas. The data shows the widening gap in accepts with DARE surging ahead of every other pathway. This is also shown in Figure 3.

DARE often exceeds 100 percent of the quota, while HEAR and QQI-FET trail behind. The widening gap visible in figure 2 suggests an imbalance across the schemes and the need for targeted intervention. While the DARE numbers are high, the other routes still face systemic hurdles. We need to continue to strengthen and expand what we do with linked DEIS schools and community partners, including further education and training providers.

Figure 3: Percentage of Entrants by Entry Pathway 2019-2024

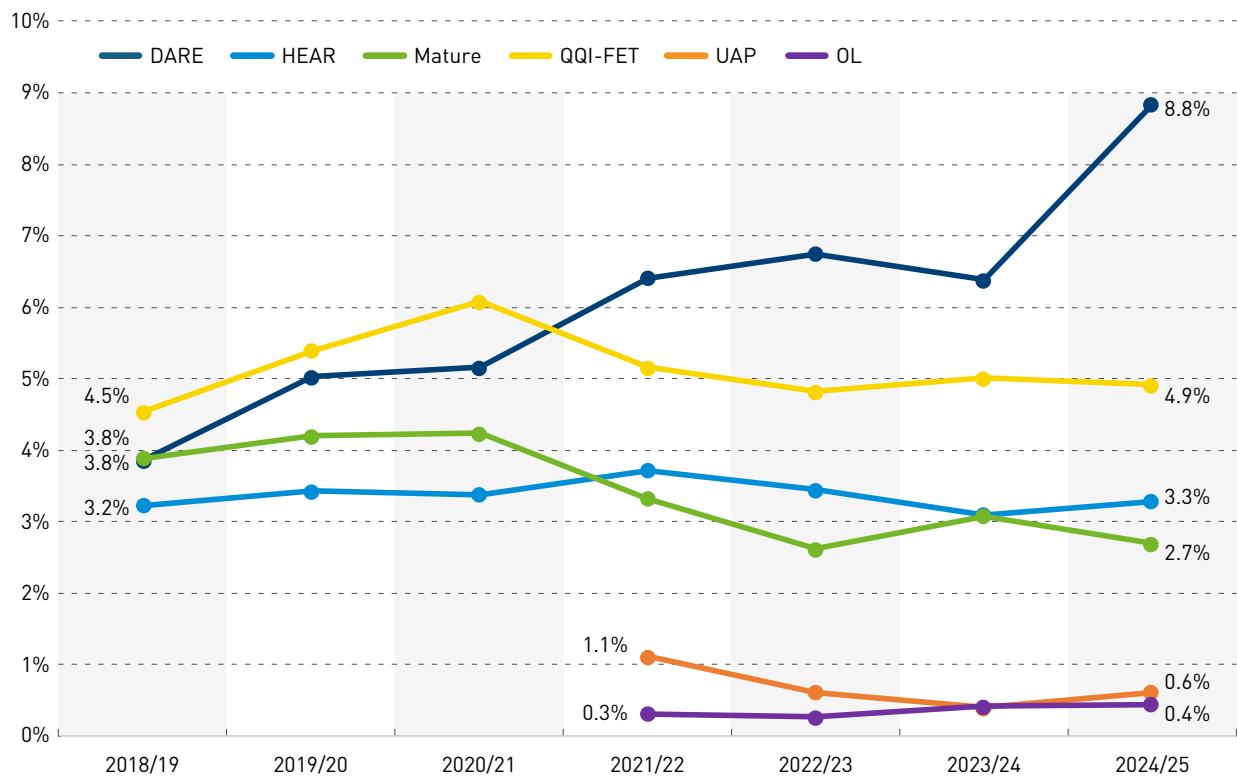


Figure 3 translates quota performance into actual entrant composition. The increase of DARE entrants, and decline in HEAR and Mature student proportions, indicate that widening participation remains uneven. Although total access representation may be positive, the internal distribution reveals patterns of selectivity, with certain programmes or applicant groups benefiting more than others. The figure thus reinforces the “burning-platform” argument raised in the commentary and suggests that structural inequalities persist despite overall progress.

Figure 4: Changes in Total Quota Percentage per Programme 2024/2025 entry

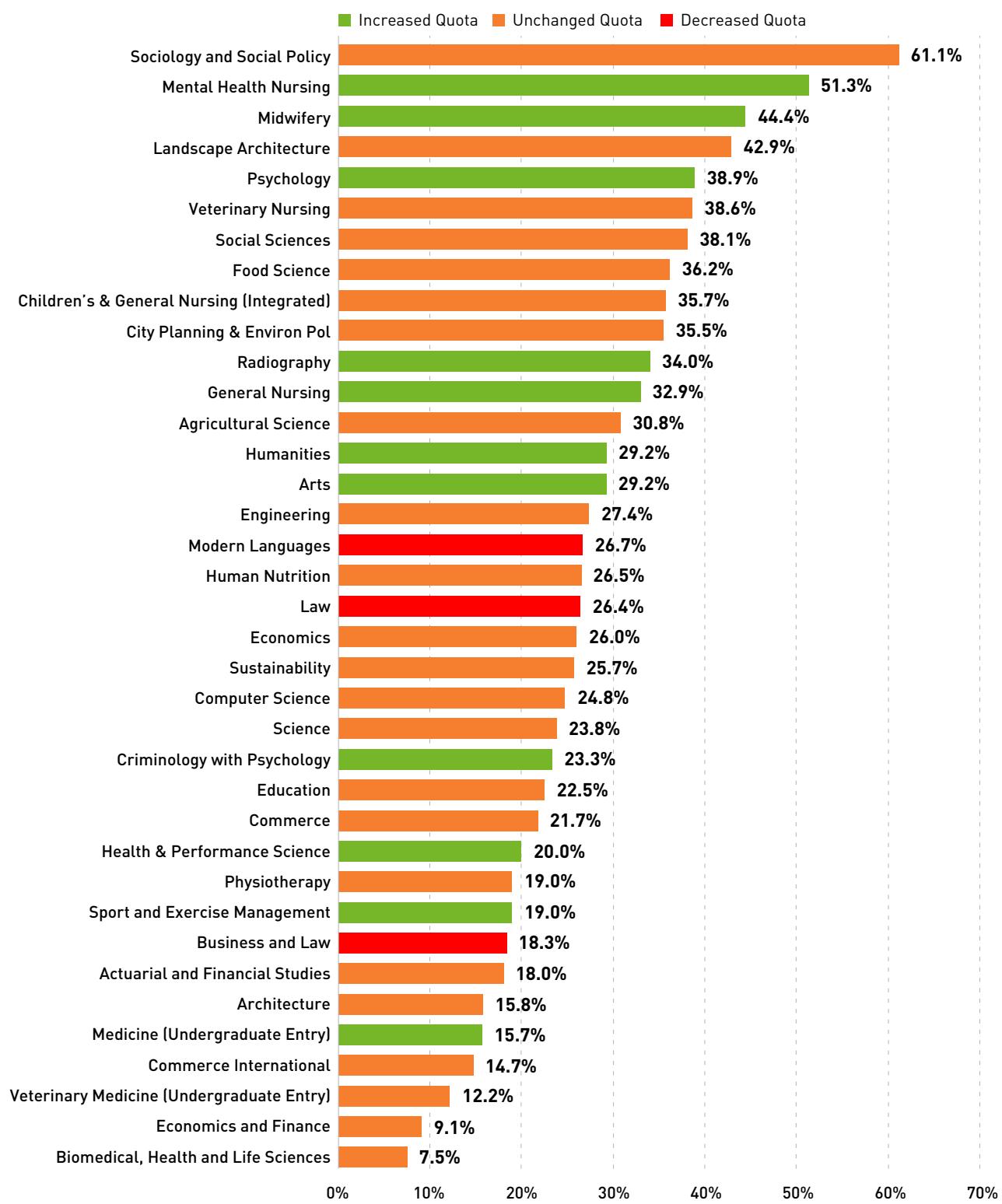
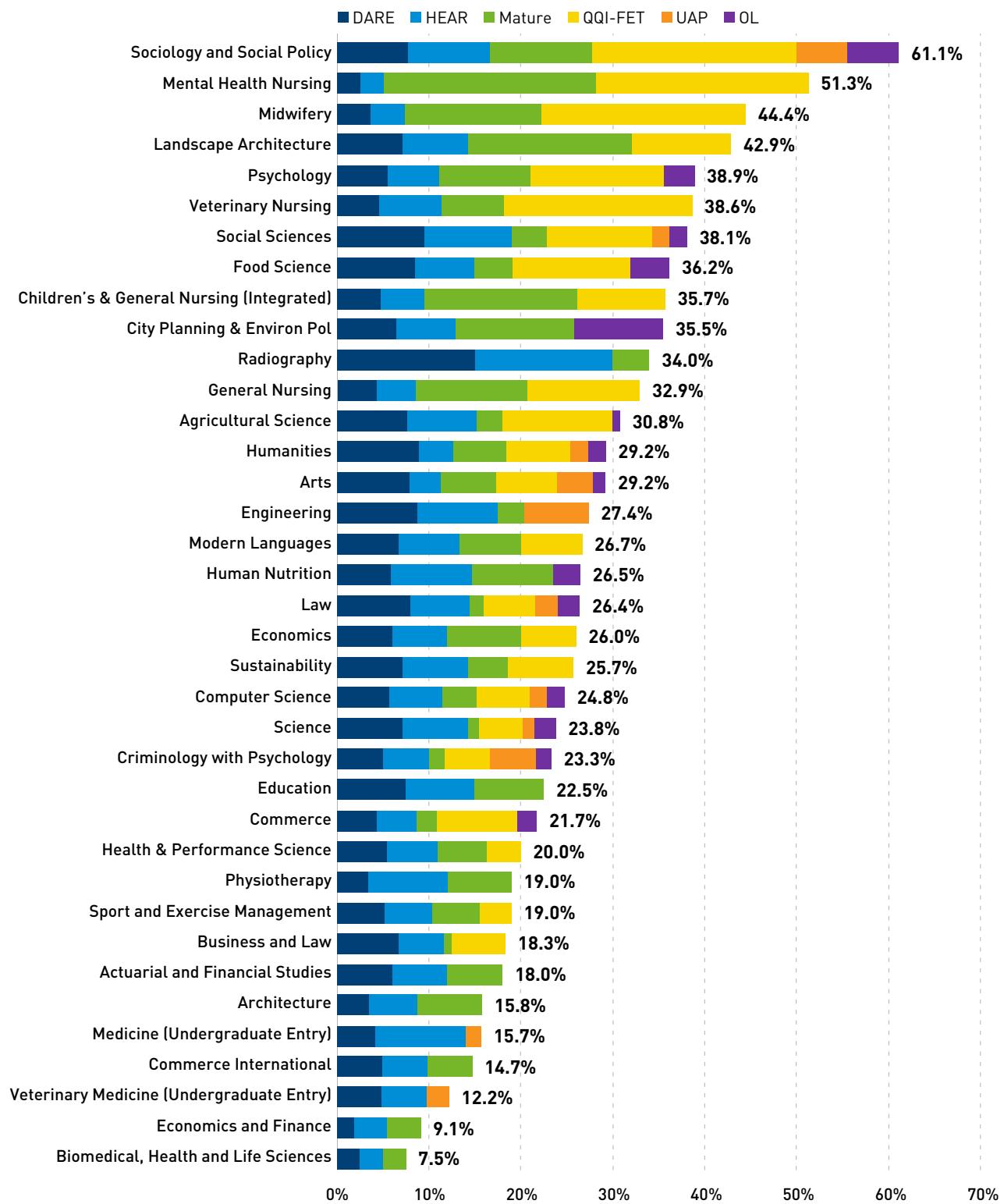


Figure 4 depicts changes to quotas at programme level. Most programmes maintain stable quotas year-on-year, but notable increases occurred in Health Sciences, including Medicine. The figure demonstrates incremental alignment with the University KPI that 25 percent of places be reserved for access entrants. However, the concentration of changes in only a few disciplines suggests an uneven institutional uptake. The area of Quotas will benefit from broader discussion at the WP Committee to explore ways to maximise entry for WP applicants.

Figure 5: Total Percentage Quota by Programme 2024



The data in figure 5 captures the proportion of each UCD programme's intake that is formally reserved for WP access entrants. The figure shows that most programmes meet or exceed the 25 percent target, but 16 programmes remain below it. It also raises a strategic question: are programmes meeting the quota through particular pathways (e.g., DARE) rather than balanced participation across all routes?

