



Academic Strategy *Teaching & Learning*

2021 - 2026



OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY



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Foreword

Teaching and Learning in Higher Education are changing, radically so. Some of that change has been in progress for years. The past decade in particular has seen an increased focus in the higher education sector internationally on teaching and learning. A number of major reports have been produced on this, such as those of the EU High Level Working Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, continued development of the European Higher Education Area/Bologna Process, and position papers from the European University Association. In Ireland, we have seen the establishment of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, which has taken a leading role in shaping the agenda as well as providing funding opportunities for teaching innovation and professional development. Other changes were made in 2020 in direct response to the global pandemic.

Lecturing today requires a combination of skills in research, teaching ability and constant professional engagement. Excellent teaching is predicated on ongoing self-development and reflection, on the enhancement of teaching ability through constant learning. Increasingly, it is being defined as a two-way process, in which the students' feedback on our teaching helps us to develop that teaching further.

That need to constantly evolve places an expectation on the University to provide support for the professional development of academic staff, both in their own interest and in the interest of students. The vast majority of our staff are committed and dedicated researchers whose teaching is informed by the research that they carry out. Building our teaching on our research is what makes us a university. Increasingly, however, the delivery of that teaching is being rooted in sound pedagogical expertise that complements the excellent research and the infectious enthusiasm that our staff bring to their work. This extends to the essential background support by Technical Officers, Support/Professional Staff, and Teaching Assistants that enable us to deliver our programmes. The case for strengthening and broadening that pedagogical expertise is incontrovertible, not least because of its impact on the students' academic experience.

The University experience is and should be a transformational one for all students, both undergraduate and postgraduate. This University has pioneered a number of initiatives in recent years, around peer support, enhancing writing skills, enhancing maths skills, personal and sexual wellness and awareness, and sustainability in the curriculum. We have had a number of initiatives around employability, graduate skills, student retention, inclusion and accessibility. The Designing Futures (formerly ASPIRE) project, awarded €7.5M in late 2020, has the potential to transform our graduates as they prepare for the world of work and this project will add to the existing work that cultivated students' readiness for the workplace. The national strategic priorities inform this strategy, as does the international context in which we recruit and into which our graduates emerge.

This strategy aims to support innovation in teaching and learning over the next five years, so that our graduates will emerge as highly educated and skilled critical thinkers who will play a leading role in our society over the course of their working lives, contributing meaningfully to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our society and the sustainability of our planet. They will do so equipped with creative, critical and technological skills and a collaborative team ethos, learned and developed both inside the University and in collaboration with key external stakeholders. In particular, our graduates will have confidence in their capacity for leadership and societal contribution.

As we implement this strategy, I am committed to monitoring progress, consulting with key stakeholders, and revising actions where necessary. This is a dynamic, responsive strategy and as teaching evolves, and legalities evolve around Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for example, we will review on a continuous basis. Even as we start on this journey, we already have in mind the next phase. We are simultaneously building on previous successes and laying new foundations for present and future success. I look forward to working with my colleagues to fulfil this strategy in the years ahead.

Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh,
MRIA, FRHistS, FHEA, FRSA,
Deputy President and Registrar.

“This strategy aims to support innovation in teaching and learning over the next five years”.



Our Vision

In 2020, the University published its *Strategic Plan 2020-25: Shared Vision, Shaped by Values*. This articulated a set of core values, developed through consultation with the wider university community, of openness, respect, excellence, and sustainability. This Academic Strategy builds on those values with a focus on how we might enact them through our teaching and learning and ensure that our graduates are well equipped to rise to the challenges ahead of them and play impactful and leading roles in society.

Even in the short time since the University's Strategic Plan was published, the world has changed with the global pandemic and an increased awareness of the threats of the climate emergency. However, we have also seen hopeful signs for a future that recognises the value in working together to tackle shared problems, and of a renewed understanding of the value of education and the need to support research and critical enquiry.

The rapid switch to online teaching also highlighted the potential not just of technologies but of different ways of teaching and learning, whilst reinforcing the value of human contact, mutual support, and the importance of well-being, both physical and mental.

Learning from this experience, and shaped by our strategic context, we have an opportunity to reconsider our educational goals and underlying ethos to ensure that they are effectively meeting the needs of our students, our graduates, and wider society. This Academic Strategy, with an accompanying Implementation Plan, aims to highlight some of the key areas on which we will focus our attention in the coming years and set some scaffolding to support the creativity of our academic disciplines, Schools and Colleges in their teaching mission.

We celebrate the diversity of our staff and student community and in a spirit of equality, diversity and inclusion, we support the right to a higher education for all those with the ability and commitment to successfully pursue a programme of study. The University will do all in its power to ensure the widest possible levels of participation of students of all backgrounds¹.

By implementing this strategy, we will:

- Build an environment and ethos that enables and empowers our students and our staff to engage in critical enquiry, reflective practice, and professional development, and which nurtures and sustains their sense of wonder and passion for their disciplines and areas of interest.
- Ensure our programmes are based on the key principles of learning design. Ensure that students from all backgrounds will have the best of learning experiences and are equipped to make an impact on society. Ensure our programmes are informed by the scholarship of teaching and learning, and enriched by what we have learned from our successful previous and ongoing innovations in student learning, approaches to teaching, and participation and inclusion.

¹ gender, marital status, family status, age disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, nationality, and membership of the Traveller community

“The University will do all in its power to ensure the widest possible levels of participation of students of all backgrounds”



Strategic Priority Area 1

Our Learning Culture

i) Learning

Learning in a university context is based on critical thinking, requires active participation, as both an individual and a member of a learning community, and is facilitated by those who are actively engaged in research and scholarship within their discipline or profession. Both the teaching and research missions are supported by professional staff with specialist skills and knowledge who are key members of this learning community. Research, as a form of active learning, requires a willingness to engage with challenging ideas and concepts, to experiment and explore, to reconsider perspectives and standpoints, to critically reflect, and to share knowledge within and beyond an academic community. Students should be able to benefit from learning in such a context by the ways in which we organise our programmes, the modes of teaching and assessment, and in how we make the connections between teaching, research, learning, and engagement with wider society.

Our university education is one that is transformative as it enables those who graduate to flourish in their lives as citizens and professionals. The complete university experience is one in which the learning journey is a combination of knowing, acting, and being – a holistic approach, which is captured in our graduate attribute statements.

To thrive in such a context, requires the building of academic and professional confidence through developing effective learning skills, being given opportunities to showcase capabilities and achievements, and in the process, becoming resilient, autonomous learners who recognise the value in lifelong learning.



We will:

- Support students throughout their learning journey, to build their academic and professional skills, and their confidence through comprehensive, integrated student learning supports. All first-year students, in all undergraduate courses, will experience peer assisted learning (e.g., through CÉIM), and similar approaches to building learning communities will be developed for later years in their programmes. In recognition of the importance of health and wellbeing to the learning experience, all students will engage in appropriate initiatives on consent, sexual violence / harassment reduction, health, and wellbeing.
- Strengthen the sense of a scholarly community through staff-student partnerships and collaboration.
- Ensure the learning experience incorporates engagement with research, opportunities for workplace learning, placements, civic engagement, building on many existing successful partnerships and initiatives.

ii) Curriculum

The design of our curricula and programmes are the means by which we can as an institution, as disciplinary specialists, as educators, express our values and educational philosophy. Curriculum is about shaping learning, plotting a route-map for those who choose to explore a subject, to pursue enquiry into questions of importance to them and to society. It is a way of coming 'to be' in the world and of finding a footstep in the longer journey of learning throughout life.

A university is a community and a place in which knowledge is produced, built upon, and shared. It is where critical questioning, intellectual struggle, focused perseverance, and creativity meet and, as such, it holds the potential to be personally transformative for those who fully engage and participate as active members of the academic and professional communities from which it is constituted.

Our curricula are founded on the recognition that a university education can and should be transformative. It involves aspects of knowing, acting, and being. This frames our graduate attributes* and aligns with the University's values of openness, excellence, respect, and sustainability. Learning in higher education requires considerable individual effort, the need to learn to work effectively in groups and participate in a culture of peer-support and the building of learning communities.