Figure 6: Percentage of Accepts per Pathway per Programme 2024-2025

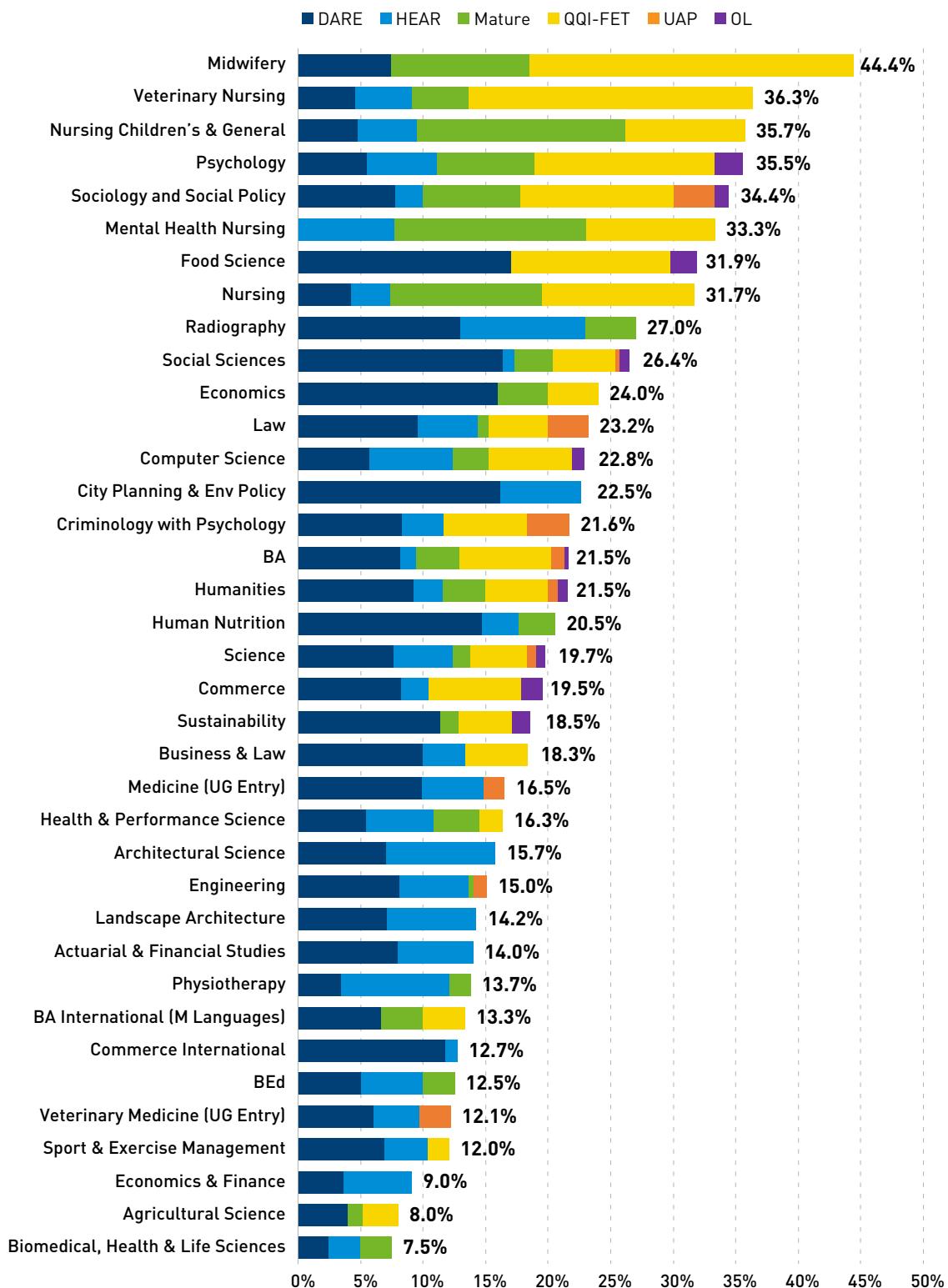
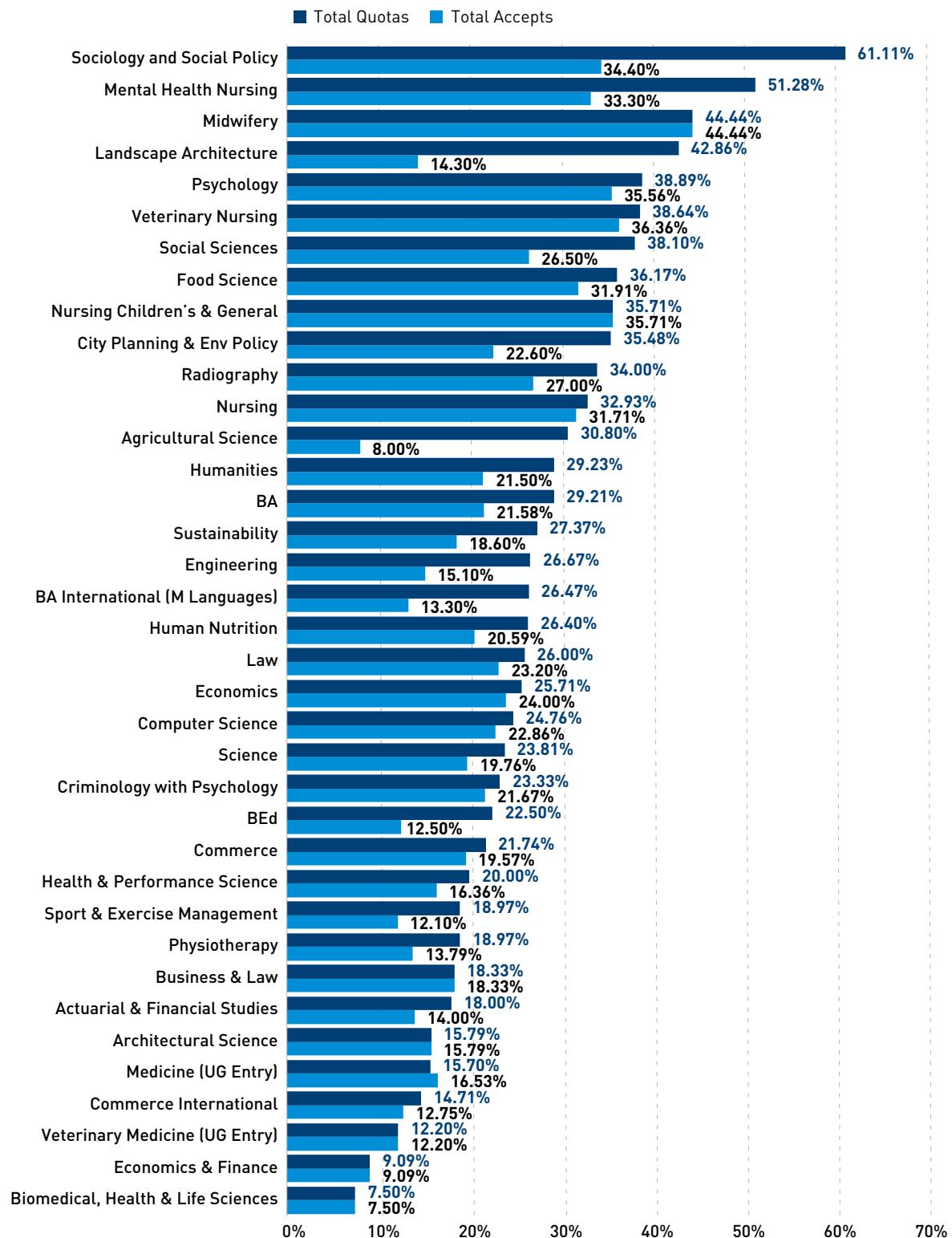


Figure 6 compares actual acceptances to the set quotas (shown in Figure 5) by entry route. It confirms a pattern of disproportionate DARE uptake, with HEAR, Mature, QQI-FET, and Open Learning acceptances generally lower. This underscores the conversion gap between quota and entry for some of the access cohorts. Programmes exceeding their DARE quota while under-recruiting from other pathways may need differentiated marketing, mentoring, or alternative initiatives to diversify their access intake profile.

Figure 7: Quota and Accepts Comparison per Programme 2024/2025



The final data figure compares quotas and acceptances side-by-side across programmes. It clearly illustrates where quotas are met, exceeded, or missed. Programmes surpassing their quotas demonstrate effective demand and outreach; those consistently below target reveal potential structural barriers. Figure 7 is useful for WP Leads or for programme boards to evaluate whether targets are realistic and whether new outreach adjustments are needed to attract and retain under-represented students.

Conclusion on Data

Data in this report provide a comprehensive visual overview of UCD's progress in implementing its "University for All" strategy. Together, these figures trace the trajectory of access initiatives across multiple entry pathways, from institutional quotas to programme-level outcomes. They reveal not only the University's commitment to widening participation but also the persistent disparities that remain between access routes.

Taken as a whole, the data present a mixed but ultimately optimistic picture of UCD's widening participation landscape. The University has made tangible advances—most notably in expanding quotas, exceeding DARE targets, and integrating inclusive practice across programmes. Yet, the data also expose enduring imbalances: HEAR, Mature, and QQI-FET pathways continue to underperform in some programme areas, and several programmes still fall short of the 25% access quota benchmark. The evidence underscores a key insight—widening participation cannot be achieved by quota increases alone. Sustained outreach, targeted support, and a continued commitment to Universal Design across all areas of the University are essential to achieving equity across all access routes. In this respect, the figures collectively serve not just as a record of progress, but as a call to action to ensure that UCD's vision of a truly inclusive "University for All" becomes a reality.

University for All

The widespread recognition of the value of Universal Design in creating inclusive student experiences was given a great boost nationally in 2023 with the HEA's PATH 4 Universal Design Fund Phase 1. Several national collaborative projects were funded including [ALTITUDE](#) - the national charter for the adoption of Universal Design. The charter was developed collaboratively by the Higher and Further Education sector with UCD playing a key role - the charter is based on UCD's [Toolkit for Universal Design in Higher Education](#). To support the charter's adoption and the embedding of Universal Design sectorally UCD Access and Lifelong Learning produced a second edition of the Toolkit which is provided as the 'how to' guide for those working to embed the ALTITUDE charter institutionally. This new edition of the Toolkit builds on UCD's experience of mainstreaming inclusion and provides a roadmap for institutions to implement Universal Design, capture good practice and identify areas for improvement. The development of this Toolkit was strengthened through extensive feedback from students and staff across Higher and Further Education and Training.

Digital Badges

To date, over 5,000 colleagues nationally have completed the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning with 515 in UCD alone. The increase in UCD numbers has been driven by the University for All Faculty Partnership Programme. Our team of University for All Faculty Partners from across every College in UCD have encouraged and facilitated their colleagues to complete the Badge every Autumn as part of the national rollouts and every Spring in local rollouts. Interest within the sector for Universal Design training for colleagues not directly involved in teaching and learning, led to the UCD Access and Lifelong Learning/AHEAD partnership to develop a Digital Badge for [Universal Design Beyond the Classroom](#) in 2023.

With funding from the HEA National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, this sibling Badge has the same format as the teaching and learning focused badge, with peer groups, online content and a redesign activity. This badge crucially expands the UDL framework to include student and staff support, engagement, services and operations with concrete examples from Further and Higher Education professionals around the country. The development of the Badge was a cross-sectoral partnership, and the resulting Badge represents that highly successful tertiary collaboration. A closed pilot rollout of the Badge was organised alongside the annual national rollout of the Teaching & Learning Badge in 2023, with a full launch in 2024 bringing the UDL framework to a wider audience and context. To date, over 400 colleagues have completed this Badge nationally, over 130 of those being UCD personnel.

Never content in sitting still, the UCD/AHEAD partnership secured funding from the HEA Forum in 2024 to redevelop the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning. The new version of the Badge features case studies capturing the evolving UDL practice from across the sector and reflecting the 3.0 version of the [UDL Guidelines](#). The first national roll out of this redeveloped badge is scheduled for Autumn 2025.

University for All Professional Staff Partnership Programme

Launched in Autumn 2023, the University for All Professional Staff Partnership Programme supports and accelerates the implementation of Universal Design throughout UCD Student Supports and Services. Building on the work of the University for All Faculty Partnership Programme which has seen the widespread adoption of UDL training and practices by UCD faculty and teaching staff, this Programme has built the Universal Design capacity of the University's professional staff colleagues to ensure that student supports and services are accessible for all students enhancing the excellent practice already in place. This pilot focused on colleagues who are in roles that attract, retain, develop and support the diverse student population in UCD. Following a competitive University wide selection process, 9 staff were appointed in 2023:

- Dr Kate Collins - Programme Manager Global Campus, School of Business
- Dr Colleen Doyle - Global Alliance & Networks Officer, UCD Global
- Karen Maye - School Placement Lead and Head of PME Outreach Initiatives, School of Education
- Caroline McTeigue - Project Lead Customer & Curriculum Operations, UCD Registry
- Dr Niamh Nestor - Head of Service, Student Advisers
- Adam Tattersall - Technology Enhanced Learning Manager, School of Medicine
- Ryan Teevan - Head of Educational Technology Services, IT Services
- Emma Somers - Mature Student Adviser
- Jiaqi Zhang - Technology Integration Manager, Innovation Academy

Staff Partners have encouraged their UCD colleagues to complete the Digital Badge in Universal Design Beyond the Classroom, facilitated on both the national and local rollouts and have implemented UD projects in their areas of work. The University for All Professional Staff Partners are producing case studies which capture the breadth of this implementation across different but interrelated contexts, including:

- Accessibility statements templates for digital solutions
- Mentoring for student teachers on placement
- Using technology to improve the learner experience in medical education
- Increasing study abroad opportunities for underrepresented students

- Supporting student onboarding and asynchronous orientation through flexibility and choice
- Implementing Universal Design in a creative student maker space
- Empowering UCD Registry to deliver clear, accessible communications

Student Partnership Programme

In order to ensure the work of University for All continues to be student focused and student centred, a University for All Student Partnership Programme was launched in 2023. The initial Programme saw 7 Students appointed in 2023/2024 and 10 in 2024/2025 with an open call across all programmes and colleges. The core role of the Student Partners is to raise the student body's awareness of the diversity on the UCD campus and inclusive practices through Universal Design. In that, the Programme has proved successful, with the Student Partners adopting the language of Universal Design and making it their own while raising awareness of University for All among their peers.

They have co-created and co-delivered training to the Student Ambassadors, Clubs and Societies Officers as well students in the Innovation Academy and Landscape Architecture. Student Partners led creative social media campaigns showcasing Universal Design in action on campus, had street interviews with students exploring their barriers to inclusion and asked them: 'what's your UCD ick?'. Student Partners reworked the University for All Roadshow into 'Incluza-Palooza' in February 2025. This Inclusive UCD Week saw Student Partners organise a range of activities across campus including pop-ups to meet students, gather feedback on their views on inclusive spaces in UCD, introduce them to Universal Design, and importantly give out freebies. Over 400 responses were collected with a high demand from students for more quiet spaces, and areas to work together, leisure and relaxation. Our 'main stage' event on Wednesday 12 February added to that excitement and energy with face-painting, prize draws, a NaviLens treasure hunt, Universal Design teasers and test your knowledge quizzes, and bracelet making. The week was a collaboration with the Student Union, UCD Dignity & Respect and various student societies.

University for All Student Partners Eleanor O'Kelly and Zara Brennan presented on the work of the Programme at EAN in University of Galway in June 2025.



Students enjoying Incluza-Palooza 2025

University for All Symposium 2024

The annual event known for showcasing innovative examples of inclusive practice and Universal Design (UD), held special significance in 2024 as we saw the launch of two welcome and exciting additions to the Access sector:

UCD Registrar Professor Colin Scott launched 'Unlocking Inclusion' the second edition of our Toolkit for Inclusive Higher Education. Already a much utilised tool in UD workshops, this publication builds upon the original toolkit while maintaining its premise of offering practical guidance and benchmarks for UD implementation across the four pillars of an inclusive campus.

The UCD Access & Lifelong Learning team with our partners in AHEAD launched the 'Beyond the Classroom' Digital Badge. Dr Bairbre Fleming, project lead on the Badge development, emphasised that the Badge offered parity of esteem for professional staff colleagues and recognised those working in the 'third space'.

A real highlight of the day was Sarah Diedro Jordão's keynote address on the role of Belonging in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion movements. Sarah's framing of belonging as the opportunity to be entirely and unapologetically oneself in a space, the thought-provoking keynote encouraged attendees to collaborate and discuss their biggest hopes and limitless solutions for progressing inclusivity in UCD. Examining the reasons for which Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) movements may stagnate or fail in large institutions, Sarah underlined the necessity of collaboration and accountability in our accessibility endeavours. Stating, "How we do our work is as important as the work we do," Sarah encouraged attendees to treat one another with kindness and respect, and to reflect on why we pursue social justice initiatives, our roles within them and the benefits of embracing diversity within our DEIB movements.

The afternoon session showcased how the University for All community has thrived within UCD over the last year. Lightning presentations demonstrated the passion, innovation and genuine enthusiasm for promoting inclusion via Universal Design principles that exists in all areas of the UCD community. Members of the Faculty Partnership Programme, the Professional Staff Partnership Programme and the Student Partners demonstrated how they have advocated for equity and change in their respective fields. Addressing everything from student orientation to AI in assessment, a common thread existed in all of these projects: a sincere desire to cultivate a sustainable community where all members can belong. Belonging in education enables all of us to thrive.



Speakers and participants at the 2024 University for All Symposium

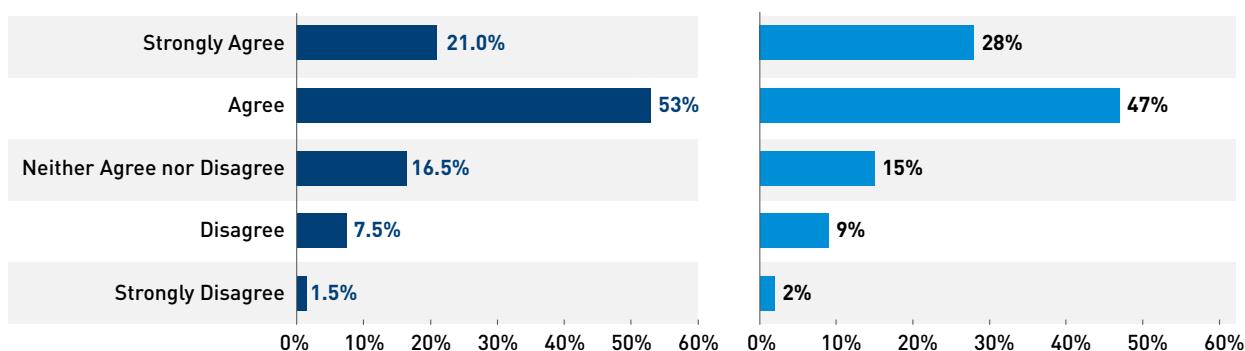
University for All Survey 2024

To track the measurable shifts in how inclusion is understood and enacted across the institution, and to inform future action, UCD undertook an institution-wide survey in 2020, targeting both students and staff, to capture perceptions and experiences related to inclusion and the University for All pillars. This survey was repeated in February 2024 to assess progress, identify persistent gaps, and deepen institutional understanding of what an inclusive university truly looks like in practice.

2,116 students responded to the survey, compared to 2,867 in 2020. It must be noted that the 2020 survey was conducted during lockdown and it is acknowledged that engagement with online surveys was higher at that time. We were pleased with the student response rate which was driven by a sustained social media and on campus campaign by the University for All Student Partners. Of those who completed the survey, the number of students linked with Access & Lifelong Learning increased from 19% to 27%. The reported awareness of UCD's University for All strategy increased from 59.5% to 78.5% demonstrating the significant impact of the work of both UCD Access & Lifelong Learning and the three Partnership Programmes.

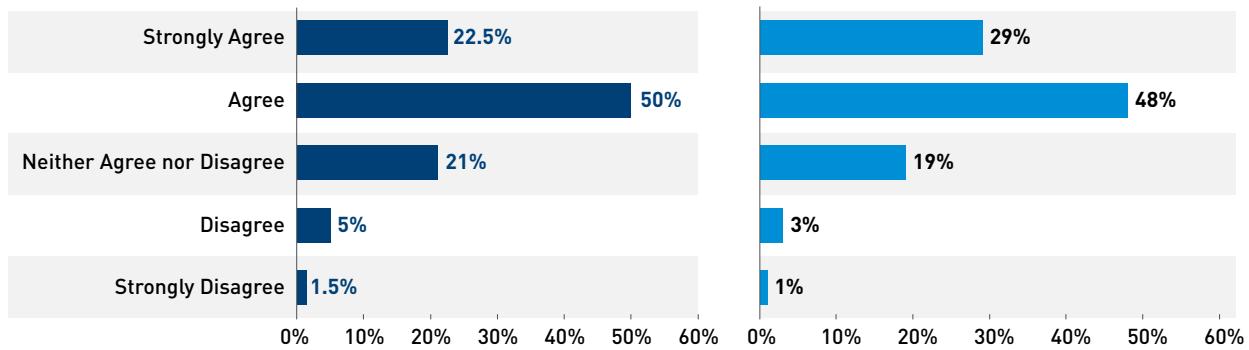
Across three out of four pillars there were positive increases in responses, with the exception being the physical campus.

Figure 8: Comparison of responses on the Teaching & Learning pillar: “In my experience UCD’s teaching, learning and assessment practices are inclusive for all students” in 2020 (left) and 2024 (right).



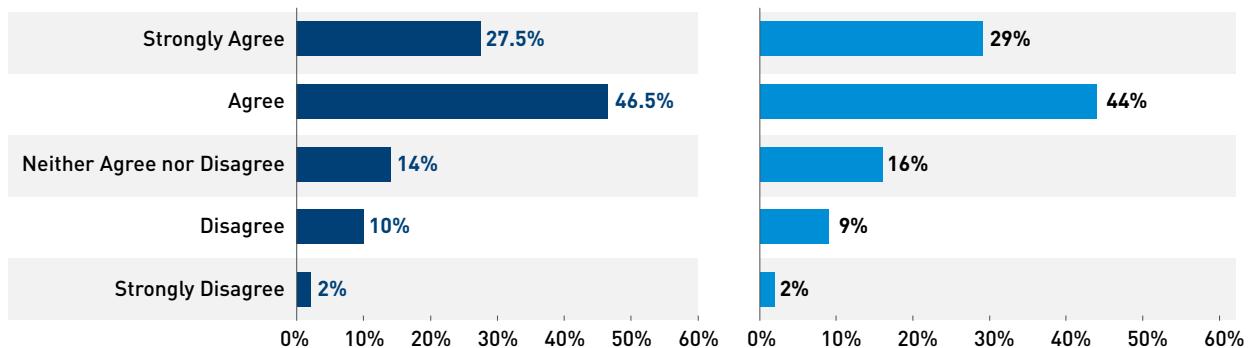
Regarding Teaching & Learning, students had positive comments on continuous assessment and the diversity of assessment methods, as well as the flexibility of faculty responding to the needs of learners. Conversely, there were negative responses where there was a lack of choice and diversity in assessment linked to concerns around the misuse of AI. This mirrors the feedback staff in student support roles have heard from students.

Figure 9: Comparison of responses on the Student Supports and Services pillar: “In my experience UCD’s Student Supports and Services are inclusive for all students” in 2020 (left) and 2024 (right).



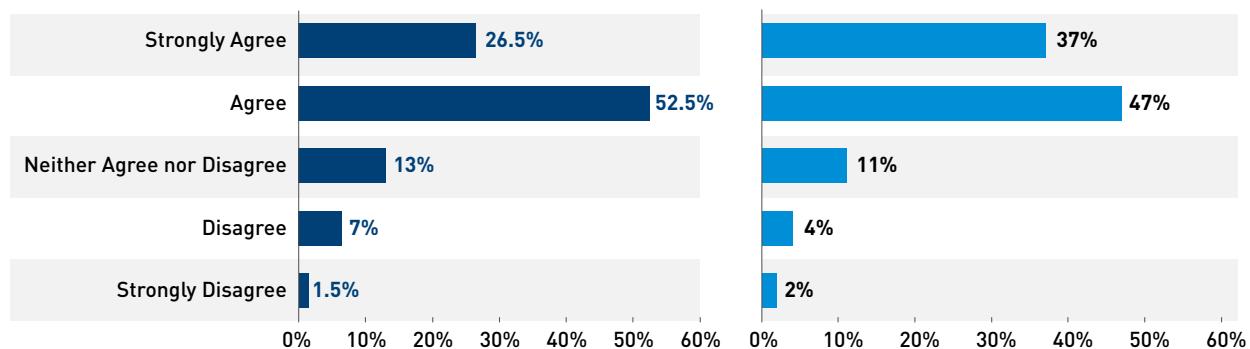
Students positively responded to the availability, approachability and advertisement of Supports and Services recognising the work of professional colleagues in meeting the needs of students. There was definite room for improvement in how support services communicate with them and highlighted the need for greater communication of the availability of services and where to find information about them given the size and complexity of the institution.

Figure 10: Comparison of responses on the Physical Campus pillar: “In my experience UCD’s physical campus is inclusive for all students” in 2020 (left) and 2024 (right).



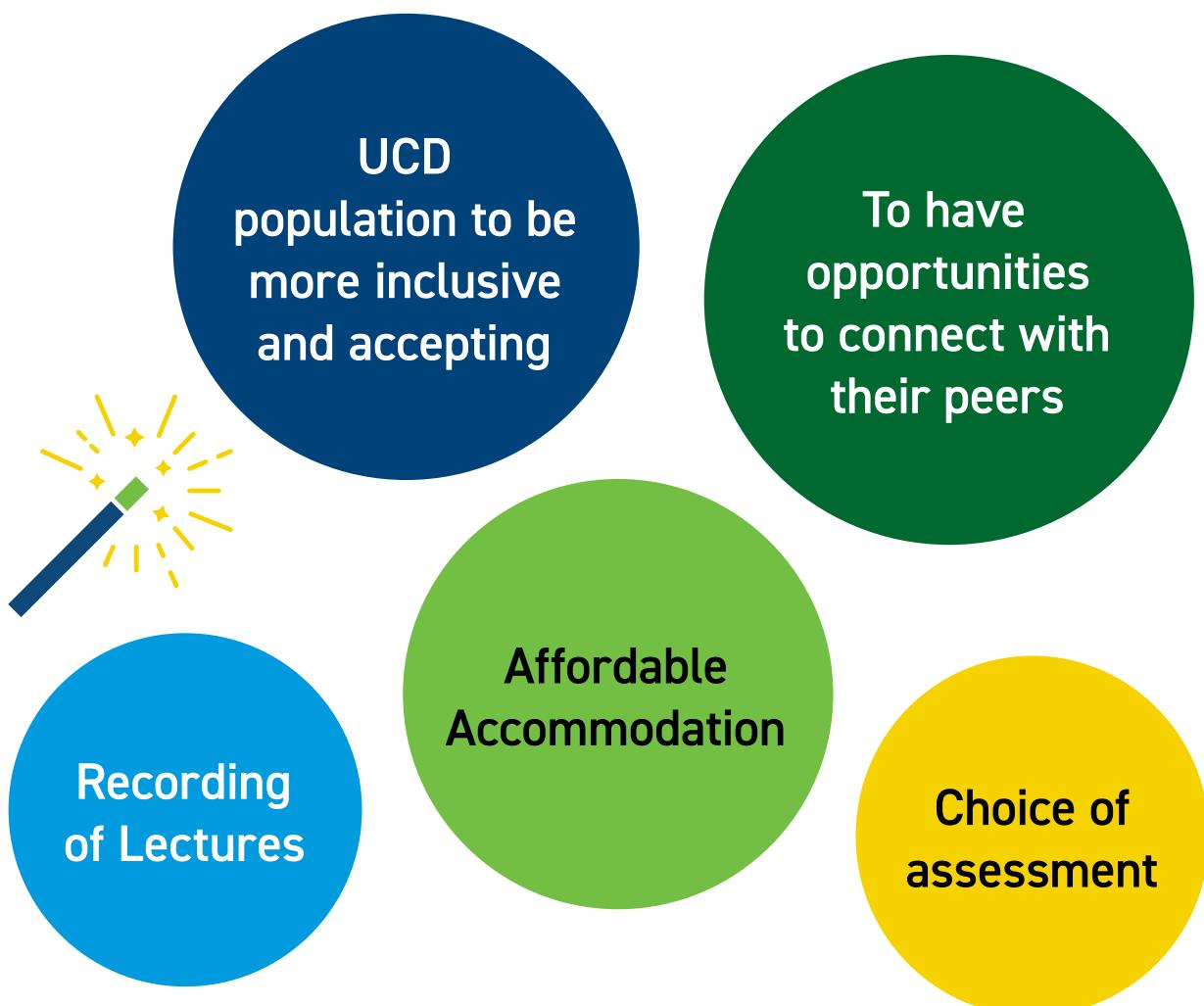
The physical campus pillar was the only pillar not to see an increase in positive responses despite the huge amount of work in improving the accessibility of the campus carried out by our colleagues in Estates. However, as we see improvements, students are increasingly aware of the areas of campus that still have accessibility issues. New buildings on campus and renovations such as those in the Science Building and Newman upper floors are creating a more noticeable gap with the legacy areas of campus which will require even more significant retrofitting works.