We will:

- Develop a set of guidelines, policies, and processes for new (or the re-design of existing) programmes which will foreground learning, critical enquiry and academic achievement, reflect our institutional values and ethos, and recognise the power of coherent programme outcomes and clearly defined graduate attributes.
- Encourage and support innovation in programme design, including flexible modes of study and assessment, professional placements and international exchange, jointly developed programmes with a wide range of partners from industry and society, and collaboration across disciplines, Schools and Colleges.
- Develop a small set of university-wide modules and explore ways in which these can be opened to all students regardless of their degree programmes.
- Ensure that students on all our programmes benefit from learning in a research-intensive university by having opportunities to develop research skills, engaging in research activity, and being aware of the key areas of contemporary enquiry in their discipline.
- Ensure that programme design and delivery are of the highest possible quality and meet all appropriate standards for professional accreditation and gain national and international recognition.

iii) Assessment

Assessment is a key component of effective curriculum design and teaching practice. Aligned closely with stated learning outcomes, course aims, and graduate attributes, a comprehensive approach to assessment should provide students with the means to demonstrate their achievements and levels of attainment. Assessment, therefore, can be considered, not just as a terminal measure of performance under strict test conditions, but also, rather as a wide range of tools and methods which help students monitor their own progress, showcase their skills, and articulate their learning.

The emergency shift to online teaching during COVID-19 has highlighted the crucial importance of assessment design in higher education and the need to consider what long term changes are merited to renew the system, build in resilience, and ensure that our methods are robust, sustainable, effective, and reflect our institutional ambitions of excellence and innovation. It has also provided a backdrop against which there has been much innovation and openness to new ideas where we will use a range of assessment methodologies.

Forms of assessment which are authentic and which aim to develop 'artefacts' (e.g. papers, book chapters, videos, creative products, performances/events, devices, software, portfolios, etc.) that have a purpose beyond merely attaining grades, can encourage both greater student engagement and give an added sense of purpose, with successful outcomes including a sense of pride and achievement. Shifting the emphasis to assessment as a continuous measure of self-improvement, with the provision of formative feedback from subject experts and peers, can also aid with reducing the anxieties associated with final, high-stakes unseen examinations. Assessment, feedback, and a drive for self-improvement are core to successful learning.

We will:

- Undertake a major, transformative, project on assessment practices across the institution. This will include: diversifying the range of approaches used, supporting the use of programme-level assessment, improving students' assessment and feedback literacy, promoting the use of authentic assessment, examining aspects of timing and volume of assessment, mapping alignment with learning outcomes and teaching methods, while also revising our policies and processes on academic integrity.
- Pilot (and examine the requirements of) a portfolio approach to student learning and assessment, where students can collect, collate and reflect on materials they have produced for assessment, as part of their learning journey, through project work, and in showcasing their capabilities and employability skills.



Strategic Priority Area 2

Developing and Empowering our Staff

Central to high quality academic programmes is the commitment, creativity, and professionalism of those who design and teach these programmes. Recognising this, we see professional development in the areas of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, as well as in broader academic practice, as essential for our staff not just at the beginning of their careers, but also on an ongoing basis throughout their professional working lives. Those institutions, which are best able to integrate their research, teaching, and societal missions, are best placed for the challenges the world now faces.

There is a particular need to ensure that all staff new to teaching are provided with initial training and support (including through mentoring within their School/ College). Equally, the University places high value on reflective practice and the continuing professional development of those who are already established in their career. Some specific roles within the University, particularly those that involve leadership or management of programmes, disciplines, or schools, will be supported through additional training and mentoring. All of these aspects can be addressed through a comprehensive professional development framework, which recognises that successful programme delivery requires a partnership approach across a range of different staff roles including academic, administrative, technical, and other support and professional services.

We will:

- Develop, resource, and deliver an outstanding professional development programme in teaching, learning, and academic practice, based on a flexible and integrated framework (referenced against national and international standards) which integrates with career progression, promotional opportunities, leadership roles, and workload models.
- Ensure that staff in relevant professional and academic support roles have access to professional development opportunities associated with this framework.
- Provide support to staff with the ability and desire to teach through Irish to do so where there is opportunity or scope within their discipline area
- Maximise the benefits of the investment in the Student Digital Pathways project to ensure that such systems act as an enabler of innovation and significantly reduce the administrative burdens associated with academic programmes.



Strategic Priority Area 3

Our Teaching and Learning Environment

The environment in which we teach and learn in a modern university has three interconnected dimensions: the physical, the digital, and the social/cultural. The third of these is addressed throughout this strategy in the references to aspects of ethos, principles, the support of learning, our engagement with the wider world, and the expression of our overall institutional values.