Figure 11: Comparison of responses on the Technological Environment pillar: “In my experience UCD’s technological environment is inclusive for all students” in 2020 (left) and 2024 (right).



Again, considerable work has been done by our colleagues in IT Services to enhance the accessibility of all UCD digital interfaces and meet the requirements of the Web Accessibility legislation. Areas for improvement highlighted by student responses focused on the expectations of digital literacy and ensuring digital skills training is built into programmes to ensure equity.

For the section of the survey which asked if they had a magic wand, what would they change, the most common responses from students were:



Class and Classism

2025 saw the Widening Participation Committee and Access and Lifelong Learning focus on class and classism in higher education. Class is often overlooked in Irish society with discussions focusing instead on finances and income which is often seen as the remedy to supporting students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This focus on classism moved the discourse from one of 'deficit' to a critical view of the persistent, systemic barriers that can undermine student success. Classism, as explored this year, is often a hidden force that manifests as financial stress, a lack of cultural capital, and feelings of being a "fish out of water". The discussions we had on classism highlighted what were described as the 'injuries of class'. The work of our colleague, Marlene Douglas, Student Finance Officer, in her autoethnographic research provided a personal, yet sociological biography that contributed to understanding the realities of poverty and oppression for the working-class.

The January meeting of the Committee, saw Marlene present her research with a selection of thought provoking extracts on her lived experience. A series of case study scenarios were then presented by student Access Leaders who assumed the personas for discussion by the Committee. The scenarios were based on the real experiences of students which show how class creates barriers to belonging and inclusion. This exercise proved extremely effective in provoking discussion and challenging our individual and collective practices as a University.

Entitled 'Fit in or Lose out', the 2025 University for All Symposium explored casual everyday classism and situated the discussion within the Universal Design for Learning Framework 3.0 with its focus on learner identity. We were privileged to have as our keynote speaker Professor Jo Littler, Goldsmiths University of London. Her work has made significant contributions to the understanding of classism in higher education through her critical analysis of the concept of meritocracy. Littler's work highlights how the discourse of meritocracy blames individuals from lower social class backgrounds for their lack of success, portraying them as "lacking in aspiration" rather than recognising the systemic barriers they face within educational institutions and society at large. Jo's keynote established the context which was followed by Marlene's work and a version of the student persona scenarios exercise.

The UDL workshop at the Symposium built on this and explored how the new UDL framework can be used to tackle classism in higher education practices and encouraged participants to think of Plus 1 changes they could start making in their work. Advice offered included:

- Review the examples used in teaching and learning, add in one marginalised voice as a

resource to be more representative.

- Reduces stress linked to marginalisation: Financial stress and imposter syndrome can heighten anxiety and reduce focus.
- Include information on all potentially hidden costs related to a module removing assumptions about baseline experience or knowledge.
- Look for ways to eliminate all costs and advocate for the removal of additional costs if they are beyond your control.
- Enable access across devices, costs, and resource availability. Students from lower-income backgrounds may not have consistent access to reliable devices, quiet study spaces, or other resources we may take for granted.
- Makes success pathways explicit to all students. Students unfamiliar with academic culture may struggle to decode hidden expectations.
- Support unfamiliarity with academic norms. Students with limited academic support outside university may not have models for time management or strategic learning.



Professor John Brannigan, Blessed Fonkoh, Soffiyah Adewoyin, Professor Colin Scott, Professor Jo Littler, Dr Bairbre Fleming, Niamh Andrews Fraher, Dr Lisa Padden



Professor Jo Littler delivering her keynote



Marlene Douglas presenting her research



Access Leaders in action at the 2025 Symposium

Contributions from Programme Boards and Units

Agriculture, Food Science and Human Nutrition

Professor Olaf Schmidt

The School of Agriculture and Food Science (SAFS) has robust structures supporting the University for All strategy. Professor Schmidt serves as the WP Representative on the School's EDI Committee and the Alternative Admission Pathways Committee. The Chair of the EDI Committee, Professor Trudee Fair, is noted for promoting the integration of UfA, EDI, and Dignity & Respect objectives for both staff and students. Additionally, the School benefits from two Change Leaders on the UfA Faculty Partnership Programme, Dr Deirdre O'Connor and Associate Professor Karen Keaveney, and a highly engaged School Representative, Damien Dempsey, on the Widening Participation Outreach Coordinating Network.

Widening Participation/UfA is a prioritised topic within the School. It is the first standing item at all EDI Committee meetings, and relevant points are consistently raised by Professor Schmidt at School Executive and Programme Board meetings. WP admissions data are formally reviewed and discussed annually at the School Executive and full School Meeting levels as part of broader discussions on student admissions and programme data. The three programmes offered—Agricultural Science (DN250), Food Science (DN261), and Human Nutrition (DN262)—exhibit different applicant trends, likely reflecting varied geographical, rural, and urban backgrounds of students.

Key Actions for 2024/2025

Enrolment and Pathways

The School is committed to widening participation by continuously reviewing its enrollment plan. A specific focus is on increasing the number of students entering via QQI-FET entry and other alternative pathways. The School plans to increase its interactions with both QQI-FET course providers and DEIS schools. Furthermore, the School is expanding its Open Learning offerings, with a total of 10 additional places planned across the three programmes in 2025.

Recruitment and Outreach

Given the primarily rural and geographically dispersed target audience for the Agricultural Science degree (DN250), the outreach portfolio is extensive. Planned events include:

- Information Evenings in various regional locations.
- A Virtual QQI-FET Entry day (January 15, 2026).
- A Farm Walk & Talk (March 11, 2026).
- Two Summer Schools (June 3 and 4, 2026).

These activities complement existing efforts like the Know Your Ag Quiz in conjunction with Macra Na Feirme and the Irish Agricultural Science Teachers Association, which brings 200 additional students to campus. Critically, all outreach materials include information on alternative entry routes and student supports.

Universal Design

The School reports excellent engagement with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), noting that 36 colleagues have received the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning. However, there are no recipients of the Digital Badge for Universal Design Beyond the Classroom among administrative or support staff, a statistic attributed partially to recent retirements and a Programme Office re-organisation. A key action for the year is to push interest in Beyond the Classroom.

Lessons Learned

The primary lesson learned is that WP/UfA is a continuing process and effort. The School acknowledges that yearly data fluctuations can be demotivating, particularly when the underlying causes—some of which may be external—are difficult to explain to colleagues. The commitment remains to persevere with the strategy and actions despite these challenges.

Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Planning & Environmental Policy

Dr Ellen Rowley

Historically, sharing of WP data within the School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy (ALAPEP) has been inconsistent. However, since October 2024, WP has become a standing item at School Executive meetings, occurring three times per trimester. WP Admissions and participation data was last shared at the January 2025 school meeting and the most updated data will be shared at the October 2025 meeting. Additionally, WP elements are shared within the School's Teaching and Learning Committee.

To support implementation, a WP working group was established early in 2025 comprising representatives from each of ALAPEP's disciplines: Ellen Rowley from Architecture, Paula Russell from Planning, Italo Sousa de Sena and Tensay Meles from Environmental Policy. This group met before the summer 2025 during which Ellen shared WP data and outlined the challenges in admissions. Paula Russell was able to describe the Open Learning route she originated for City Planning & Environmental Policy. The group has links with the School's Teaching and Learning Committee (through both Ellen and Tensay) and since October 2025, Ellen has taken on the role of ALAPEP's Director of Teaching and Learning.

The School's quality review in October 2024 recommended redefining the WP lead role as "WP Dean" or "Director of WP" to give greater visibility and responsibility to the role. This has been enacted. It is clear that the new Dean and the HOS of the School want to improve matters. Architecture's admissions figures remain low in comparison with other programmes in the University. The fact that Architecture has no relationship with QQI-FET access pathways needs to be addressed, longer term. But as a more immediate plan, Open Learning and the University Access Programme pathways must be pursued.

Significant progress has been made since the 2021 Implementation Plan. The 2023/4 data show that Landscape Architecture shows the highest access student participation at 36.1% within the School. The City Planning and Environmental Policy degree, now a four-year programme, has an Open Learning progression pathway though uptake is low, and a 33.7% access student participation rate. Architecture continues to have lower than average access student participation (28.5%), lacking a QQI-FET pathway but always fulfilling its HEAR offers, for instance. All three programmes have improved since the last data report.

A primary challenge for our programmes in 2025/26 remains the physical accessibility of the Richview campus buildings. Current WP efforts are focused on improving physical accessibility, in the face of a bigger University-led/funded refurbishment plan for Richview. In Spring trimester 2024/5, a M.Arch module (Design/Build) collaborated with Irish Wheelchair Association and UCD Estates, Access team (Liam Brady and Tom Parlin) to design and build: 1) a ramp into the Building Lab; 2) Way finding in the Richview Building with priority to visual impairment, incorporating braille;

3) an accessible play-bench with built-in draughts board. This collaboration is ongoing and will be pursued in Spring 2026 with the same module.

WP at ALAPEP must also continue the work of former faculty partner, Alice Clancy in increasing UDL practices in teaching, and encouraging staff, especially part-time professional staff who are Design Fellows, to engage in UDL training. Currently their contracts do not allow for training.

Key actions planned for the 2025/2026 academic year include:

- Holding a "University for All Toolkit" workshop for the ALAPEP school meeting this December.
- Increasing the Open Learning offerings across ALAPEP while critically analysing this pathway in the CPEP degree.
- Pursuing improved physical accessibility of Richview buildings at the university level, with hopes for new structures at the Newstead campus: This includes a plan to roll out neurodivergent sensitive break-out space in Richview with new Head of Architecture, Paul Kenny. As well as, ongoing collaboration with the Irish Wheelchair Association and UCD Estates to make student-led designed and built small interventions with History of Art students and design 'Landing' spaces at Building 71 – underpinned by neurodivergence in design (Spring 2026, in planning now).
- Increasing ALAPEP staff uptake of Introduction of Universal Design in UCD on Brightspace and the Digital Badges. There has been a decrease in uptake and this needs to be addressed.
- Initiating an examination of the financial costs of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Architecture and Planning.

Arts & Humanities

Dr Fionnuala Walsh

Significant progress has been made in the College of Arts & Humanities since 2021, particularly in Universal Design for teaching & learning, outreach, alternative pathway promotion, and accessibility awareness.

WP data is regularly shared and discussed within the College. Annually, in spring, the WP Lead presents updated data to the Programme Board, followed by a discussion. Open WP forums are also held each year for wider College engagement.

Local implementation structures include a change team comprising University for All Faculty Partners, the VP for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), the WP Outreach Representative, and the College EDI Committee. The WP Lead also liaises with the Associate Dean and reports annually to the College Principal. WP is a standing item on the College EDI Committee and is often discussed under EDI or Teaching & Learning portfolios in School Executive meetings across the College.

Key progress areas include:

UDL and Disability Support: There's been a continued increase in colleagues completing the Universal Design for Teaching and Learning Digital Badge. Videos of faculty UDL re-design projects are available, serving as a valuable resource. Several workshops for staff on supporting students with disabilities have been successfully organised.

Thinking Inclusion Workshops 2023-25: Annual workshops organised by the WP Lead and College VP for EDI have included Toolkit sessions, Access student panels, and showcases of outreach activities.

Alternative Pathway Promotion: The Schools of History and English contribute to the University Access Programme for Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Law. Efforts have also been made to encourage Schools to add modules to Open Learning offerings, with over 200 modules available in 2024/25.

Outreach: Successful initiatives including Access Classics continue. Lifelong Learning courses are also provided by several Schools and efforts continue to further develop the offerings. We have also held annual 'Shakespeare Day' and 'Thinking Creatively' events since 2024, bringing over 100 each year students from several DEIS and associated secondary schools to campus, with the aim of increasing applications from non-traditional students.

The focus of WP in the College in 2024/2025 included:

- Coordination and centralisation of outreach activities.
- Ensuring accessibility and universal design in the Newman Building renovations, and representation on the College Space Committee.
- Embedding UDL into teaching and assessment practice across the College, building on the relatively high uptake of the UDL badge.
- Encouraging completion of the Digital Badge for Universal Design Beyond the Classroom by non-teaching staff.
- Continuing outreach work with DEIS secondary schools and promoting Access, HEAR, Mature, and Open Learning pathways to address typically unfilled quotas.
- Raising awareness around classism and the struggles faced by low-income students especially in areas such as internships, study abroad, and field trips. In Spring 2025 we held a toolkit session on classism and the Programme Forum reviewed the costs of field trips and reading lists at School level.

The greatest challenge facing WP work in the College is the lack of a designated budget. While Faculty Partnership funding has been beneficial, its conclusion raises concerns about sustainable alternative funding streams. Lessons learned emphasise the importance of structured activities, planned annual events, regular communication among WP stakeholders, and the enhanced efficiency gained through formal links between EDI and WP.