The digital environment has undergone rapid development, expansion, and reconfiguration in recent years. Modes of teaching have broadened to incorporate online, blended, and hybrid, in addition to technology enhanced on-campus courses. A well-resourced teaching environment (both physical and digital) requires careful planning, sustained investment, and a commitment to innovate, in order to open up opportunities for enhanced learning and wider participation.

Enhancing the physical and digital environments is crucial for the University to not only keep pace with change across the sector, but also to lead and to innovate, ensuring that our students not only benefit from high quality facilities and resources, but also contribute to the longer-term transformation of our campuses and the virtual space we inhabit. All members of the University community are able to play a role in shaping our future through representation and consultation on major decisions. It is also crucial that those who teach and those who learn have their voices heard in how our physical and digital environments are developed and enhanced.

Such a transformation requires redesigning existing and building new teaching venues to meet our educational goals and to respond to the needs of teachers and learners. Through a programme of refurbishment and development, a portfolio of spaces of differing designs and types, including many that are flexible, adaptable and equipped with new technologies in order to nurture greater learner engagement and participation, will gradually replace traditional classroom design and structures.

We will:

- Identify, through an update of the recent teaching spaces review, opportunities, to redesign and reconfigure our teaching and learning spaces to ensure that they meet the needs of students and those who teach in them, reflect the state-of-the-art in technology and configuration, and enable more flexible, collaborative, interactive, and innovative modes of teaching and learning.
- Design, configure, and support a digital learning environment that comprises the broad range of tools and systems essential for the sustainable and inclusive delivery of teaching and learning, and as a basis on which to innovate and explore new forms of pedagogy, which it makes possible.
- Deliver on our commitments to the Learning Commons project to provide a transformative learning space and new library at the heart of our campus, and explore other opportunities to develop learning spaces and study resources across the institution.



Strategic Priority Area 4 Our Community and Beyond

University of Galway recognises higher education as a public good, the role of the institution being to serve its community and wider society. Our aim is that our graduates will each make their mark on the world, whether it be through their profession, as an active and responsible citizen, or by endeavours in culture, the arts, or science.

The University is privileged to be centred in Galway, values its connections with the wider region, and is honoured by its historic duty to safeguard and champion the Irish language. At once we are both local and global, connecting the west of Ireland to Europe and beyond through our partnerships, collaborations, and diverse international staff and student communities. The ENLIGHT project, Global Galway, and initiatives supported by the Coimbra Group of Universities, and the European Universities Association, all provide invaluable opportunities for our students, staff, and curricula.

We connect with business and industry in research and development and through graduate employment and lifelong learning. The Designing Futures (formerly ASPIRE) project is a major initiative which will facilitate the strengthening of such connections, including the potential for co-creation of new courses and programmes, supporting the development of entrepreneurship and leadership amongst our students, and enabling greater scope for student peer-learning communities and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

The world's response to the climate emergency and other environmental threats will shape the quality of life of everyone across the planet in the years and decades to come. Our graduates will inhabit a world in which these challenges will be centre-stage and impinge on many aspects of their lives. We have a moral and ethical duty, as an institution of learning and research, to respond as best we can to these circumstances by both our actions as an organisation and in how we prepare our graduates. The University's Sustainability Strategy is a first, significant, step and many of its recommended actions relate to, or connect with, teaching and learning.

We will:

- Ensure that all our programmes nurture critical thinking, enterprise, and creativity and that the graduate attributes meet the needs of the students themselves, those who would seek to employ them, and wider society.
- Recognise the climate emergency and other environmental and societal challenges, by committing to the Sustainable Development Goals and reflecting this through our curricula and co-curricular offerings to students.
- Internationalise the curriculum in our mission to create global citizens
- Strengthen our connections with alumni, partner institutions, business and industry, public services, NGOs, and professional bodies through deep, collaborative partnerships, student placements, curricular co-creation, and contribution to public discourse.
- Celebrate and embed diversity through a range of initiatives for all members of our University community. This will include: (i) encouraging participation in international partnerships, exchange, and placements; (ii) creating a welcoming culture for staff and students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds; (iii) provide awareness raising and training on intercultural communication, empathy, and diversity; and (iv) enable all to benefit from the distinctive aspects of Galway and the West of Ireland, through language, culture, the arts, and our natural environment.
- Broaden the range of courses offered through the medium of Irish and provide opportunities for all who wish to learn or enhance their use of the language.