Selection of artefacts presented to visiting DEIS school students at Thinking Creatively 2025

Business

Aoife Doherty

The UCD College of Business has embedded Widening Participation (WP) and the University for All (UfA) agenda into central governance and reporting structures, ensuring that inclusive education is a sustained priority. To drive accountability and monitor ongoing progress with agreed targets, widening participation data is regularly communicated across the College and the Quinn School of Business. This data is a standing agenda item in admissions reports presented to the College of Business Executive. Further to this, the Undergraduate Business Governing Board—which oversees all admissions—receives this data routinely.

The College's commitment is supported by a number of School and College committee structures including the Undergraduate Business Governing Board, Teaching and Learning Committee and the Widening Participation Committee. The Governing Board, which includes the Associate Dean, VP Teaching and Learning, WP Lead along with Subject Area Heads and Academic Directors, ensures that widening participation is at the forefront of academic and strategic decisions. To foster a culture of inclusion, the College of Business provides comprehensive training and awareness programs:

- Staff are encouraged to complete the 'Introduction to Universal Design in UCD' training on Brightspace.
- Resources for Faculty and Teaching Staff: In the College Teaching and Learning area on Brightspace, a section is dedicated to sharing resources on UDL and on inclusive assessment.
- New Faculty Orientation: All new faculty members participate in an orientation that covers the University for All agenda, Widening Participation initiatives, and UDL principles.

Throughout the College and all at levels of study, there are a range of financial supports and scholarships in place to increase and promote the broadest level of student participation and engagement, including a new multi-year scholarship for undergraduate students and stipends for activities like internships and study trips.

A further key element of the undergraduate scholarship programme is its focus on building a robust community of practice. This involves regular peer-to-peer and faculty dialogue, and crucially, directly involves students in shaping the programme's future. By engaging students in our School Ambassador roles and learning initiatives, we receive critical feedback that guides our policy decisions, such as the structure and funding of our internship supports, ensuring our efforts evolve to meet student and community needs.

Since the 2021 plan, the College of Business has seen strong engagement with the inaugural Open Learning (OL) pathway, which started as a pilot and has seen increased progression to the Commerce programme. Key actions planned for the 2024/2025 academic year build on previous successful activities and include focus on the following:

Outreach: Enhancing connection and engagement with Further Education providers for the QQI-FET entry route including the introduction of QQI-FET information day in the Quinn School of Business. Continuing engagement with DEIS and Linked Schools, offering free places on summer schools to bring students to the School.

Pathways: Governing Board review and consideration of additional QQI-FET pathways to business programmes currently not served by this route. Similar for Open Learning entry pathways through the Governing Board. The focus of this activity is to provide further entry opportunities in particular for programmes that are currently underserved.

Physical Space: Improving physical space, including the introduction of NaviLens and consideration of how best to introduce and make available a multi-purpose student sensory room.

College Communications: Re-aligning engagement between the EDI Committee, WP Committee, and T&L Committee at the College level.

Universal Design: Promoting higher uptake and engagement with Universal Design Badges through T&L communications, weekly newsletter, and the active work of the College of Business UfA Faculty Partners.

Careers Network

Dr David Foster

Regarding the communication of local WP data, Leonie Phipps, Career & Skills Consultant, acts as a point of liaison with the Access & Lifelong Learning team and regularly provides updates for Careers Network colleagues. Sophie Carey, Senior Manager, sits on the Student Recruitment Network, which frequently discusses WP data for incoming students, and this information is disseminated to the Careers Network team as needed.

Local structures supporting UfA implementation include Dr David Foster's membership of the University's Widening Participation Committee and Sophie Carey's membership of the Widening Participation Outreach Network

All Careers Network staff are expected to complete the "Introduction to Universal Design in UCD" training, with student-facing colleagues expected to undertake the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning. Other staff are strongly encouraged to complete the Digital Badge for Universal Design Beyond the Classroom.

While Widening Participation/University for All is not a standing agenda item at all meetings, time is regularly allocated to these areas at the Careers Network's bi-annual Impact Days and annual Strategy Day. A WP self-assessment workshop was held in June 2024 during the Careers Network's Strategy Day, which led to the creation of a 12-month WP action plan. Leonie Phipps is responsible for coordinating this action plan and liaising with the Access & Lifelong Learning team on actions as appropriate.

The Careers Network is committed to continuously improving its offerings and accessibility for all students, in line with UfA principles. Examples of progress on its WP action plan include the development of an accessibility checklist for print/digital materials, implementation of Navilens QR codes in the office and on College Career Guides, and update of the "College to Career" video series to incorporate universal design principles, e.g. captioning and colour contrast. The Careers Network website has recently been migrated to the UCD design library, which has led to significant improvements in its accessibility. A suite of resources for neurodivergent students and students with disabilities has been developed and is available on the website.

Additional supports in 2024/2025 for Access students include:

- Graduate programme applications information session
- Career mentoring information session
- Think Again Scholars stage 2 Introduction to the Careers Network
- Think Again Scholars stage 3 & 4 Introduction to the Careers Network
- Summer internships information session
- Access Law Challenge information session
- Mature student workshop (job search & CVs)
- Sanctuary Scholars workshop (job market, CVs)
- Three CV Clinics
- Four Careers Drop in Sessions

In 2025-26, the Careers Network will focus on:

- Providing ongoing training and professional development opportunities for the team in WP related areas.
- Reviewing and updating events, resources and promotional materials for accessibility.
- Continuing to encourage the uptake of Universal Design badges by staff.

Engineering

Dr Md Salauddin

The local WP data for Engineering is scheduled to be presented at a College-level workshop in December 2025 and subsequently at the Engineering Programme Board meeting in January 2026. A comprehensive report on the WP data will be submitted to the College in early January 2026, ahead of the presentation. Making UfA a standing item at the Programme Board will facilitate ongoing monitoring and the development of targeted actions.

Key partners in the implementation include the College VP for EDI (Dr Fionnuala Murphy), College VP Teaching & Learning (Associate Professor Jennifer Keenahan), and the WP Outreach Network Representative (Md Salauddin).

Implementation actions focus on several areas:

- **Universal Design Learning (UDL):** The plan promotes the uptake of UDL Badges (at College level, 38 colleagues have completed the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching and Learning). The plan includes showcasing examples of embedded UDL principles.
- **Workshops:** A University for All Toolkit Workshop is scheduled for early December 2025 in collaboration with UCD Access & Lifelong Learning, to discuss the application of the Toolkit to programme and module design. The last such workshop was in 2021.
- **Targeted Outreach:** The College will expand outreach through "Come and Chat with Us" sessions with the Engineering Society and the University for All Student Partnership Programme, and increase engagement with schools during Inclusive UCD Week (February 2026) to raise awareness of pathways and supports for under-represented students.
- **Proactive Support for Students with Disabilities:** To build on the trimester-start reminder from Access and Lifelong Learning, the Engineering WP representative will send a detailed, proactive message via School Heads of Teaching and Learning (SHTLs) to all academic staff near the start of each new trimester. Staff will be encouraged to proactively offer support and ensure exam accommodations, such as extra time for continuous assessment, are applied and communicated in advance.
- **Addressing Low Participation:** The College will explore Open Learning Progression Pathways for Engineering. A report on WP data will be used to identify potential Open Learning Progression Pathways Programmes in January 2026.

Lessons learned include the value of:

- Systematically monitoring and reducing student assessment load to create a more manageable experience.
- Ensuring WP/UfA workshop communications come from the most senior College-level representative (Dean or College Principal) to maximise engagement across Schools.
- Regular meetings between the Engineering WP representative and the UfA project team, combined with timely access to WP data, for informed action.
- Launching student-driven initiatives, such as the podcast series, "[The Student Voice on AI and Assessment](#)," to gather valuable student perspectives.



THE STUDENT VOICE ON AI AND ASSESSMENT

College of Engineering and Architecture

The image shows a group of approximately 18 people, including students and staff, standing behind a white metal railing. They are all smiling and dressed in casual attire. The background features a large mural of a landscape and a yellow wall. The title 'THE STUDENT VOICE ON AI AND ASSESSMENT' is displayed in large, white, sans-serif capital letters at the top. To the left of the title is a white icon of a microphone with a sound wave line. Below the title is a photograph of the group. At the bottom, the text 'College of Engineering and Architecture' is centered, with the UCD Dublin logo to its left.

AI & Assessment Student Producers

IT Services

Caroline Hackman

Within IT Services, our approach to supporting the University for All initiatives differ slightly to how this is managed at school or college level, given the nature of our work, with our primary focus on product and service delivery. A central Change Control Board has oversight of the approval and delivery of central digital services supported by IT Services across the University. This process ensures compliance across some of the key areas such as data privacy, IT security and accessibility, ensuring solutions fulfil the requirement to support students and staff in the technology we procure, implement and support. From Summer 2024, accessibility compliance statements have been required for all new systems and has formed part of the compliance check undertaken by the IT Service Change Management Board.

Caroline Hackman represents IT Services on the University Widening Participation Committee, while Ryan Teevan serves as the UfA Professional Staff Partner. Although WP/UfA is not a regular standing item at IT Services management meetings, its contribution to supporting this function was presented at the IT Services departmental meeting in November 2024.

The current priority is to provide ongoing support for WP/UfA through a range of initiatives. Notable progress includes the signing of a new five-year contract for Ally, a tool that generates alternative formats of learning materials on the University's Learning Management System. In addition, IT Services is actively engaged in the Web Programme Accessibility project, which aims to enhance UCD's web accessibility score and ensure compliance with EU Directive 2016/2102.

As part of the 24/25 work programme, a project was undertaken to migrate approximately 20 websites deemed as high priority due to the high levels of usage. As a result of this work, the overall University web accessibility score rose from 85.1 in September 2024 to 87.4 in September 2025. 378 (78%) of all UCD websites are now using the UCD [Design Library](#) with accessibility and mobile responsiveness built in. The webpages utilising the Design Library have an average accessibility score of 93% or above. Some websites of note which have migrated as part of this initiative include [UCD School of Medicine](#), [Nova UCD](#) and the [Irish Social Science Data Archive](#). For the upcoming work programme we will continue making progress towards our goal of having 100% of websites using the [Design Library](#).

Key actions planned for the 2024/2025 academic year include:

- Improved the accessibility of IT Services' front-facing support materials to better serve a diverse staff and student population.
- Develop standardised accessibility statements for all systems.
- Refurbish the IT Centre in summer 2025 to enhance face-to-face IT support for students and staff.
- Continue migrating websites to the Terminal 4 content management system using the Design Library.
- Ensure the Service Desk team completes the “Introduction to Universal Design in UCD” training on Brightspace.
- Promote Universal Design Badges across the department.
- Propose system-wide updates to the Student Registration System and InfoHub in the next work programme cycle to address identified accessibility issues affecting both students and staff.
- Redesign of Digital Learning webpages to utilise the new design library for faculty and students.
- Work has commenced ,following a review in 2024/25, to redesign Brightspace training for faculty. The new training is underpinned by UD elements and best practice to support faculty in the best use of the Virtual Learning Environment - Brightspace. This is a multi year project with phase 1 due to launch towards the end of the 2025/26 academic year.
- Expected to deliver Ally data to school and college leaders highlighting accessibility scores and issues via dashboard and reporting from the VLE Brightspace - expected to be delivered within the 2025/26 academic year.

Law

Professor Gavin Barrett

The School communicates widening participation data through regular updates at staff meetings, Law School Executive Board meetings, the School EDI Committee, and Law School Committee meetings. Student panels and discussions attended by faculty and staff are also a feature of life in the School.

Widening participation efforts are supported by a dedicated Widening Participation officer who also serves on the Executive Board. Widening Participation is a standing item on the agenda of the School Executive, the EDI Committee, and the broader Law School Committee meetings, with the WP Officer providing a written report to each meeting of these bodies, ensuring ongoing discussion and reflection. The Law School also offers modules that promote widened access, such as by facilitating internships and the Law in the Classroom programme.

Significant efforts in widening participation have been made by the Sutherland Law School. The current focus areas include entry including supporting students with scholarships, student participation during undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and widened access to career opportunities through Pathways to the Professions. The annual Mason Hayes and Curran Pathways to the Professions Access Law Leadership Challenge is a key element of this work, promoting as it does more attainable and equitable entry to the legal profession for all students. The idea of Leadership Challenge is to champion diversity solutions in law. Students had to suggest such strategies. Prizes included a Summer placement opportunity, mentoring sessions and bursaries for reading materials. A prizegiving was held on Tuesday 25 March in the offices of Mason Hayes and Curran.

Key actions planned for the coming academic year include increasing staff uptake of Universal Design Badges. The School will continue its focus on recruitment and outreach, particularly to secondary schools, including DEIS schools, through special events and the Law in the Classroom module run by Professor Suzanne Egan and supported by UCD Access and Lifelong Learning. There will also be continued promotion of internships, especially for students who may face financial or other barriers to exchange programmes.

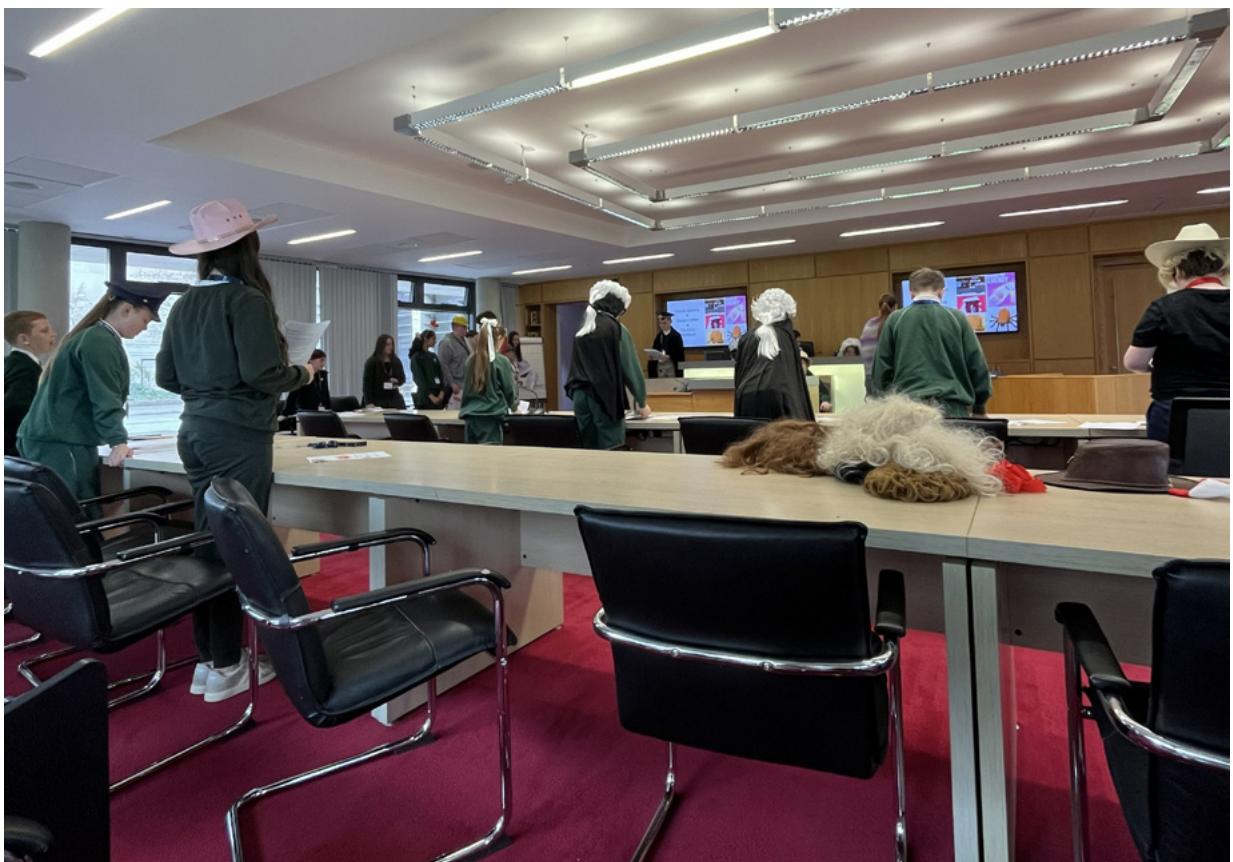
Although the generous funding provided by Mason Hayes and Curran for the Access Opportunities programme expired, generous funding by alumni has ensured that the Sutherland Opportunities programme has continued and should hopefully be in a position to provide some bursaries in the coming year. In the past year, bursaries were awarded, administered by a Committee in the Law School.

By the beginning of the last academic year, the number of colleagues who had completed the Introduction to Universal Design in UCD training on Brightspace stood at ten, the number of

colleagues who had completed the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning recipients stood at eight, and the number of colleagues who had completed the Digital Badge for Universal Design Beyond the Classroom recipients stood at zero, a figure explained by the fact that at that time it had only recently been introduced.

Valuable research is being carried on in the Law School on access to the legal professions by Dr Saoirse Enright, who in 2024 was appointed the Matheson Diversity in Law Newman Fellow at the UCD Sutherland School of Law. Matheson has generously funded the Matheson Diversity in Law Newman Fellowship to support research-based evidence in the field of access to legal education for under-represented groups, and to identify hurdles experienced by those groups to access and remain in the legal profession. Dr Enright is delivering a two-year, interdisciplinary project focused on identifying the barriers faced by under-represented groups to pursue a career in the legal profession, and aims to lead the development of current and new initiatives to improve access to law degrees and the profession more broadly.

The Law School continued its annual activity of welcoming transition year students from two Dublin DEIS schools each year. This is a project being carried out in cooperation with Community Law and Mediation (led by Roslyn Palmer) which facilitates students from DEIS schools to get a taste of what legal studies involve.



The Moot Court is in session

Library

Philip Russell

UCD Library is actively engaged in realising a 'University for All' offering inclusive spaces for everyone in UCD.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) underpins all library activities across 5 sites, online and in the wider community and creating an inclusive library space is crucial to realizing the library's strategy. Specific University for All initiatives and programmes implemented over the past three years include:

- Refurbishment of the James Joyce Library on Level 3, designed with Universal Design principles, providing more student spaces and zones and new facilities to meet a range of needs, including silent study rooms and zoom rooms.
- New student spaces, such as Sensory study rooms and a Multi-faith room.
- Key initiatives like the Leaving Cert Access Scheme, Maths Xplained, Citizen Science, and the End Period Poverty initiative (launched October 2021, received a Values in Action Award).
- Availability of equipment for an inclusive and accessible library experience, including RFID Smart Book Returns, device charging units, and noise-cancelling headsets.
- Removal of library fines to assist students with the cost-of-living crisis and promote a more equitable experience.
- Diversification of library collections and advocacy for diverse groups through exhibitions and events like LGBT+ spotlight.
- Partnering with other units on campus to host events on LGBTQI+ History, Black Women in Academia and Traveller Awareness Month.

The current priority for the Library is the Capital Development Project for the James Joyce Library, this transformative building project will provide many additional opportunities to enable access and widen participation, aiming to make physical and online spaces as accessible as possible. Key actions for the 2024/2025 academic year include:

- Continuing to implement the UCD Library Strategy 2021-2025 by creating an inclusive library for all.
- Focusing on the Capital Development Project to create inclusive library spaces and enable access.
- Enhancing communications, outreach, and continuous community engagement (Communications & Outreach team awarded Values in Action Award 2025 for promoting EDI).
- Prioritising staff development to empower library staff with training, knowledge, skills, and practices around EDI.

UCD Library Community projects

We launched two projects in the 2024-25 academic year. Both these projects received seed funding from UCD Sustainability, and are collaboration between UCD Library, Access and Lifelong Learning and UCDSU.

The [Library of Things](#) lends household products that are costly to purchase and may not be used on a regular basis. This will address student hardship and help reduce the need for multiple people to buy the same product.

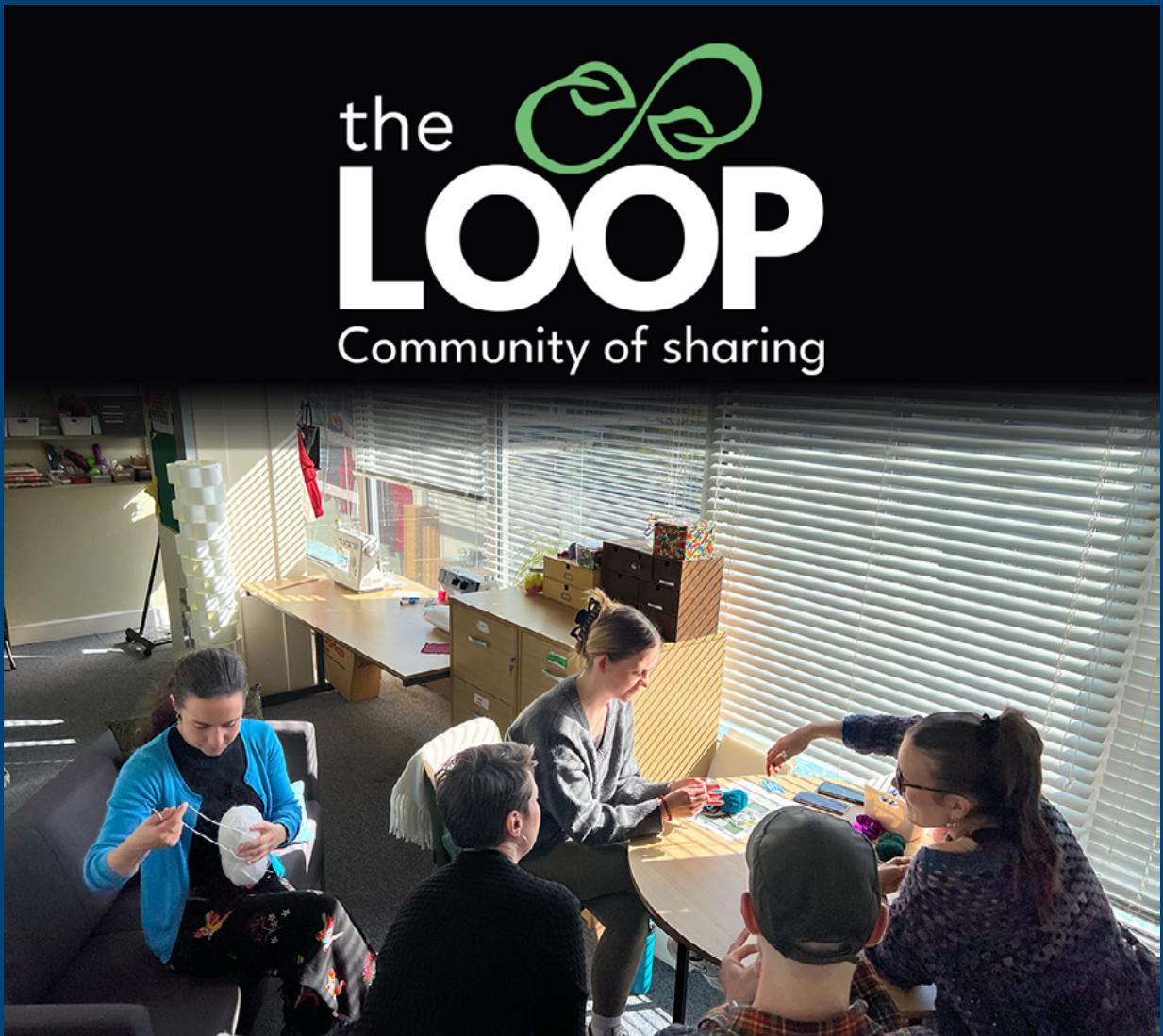
[The Loop](#) is a community-based space where students can learn how to repair clothes in a social environment. It is located on level 4 of the James Joyce library and students can learn new skills around repair of clothes and other fabrics and the library will run workshops on embroidery, sewing etc.

The Library seeks ongoing collaboration and support from UCD Access & Lifelong Learning, particularly regarding knowledge sharing, expertise, and partnership in projects like the Capital Development Project focus groups and the recent NaviLens project. The Widening Participation Outreach Network has also been very helpful for ongoing community engagement. Continuous staff development and empowerment are crucial for embedding excellent inclusive practices in all library services and interactions.

Communication of widening participation data within the Library is handled through ongoing updates from the Library Executive, various team meetings, the library website, social media, WorkVivo, training, Community Engagement, and via the library's WP representative. Philip Russell is responsible for driving the University for All implementation for the Library Service and embedding EDI principles. Strategic direction comes from the Head of Library Operations & Deputy Librarian, Lorna Dodd. "Creating an Inclusive Library for All" is a core strategic pillar of the Library's 2021-2025 strategy.



Sensory Study Room



The Loop promotional material

Medicine

Associate Professor Suzanne Donnelly

The primary strategic focus is on improving access to Medicine programmes, particularly where access targets are not being met. This responsibility is handled at a high level by the Dean, Programme Director, Admissions Director, and the School of Medicine Executive Management Committee. Widening Participation data is discussed annually at the School of Medicine Executive Management Committee meeting, led by Dr Donnelly. Associate Professor Melinda Halasz serves as the outreach representative. Widening Participation/University for All is a standing item at these meetings.

Since 2021, there has been a substantial increase in places allocated for access routes in Medicine programmes. However, while this has translated to uptake for DARE, it has not for HEAR. One possible reason for lack of uptake of places is a requirement for minimum score of 150 in the HPAT admissions test and in 2024/25 the Medicine Governing Board approved removing that criterion for Medicine. The change was subsequently approved by Undergraduate Programme Board in time for the 2025 student intake. At the time of writing we do not yet have data on whether this change has impacted on uptake of HEAR places. If not, we will continue to investigate and instigate changes to make this vital difference.

Key actions which will continue in the 2025/2026 academic year include:

- Improving the profile of Medicine for "trailblazers" from non-traditional backgrounds, in collaboration with the Communications team and outreach lead.
- Engaging in a national focus on Widening Participation in Medicine via the Irish Medical Schools Council.
- Advocating for better support and facilities for access students, including those on off-campus clinical sites.

Outreach has also been busy. Dr. Melinda Halasz (School of Medicine), Nicola Dervan (School of Public Health, Physiotherapy & Sports Science), and Dr. Antonella Puggioni (School of Veterinary Medicine) originated the I Decide programme in 2022; and they ran this outreach initiative for the third time this year. Supported by UCD Access and Lifelong Learning, the I Decide programme aims to empower primary school children from disadvantaged backgrounds by increasing their sense of agency and encouraging them to consider university as a future path.

This year, St. Kieran's Special School and St. Peter's Primary School in Bray participated in the programme. On 19 May, 35 primary school pupils visited UCD. During their campus tour, they took part in a treasure hunt and attended workshops in the Clinical Skills Lab in Health Sciences and at the Veterinary School.

Later, on 23 May, UCD students -including eight Medicine EDI Student Ambassadors- visited the two primary schools in Bray. There, they engaged with children in small groups, sharing their experiences of university life and serving as role models. These sessions helped inspire the children to create stories or drawings envisioning themselves as university students. The children's work has been published with the title "[I Decide - A Day in the Life of a University Student](#)".