Strategic Priority Area 5

A Culture of Quality Enhancement

University of Galway has a long-standing commitment to an outstanding, research-informed academic experience for its student community, with staff and students intent on making a respectful, open and sustainable impact on society, both locally and globally. Our activities are ambitious, command collective energy and, be they teaching, research or professional services, are tied together by a common thread – Quality, which can be defined as an individual and collective quest for excellence.

We aim to create an institutional culture that will keep quality as the principle, informing a process of transformation and continuous improvement.

Our Quality Framework provides a process of reflection, accountability, and recognition of the scope for continuous improvement to ensure a world-class education. Through the lens of our University's core values of Respect, Openness, Excellence and Sustainability the framework must support an open environment that values democracy and debate and gives opportunity to the voices of staff and students. It must value excellent teaching rather than only academic expertise and research strength. It must ensure that all our programmes are of the highest standards and meet the requirements of national agencies such as the QQI, the HEA, and those of appropriate professional bodies, with our programmes conforming to the Bologna principles, the National and European Framework of Qualifications, transferability and mobility.

Our institutional structures, roles and responsibilities align with the concept of mutual and collective responsibility for quality and standards and our governance and institutional regulatory frameworks ensure appropriate oversight, responsiveness, and agility in the pursuit of excellence in our teaching, research, and other activities.

We will:

- Strengthen our existing Quality Framework and processes to support and guide the University in ensuring a culture of transparency, accountability and continuing enhancement.
- Strengthen the quality of our education to provide a pedagogically informed programme of excellence that meaningfully connects with our research through continuous professional development in teaching and recognition of teaching excellence as a priority.
- Strengthen the student contribution to, and participation in curriculum design and review, quality and monitoring processes associated with teaching, learning, and the wider student experience, embedding the concept of students as partners and embedding the student voice in course evaluation and review.

Implementation

The University's Teaching and Learning Committee will oversee this strategy. The associated Implementation Plan will outline the delivery of agreed actions aligning with *Shared Vision, Shaped by Values - Strategy 2020-25*. The first progress review will be initiated in autumn 2023. As part of this review process there will be an opportunity to review and revise specific actions and to adapt the strategy if necessary due to changing circumstances. Any proposed changes will be subject to a formal case being made and approval by the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Deputy President and Registrar.

Key objectives within this strategy stemmed from discussions and debates held at meetings of the Teaching and Learning Committee, the five working groups as well as from feedback from the four Colleges. Actions and deliverables to implement the key goals of this strategy are detailed in the associated Implementation Plan. Additionally, this includes work being undertaken by a range of groups, units, and projects over this time which are intimately connected to this strategy. Such projects include Student Digital Pathways, Designing Futures, and the Student Success Strategy.

Appendix 1 Summary of Graduate Attributes

University of Galway's University Level Graduate Attribute Statements, approved by Academic Council in 2015 are as below.

University of Galway provides opportunities, both through its formal programmes and the broader student experience, to develop a wide range of knowledge, skills and dispositions.

The attributes, which a successful, fully engaged student can develop at University of Galway, include:

Knowledge

- Academic achievement and expertise
- Ability to solve new challenges and problems

Skills

- Able to make sense of complex information from a variety of sources
- Communication skills in a variety of contexts, styles and media
- Teamwork, collaboration and effective leadership
- Creative, enterprising and resourceful

Disposition

- Personal responsibility and a commitment to lifelong learning
- Valuing of ethical and professional standards, integrity, responsibility and good citizenship
- Appreciation of the importance of place, identity and culture in a global context

Appendix 2 Implementation Plan

- Based closely on recommendations from the various working groups and the feedback from the Colleges, in addition to mapping out initiatives which are already planned over this time period and which are related to teaching and learning.