Medicine Conferring Ceremony 2025

Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems

Dr Freda Browne

Widening Participation/University for All is a standing item at the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems (SNMHS) Governing Board meetings, and the Local Joint Working Group (LJWG). The LJWG includes associated healthcare providers across the four undergraduate programmes in the SNMHS. At these meetings yearly admission data related to widening participation is presented and discussed. In the SNMHS, local structures supporting UfA implementation in the SNMHS include the Athena Swan Lead and the EDI Associate Dean.

Since 2021, the school has made significant progress in widening participation by increasing reserved places for access routes across its four undergraduate programmes. Data shows that entry to the programmes for WP students has increased from 35.2% in 2019/20 to 42.2% in 2024/25.

The SNMHS has been at the forefront of Universal Design implementation since this work began in UCD and are sectoral leaders in this area. The appointment of three Faculty Partnership Programme (FPP) members in 2021 (Dr Phil Halligan, Dr John Gilmore, and Dr Freda Browne) has facilitated the development of UDL within the School. These FPPs have significantly contributed to UfA through UDL Digital Badges, publications, and conference presentations. Recently Dr Gimore and Dr Browne along with student collaborators launched 'Universal Design for Practice Learning (Nursing) Guideline'. These are the world's first set of guidelines to support the integration of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into clinical practice placements for nursing students. The guidelines, which were developed collaboratively with student partners, provide a practical framework to make practice-based learning more inclusive, accessible, and learner-centred.

A significant number of faculty (53) have so far completed the Teaching and Learning Digital Badge. There are also a number of UDL Digital Badge Facilitators in the SNMHS who act as UDL Facilitators each year for the National UDL roll out. The school has recently been successful in renewing its Athena SWAN Bronze award and were commended on the inclusion of actions supporting staff in acquiring UDL badges. The assessors reported that 'these actions show clear alignment with institutional priorities and a commitment to inclusive curriculum design.'

Key actions planned for the 2025/2026 academic year include continuing to focus on Universal Design Badges including 'Beyond the Classroom' and continuing with John and Freda as Faculty Partners for University for All. The School also plans to promote recruitment and outreach for mature entry places in General Nursing, establish yearly meetings with the Chair of the Athena Swan Committee and Associate Dean for EDI, and report UDL audit results to the Governing Board.

Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science

Dr Sarah Browne

Caitríona Cunningham represented the School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science (SPHPSS) on the WP committee from 2016 to 2025. Caitríona Cunningham also chaired the UCD WP Outreach Network until June 2025. Sarah Browne is the current SPHPSS WP Lead (since April 2025) and James Timmons is the current SPHPSS WP Outreach Lead. Other key SPHPSS staff engaged include the Head of School, Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning, Associate Dean for EDI, and senior administrators.

WP and UfA are standing agenda items at School meetings, the Teaching and Learning Committee, Programme Board, the Physiotherapy Discipline meetings and EDI Committee. WP data and communications are shared at these meetings. Reports are also circulated through the School newsletter and specific communications.

In 2021, quotas for access cohorts across all undergraduate programmes increased, and QQI-FET routes for the BSc Sport, Health and Exercise Science and BSc Sports and Exercise Management, were established in 2024/25.

A wide variety of outreach initiatives reflect the School's commitment to WP and inclusion. The CuriosiTY Programme (March–April 2025) provided Transition Year students from disadvantaged schools with STEM experiences through taster lectures and Q&A sessions (30–40 participants). The I Decide programme (2022, 2024, 2025) continues, encouraging DEIS primary school pupils to consider careers in health professions through campus visits, storytelling and mentoring (95 participants in 2024–25). Ongoing involvement in UCD Open Days, the UCD Festival, the REFRESH project, and Para-athletics Engagement further extended the School's reach. Healthy Eating Active Living week is an annual event open to the whole UCD community and driven by SPHPSS dietetics and physiotherapy students in collaboration with Healthy UCD. A public lecture on Open Science by Daniel Lakens (June 2025) promoted transparency in research and was attended by 50–60 staff and students from UCD and other Irish universities.

Community-focused initiatives included Cut from the Same Cloth (2024–25), a creative project supporting women from marginalised communities through textiles and storytelling. International Day of Women and Girls in Science included school visits, research showcases and media activities, reaching several hundred participants across 2024 and 2025, supporting visibility and role-modelling for girls in STEM.

Internationally, the GAA Uganda Project (Summer 2025) involved 10 UCD students coaching and delivering educational sessions in Ugandan primary schools, reaching over 200 children while fostering student leadership and global citizenship. Students (31 physiotherapy and 10 dietetic students in 2024 and 2025) and UCD academic and clinical tutor staff members continue to actively

participate in UCD Volunteers Overseas (UCDVO). The teams spend 4 weeks contributing to clinical care and education in healthcare facilities in Uganda and Tanzania. Locally, the Kilmacud Crokes Juvenile Football Partnership (Nov 2024–Mar 2025) paired Health & Performance Science students with U12–U16 GAA teams to deliver gym-based sessions on movement, injury prevention and conditioning, benefitting around 100 juvenile athletes and 10–15 UCD students.

Looking ahead, the School will strengthen WP/UfA by exploring Open Learning Progression Pathway access routes, continuing targeted outreach, expanding Universal Design training (including Beyond the Classroom), embedding EDI content in curricula. Challenges remain in supporting accommodations on clinical placements, resourcing alternative exam formats, and ensuring equity in assessment. Nonetheless, the breadth of activity demonstrates a sustained commitment to inclusion, representation and access for under-represented groups in Ireland and beyond.



Students engaging with IDecide Public Health

Registry

Jill O'Mahony and Sue McAlinden

WP data is communicated through the Registry Communications Manager tracking website activity and providing feedback on accessibility, and Registry Admissions sharing data on allocated places for WP groups. The Registry Communications Group oversees the use of Universal Design and Accessibility Guidelines in communications. WP/UfA items are discussed at meetings such as the Registry Communications Group, Admissions Team, Student Recruitment Network, and Supports for Students Working Group.

Registry remains committed to embedding Universal Design principals in our day-to-day activities. To date over 25 Registry staff have completed the Digital Badge for Universal Design Beyond the Classroom. During their induction to the unit, new staff are encouraged to complete the badge as soon as is feasible. In addition, Registry engaged an external trainer to provide Plain English training to the Registry Communications Group initially. Additional training sessions were then provided to wider Registry staff. We have a comprehensive repository of guidelines and templates to assist all staff in producing accessible documents on the Registry intranet. We also run several accessibility drop-in clinics throughout the year, where staff can get assistance in creating accessible documents.

The current UfA focus for Registry is to encourage staff uptake of Universal Design Badges, with "Introduction to Universal Design in UCD" being mandatory training for Registry staff and the Digital Badge for Universal Design Beyond the Classroom recommended. Key actions for 2024/2025 include organizing a UfA Toolkit workshop, rolling out Plain English training to increase accessibility of written communications, evaluating and improving the "Mature Application Assessment" pilot project, and contributing to actions from the RPL HCI Project. Registry has found it challenging to meet Mature and HEAR intake targets.

Science

Professor Keith Murphy

Widening Participation (WP) data is shared and discussed with the College of Science Executive each Autumn and Spring trimester and also presented at the College Programme Board in December and late March/early April. This provides an opportunity to update on WP activities and discuss matters such as the first-year WP student mentoring programme.

The College UfA champions include the College Principal, Professor Jeremy Simpson; VP Widening Participation, Professor Keith Murphy; Associate Dean for Science, Associate Professor Patrick Orr; VP for T&L, Dr Gavin Stewart; VP EDI, Associate Professor Catherine Mooney; Science Outreach Manager, Dr Orla Donoghue; WP Outreach Network representative, Associate Professor Niamh O'Sullivan; and UfA Faculty Partners. WP/UfA is an item on both the College Executive and Science Programme Board meetings, and in most Schools within the College, it is discussed under the EDI portfolio at School Executive meetings.

Since the 2021 Implementation Plan, notable progress includes:

- Continued running and expansion of the SEAM+ University Access Programme, including the successful addition of places in Veterinary Medicine and Sustainability undergraduate programmes.
- Ongoing support from the UCD Maths Support Centre.
- Workshops on "Creating accessible content" on Brightspace for the seven schools within the College.
- Annual circulation of a checklist to module coordinators regarding student accommodations.
- A "Sense of Belonging" survey was conducted for all undergraduate students across the College and a practical talk on neurodiversity for students was provided.
- Review, improvement, and successful implementation of the process for needs assessment and assigning personal assistants in labs for students with sensory or physical disabilities.
- Review of signage in the O'Brien Science Centre and planning for best practice application in the new Phase III of Science.
- A UfA Toolkit workshop was organised the 24-25 Spring trimester, promoting further embedding of UDL principles, and encouraging uptake of Digital badges for UD T&L and UD Beyond the Classroom.

Key actions planned for the 2025/2026 academic year include initial planning for the implementation of UDL principles across a suite of core modules across the subject streams of the Science Programme. The College will also focus on ensuring accessibility principles are central to the new Phase III of Science as spaces come online, and review/increase quotas for WP access routes across College programmes to maintain the successful percentage of access students.

Social Sciences & Law

Dr Ernesto Vasquez del Aguila

Since the merge of EDI and WP into a single initiative, the College of Social Sciences and Law has appointed directors in each School who are committed to EDI and WP. WP initiatives are an ongoing discussion point for the College Committee. The VP is also an active member of the University for All Faculty Partnership and promotes the Digital Badge in Universal Design in Teaching and Learning (UDT&L) across the College. WP and UfA are standing items at School Executive/Programme Board/Management Team meetings, with School Heads of EDI/WP expected to report back on initiatives. The VP for EDI/WP actively promotes the Digital Badge in UDT&L through written and oral reports to the College Executive Committee and to the College EDI/WP Committee.

The College aims to embed WP across its programmes and staff, with a recognised history of academic and staff involvement in inclusive initiatives. However, a significant challenge is the underrepresentation of male and senior colleagues in these initiatives, including EDI, UDL, and other pedagogical efforts. A major goal for the current VP is to raise awareness and promote initiatives specifically designed to engage these colleagues.

Key actions planned for the 2025/2026 academic year include:

- Actively promoting the University for All initiative throughout the College.
- Actively promoting the Digital Badge in UDT&L, specifically targeting male and senior colleagues (e.g. promotion and P4G with HoS).
- Promoting focused events for inclusion, including a walking tour to mark the International Rare Disease Day.
- Promoting the [UCD Inclusive Digital Map](#) that foster inclusion for students and faculty from different backgrounds.
- Promoting inclusion and a sense of belonging in UCD for our students through initiatives such as the [Inclusive Photo Competition](#).
- Promoting decoloniality and intersectionality as frameworks to address equity (e.g. the new [Structured Elective in EDI and WP](#); a new undergraduate module [SSJ10100 EDI: Social Groups](#)).
- Contributing to the analysis of data concerning access and low participation of minoritised students.
- Creating initiatives to analyse the experiences of minoritised students and faculty.
- Supporting the "Faculty with Families Abroad Working Group" through a survey, qualitative testimonies, and a "World Café" event.
- Participating in "UNITE: Inclusive Digital Education," an Erasmus Consortium developing inclusive initiatives for students and faculty across seven EU countries.

Student Advisory Service

Dr Niamh Nestor

University-level WP data informs the UCD Student Advisory Service's work, and there is scope for further development in this area. While data is shared locally, this is not always done consistently. The Service places strong emphasis on recognising that students enter UCD through diverse pathways and on ensuring that support is inclusive of all students. Our team meets every fortnight, and Widening Participation is a standing item on our agenda for discussion.

In terms of implementation structures, each team member is expected to engage with relevant training, such as the Digital Badge for Universal Design Beyond the Classroom. Five team members are EDI Level 1 Ambassadors, and the whole team has received training in trauma-informed approaches. The Service also plays a central role in administering the ESF-funded Student Support Fund and in supporting students with a wide range of needs, including those from WP backgrounds, mature students, and students with disabilities. Two members of the team, Emma Somers and Dr Niamh Nestor, were appointed to the University for All Professional Staff Partnership Programme, and most team members have now completed the Digital Badge as part of its 2024 rollout, facilitated by Niamh and Emma. Student Advisers monitor and act on student engagement data via UCD Live Engagement & Attendance Project (LEAP). LEAP supports students from all backgrounds to successfully transition into university life and engage with their studies.

Awareness and support for University for All principles are strong within the team, and members are committed to further upskilling through training, guidance, and reflective practice to enhance access to the Service. Additional data on student pathways, participation, progression, and outcomes would be particularly valuable in shaping and informing this work.

Teaching & Learning

Dr Leigh Graves Wolf

There are five priority actions currently in progress within Teaching & Learning (T&L) which are informed by the University for All ethos:

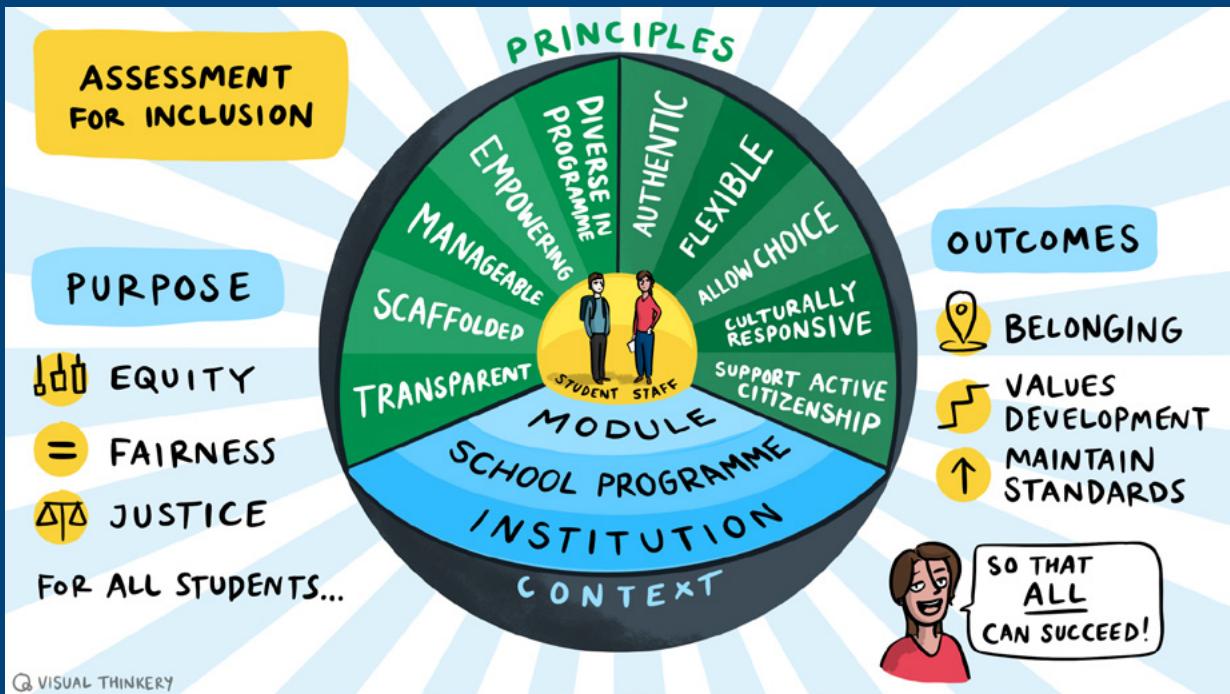
Inclusive learning embedded into University Teaching and Learning modules: UCD T&L has a long history (since 2006) of teaching and researching inclusive learning. This long-standing commitment ensures that inclusive learning is integrated throughout the curriculum rather than treated as an optional addition. The unit has revised and reviewed key features of inclusive learning embedded across modules, ensuring that inclusive learning topics are key content areas and that UCD T&L faculty consider inclusive and intercultural learning in their practices. The Digital Badge in Universal Design for Learning is embedded into the UTL40180 Reflective Practice in Teaching and Learning module.

Strategic Project on Inclusive Assessment: UCD T&L led the development of the UCD Framework for Programme Assessment and Feedback Strategies, approved in June 2020. This framework promotes varied and integrated assessment strategies, including choice of assessment, to support diverse student cohorts, thus advocating for inclusive assessment. Additionally, in Spring 2024, the [UCD Assessment for Inclusion Framework](#) was released. See reference section for various publications on the research process.

Students as Partners in Teaching and Learning: The Student as Partners in Teaching and Learning initiative aims to create a student-centred culture and partnership approach to teaching and learning development and enhancement. "Students as Partners" in higher education re-envision students and staff as active collaborators in teaching and learning. This approach ensures that student perspectives inform University educational development and improvement processes. [Visit the project page](#) for more detail.

Contributing to UCD Strategy and Policies on Teaching and Learning and Professional Development: UCD T&L staff contribute to University's EDI Committee, Athena Swan Silver Application subgroup, and Widening Participation committees, influencing broader UCD strategies related to teaching, learning, and academic development. This involvement encompasses curriculum review, assessment, technology-enhanced learning, and quality assurance.

UCD Teaching and Learning Co-facilitating Universal Design for Learning workshops: Faculty members from UCD Teaching & Learning continue to co-design and co-facilitate workshops with School/Programme teams and colleagues in UCD Access & Lifelong Learning as part of the University for All initiative. This partnership approach ensures that UDL principles are effectively translated into practice across the institution, with Teaching & Learning staff providing expertise and support to colleagues in various academic areas.



Assessment for Inclusion framework



Students engaging with IDecide Veterinary

Veterinary Medicine

Dr Michael Duggan

Universal Design for Learning

Diane Cashman successfully developed the Professional Certificate in Veterinary Education and its first iteration was delivered in the Spring trimester 2025. Universal Design for Learning is embedded in the certificate in consultation with UCD Access and Lifelong Learning and University for All Faculty Partner, Professor Deirdre Campion. Exploring UDL in teaching and assessment is a key learning outcome and this is explored in depth in week 9 of the certificate with Deirdre Campion facilitating the students' learning on this topic. Students produce an e-portfolio of a teaching intervention design which requires them to address UDL and describe how they included UDL principles into their design.

As part of the University for All Faculty Partnership Programme, Deirdre Campion received funding which was used to purchase anatomical teaching specimens, supporting multiple means of engagement in veterinary education. These plastinated canine and equine specimens allow learners to connect theoretical knowledge to real anatomical structures. These specimens encourage active participation through tactile and visual learning across a wide range of modules in the School, facilitating students engaging directly with anatomical features that are often difficult to visualize. Collectively, these plastinated specimens have provided an interactive, inclusive, and hands-on learning environment, enhancing understanding, participation across, and confidence of a wide range of learners.

Outreach and entry Pathways

The I Decide outreach project was successfully launched in 2023. The project aims to introduce 5th and 6th class primary school children to university life and education, and to give students the opportunity to see what Higher Education might have to offer them in the future. It is a collaboration between the Schools of Veterinary Medicine, Medicine and Public Health, Physiotherapy & Sports Science and has been developed as part of the Pathways to the Professions Project. In 2025, iteration was in collaboration with the UCD Traveller and Roma Access Officer whose remit is to increase the participation and progression of Traveller and Roma students in Higher Education, supporting the achievement of the National Access Plan (2022-2028). The primary school groups are invited onto the UCD campus to explore these disciplines in a hands-on way and each student writes their own story which is compiled in a digital story book: "[A Day in the life of a University Student](#)".

A new mature entry pathway was introduced to Veterinary Medicine for the 2023/2024 academic year. Applicants who successfully complete the SEAM+ University Access Programme can apply for Veterinary Medicine with two dedicated places reserved each year.

University Widening Participation Committee Membership

Chair, University Widening Participation Committee
Professor John Brannigan

Programme Board Leads

Agriculture & Food Sciences
Professor Olaf Schmidt

Architecture, Planning &
Environmental Policy
Associate Professor Ellen Rowley

Arts & Humanities
Dr Fionnuala Walsh

Engineering
Dr Md Salauddin

Law
Professor Gavin Barrett

Medicine
**Associate Professor Suzanne
Donnelly**

Nursing, Midwifery &
Health Systems
Dr Freda Browne

Public Health, Physiotherapy & Sports
Science
Dr Sarah Browne

Science
Professor Keith Murphy

Social Sciences
**Associate Professor Ernesto Vasquez
del Aguila**

Veterinary Medicine &
Veterinary Nursing
Dr Michael Duggan

Policy & Support Leads

UCD Access & Lifelong Learning
Dr Bairbre Fleming, Dr Lisa Padden and Daniel Elliott

Admissions
Jill O'Mahony

Career Development & Skills
Dr David Foster

Communications & Marketing
Mary Staunton

Finance
Valeria Baratella

Estates Services
PJ Barron

IT Services
Caroline Hackman

Library
Philip Russell

Recruitment
Noya Fernandez del Cotero Secades

Student Advisors
Dr Niamh Nestor

Teaching & Learning
Dr Leigh Graves Wolf

Co-opted Members

Culture & Engagement
Rory Carey

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
Marcellina Fogarty

EDI Sub-Committee on Sanctuary
Dr Graham Finlay

UCD Global
Una Watkins

Glossary

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| Access student | Any student from one or more of the following target equity groups, socio-economically disadvantaged students, students reporting a disability, mature students, part-time or flexible students, QQI-FET award holders, and refugees and asylum seekers. |
| DARE | The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a higher education admissions scheme for students with disabilities. Eligibility for this scheme is determined through a national application process, aligned with CAO, and is based on evidence of disability and educational impact. CAO offers are typically made in late August/Early September. Eligible students, and all those who disclose a disability before or during their studies in UCD, are offered a Needs Assessment, where support and accommodations to remove barriers to education are agreed. |
| DEIS | Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools. This is an initiative of the Department of Education and Skills aimed at lessening educational disadvantage and bringing about social inclusion in primary and second level education. Eligible primary and secondary schools in Ireland are designated as DEIS schools and, as such, are provided with a set of resources and targeted support. UCD ALL's Outreach & Mentoring programme is run in collaboration with 16 'linked' DEIS secondary schools. |
| EDI | UCD Equality, Diversity & Inclusion |
| HEA | Higher Education Authority |
| HEAR | The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a higher education admissions scheme for students, resident in the Republic of Ireland, and who are underrepresented at Higher Education due to their socio-economic background. Eligibility for this scheme is determined through a national application process, aligned with CAO, and is based on evidence of family income, and specified indicators of disadvantage. Eligible students are provided with targeted financial, academic, and personal support to remove barriers to their education. |
| FET | Further Education and Training |

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mature Entrants | Students who are at least 23 years of age on the 1st of January of the year of entry. Application on such grounds varies depending on the UCD programme, and may include provision of a personal statement, completion of MSAP (Mature Students Admissions Pathway (MSAP), HPAT (Health Professions Admissions Test), or the Nursing Written Assessment. Instead of MSAP, Mature Students can also opt to take any Open Learning module for credit. Application via the mature entry pathway is made through the CAO and offers are usually made in July each year. |
| Open Learning | Open Learning is UCD's unique flexible study option, which enables students to choose from a wide range of modules, and take either a Certificate (30 ECTS), or Diploma (60ECTs) level 9 award. There are currently 16 progression pathways to undergraduate degrees. Students can also take Open Learning for audit, meaning there is no associated assessment. Open Learning is coordinated by UCD Access & Lifelong Learning. |
| Part-time | Any student studying part time, such as Open Learning, Diploma and Bachelor of Business Studies, Safety and Health at Work, University Access Courses, etc. |
| QQI | Quality and Qualifications Ireland |
| QQI-FET | Students who are studying full time and have entered UCD holding a FETAC/HETAC/ QQI award. Students with relevant and appropriate QQI-FET (formerly known as FETAC) Level 5/6 major awards and components, with a minimum of Distinction in five components, may be admitted on a competitive basis to a range of UCD programmes. Application via the QQI-FET entry pathway is made through the CAO and offers on the basis of QQI-FET qualifications are usually made in early August each year. |
| Targeted places | As part of enrolment planning, every UCD undergraduate programme creates targeted places for students entering through designated access routes (HEAR, DARE, Mature, QQI-FET, Open Learning, UAP). These places, sometimes also referred to as reserved places, assist in widening participation to undergraduate programmes enabling equitable access to UCD. These targets are transferable across access groups to allow for maximum diversity of admissions. |
| WPC | UCD Widening Participation Committee. The Committee is chaired by Professor John Brannigan, reports to the UMT Education Group (UMTEG), and has a 'dotted line' to the UCD EDI Committee. Membership is drawn from all Academic Programme Boards, Policy and Support Services, in addition to Student representatives and the UCD Student Union. The Committee is provided with policy advice, expertise, and operational support by UCD Access & Lifelong Learning. The Committee has a three-year term and meets five times per year. |

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| Universal Design | Universal Design is the design of an environment, product, service or experience so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. Universal Design does not attempt to provide a 'one size fits all' solution but rather requires that the design considers the needs of all potential users avoiding the need, where possible, for retrofitting or alternative solutions. Universal Design is fundamentally good design and is to the benefit of all people. |
| UDL | Universal Design for Learning. UDL is a framework to improve the learning experience of all students within the mainstream teaching environment. The UDL principles espouse flexibility for students with the aim of removing educational barriers which may be put in place inadvertently through adherence to rigid or singular delivery, engagement and assessment strategies. |
| UfA | University for All. Launched in 2017, UCD is pioneering University for All - a whole-institution, evidence-based approach to mainstreaming inclusion, ensuring that all students feel welcome, belong and are valued. Grounded in the UCD Strategy 2020-2024: Rising to the Future, and the EDI Strategy and Action Plan 2018 - 2020 - 2025, and the Education and Student Success Strategy (UCD, 2021), University for All recognises, promotes and values the breadth of talent, experience and contribution of all students, and creates an inclusive educational experience for all. This initiative embeds inclusion across the University further developing UCD's capacity to attract, retain, and develop our diverse student population. The University for All initiative is sponsored by the Registrar & Deputy President, Professor Mark Rogers, governed by the University Widening Participation Committee, chaired by Professor Grace Mulcahy, and led by UCD Access & Lifelong Learning. |
| University Access Programme (UAP) | UCD offers two University Access Programmes. These are one year, part-time diplomas, and prepare mature students, who may not have formal qualifications, for successful study at university. University Access has two streams: Access to Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Law (AHSSL); and Access to Science, Engineering, Agricultural Science, Computer Science, Medicine, Vet Medicine and Sustainability (SEAM+). These lead to Special Purpose Awards Level 6 awards, which provide pathways to study selected UCD undergraduate degrees. |



ALL Welcome



UCD Access and Lifelong Learning contact information

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Contact us by phone at 01-716 7123

Contact us by email at all@ucd.ie

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-  [@UCDforALL](https://twitter.com/UCDforALL)
-  [@ucdforall](https://instagram.com/ucdforall)
-  [UCD Access and Lifelong Learning](https://www.youtube.com/UCD Access and Lifelong Learning)
-  [UCD Access and Lifelong Learning \(ALL\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ucd-access-and-lifelong-learning-all/)

#UniversityforAll

Photographs and images courtesy of the UCD Access and Lifelong Learning Collection

Thank you

Thank you to the staff of UCD Access and Lifelong Learning whose expertise and insights informed the work of the Committee



University College Dublin
University for All

UCD Widening
Participation Committee
Annual Report 2023-2025