Strategic Priority Area 1 – Our Learning Culture

i) Learning

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
L1 All first year undergraduate students to participate in peer assisted learning.	Extend CÉIM to cover all programmes across the institution.	Promotes active management of own learning, develop sense of community and support, better adaptation to HE, retention, progression, performance, and satisfaction.	DPR, Colleges, Student Services, SU	Colleges	Build capacity progressively over the full period of the strategy.
L1a Encourage wider use of PAL, learning communities, and similar approaches to other years where appropriate.	Build on existing initiatives and consider discipline-based or self-driven models for students in later years who have experienced CÉIM. Develop PAL for PG students by building on the PGR mentoring pilot project.	Improved levels of learner autonomy, self-direction, cooperation, and academic outcomes.	DPR, Colleges, Student Services, SU, Graduate Studies	Colleges	Build capacity progressively over the full period of the strategy.
L2 Develop and resource a comprehensive, integrated student learning support service.	Connect the work of the Academic Writing Centre, SUMS, CÉIM, the Academic Skills Hub, PUPS, Library, Student Services, and other supports and move from reliance on project and short-term funding	Better student retention, performance, progression, satisfaction, and levels of confidence. Stronger collegiality and cooperation across range of services and alignment with primary academic mission.	DPR, Student Services, Graduate Studies	DPR/Dean of Students	

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
L2a Develop student learning skills and academic and professional confidence	An outcome of CÉIM experience, first year skills modules, learning supports (L2a), training opportunities, and through experience within programme of study.	Increased learner confidence, improved performance, and skills to support autonomous learning.	Colleges/ Schools, Student Services, Designing Futures, Library	Colleges	
L2b Ensure the goals of the Student Success Strategy are achieved	Deliver, evaluate, and build on the work to date in developing the Student Success Strategy.	Detailed strategy and implementation plan with specific goals and targets. Increased student success, confidence, and resilience	Student Services, Colleges, SU	Dean of Students	Strategy / Implementation plan completed by Sept 2022. Implementing over full period.
L2c Provide mental health, wellbeing, and sexual health / consent training to students	Recognise that personal wellbeing is crucial to students in achieving their learning goals.	Awareness raising initiatives included in student orientation, curricular and extracurricular levels; Awareness raising, education, and training for student leaders / staff members. Enhanced confidence and skills, help seeking capacity, and ability to support others.	Colleges & Schools, Student Services, Consent Framework Group, EDICC, Teaching & Learning Committee.	Dean of Students / Student Services	
L3-C6 Build strong connections between teaching, learning, and research through the student learning experience, teaching and assessment methods, and other opportunities.	Implement a range of approaches, best matched to the particular discipline areas and contexts, examples of which can be taken from Healy et al and similar case studies across a range of institutions. (Label indicates also connected to Curriculum domain)	All students to have experience of research or research-like activities as part of their programme of study. The development of research skills, and an awareness of contemporary research questions/issues within their chosen field(s).	VP Research Research Centres and Groups Colleges & Schools	Dean of Students/ Research	

ii) Curriculum

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
C1 Develop and implement policy for the design and operation of new programmes	This policy to include reference to key aspects of Learning Design and to outline formal processes for the validation of proposed new programmes, providing appropriate forms, timescales, etc.	Policy for the design and operation of programmes. Approved and implemented.	Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs, Teaching & Learning Committee, Registry, Quality Office, Colleges, Graduate Studies	Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs	Approved by December 2021. Implemented thereafter.
C1a Produce and publish guidelines and training materials on aspects of learning design and good practice in the management of programmes.	These will provide resources to programme teams and schools to guide through the process of design of high-quality university programmes and courses. Specific aspects raised by the Working Groups (e.g. flexible course structures, elective modules, alignment, assessment methods, use of openly licenced resources, etc.) will be incorporated into these materials.	Guidelines, handbook, and online training materials	CELT, Registry, Graduate Studies	CELT	Core materials completed by Sept 2022. Additional issued throughout period of the strategy.
C1b Promote the principles of UDL across programme design and teaching practice and compliance with accessibility requirements.	Extended rollout of UDL training programme, incorporation of principles into guidelines and design strategies. Review of available technologies to support diverse learner needs. Aim to meet accessibility standards.	Significant completion of UDL training. Provision of guidelines, advice, and checklists. Availability of technologies to support diverse learner needs. Compliance with accessibility requirements.	CELT, DSS, Student Services, Library, Accessibility Committee	Teaching & Learning Committee	
C2 Colleges to review their portfolio of programmes and to identify opportunities for enhancement, consolidation, new programme possibilities, and to revise structures.	Taking the opportunity to review programmes with a view to enhancing operational management as well as reviewing curricula with a focus on aspects such as placement, internationalisation, scope for incorporating university level elective modules, stronger connection with research interests and activities, flexible programme structures and modes of delivery, issues of inclusion and UDL, graduate attributes and skills, links with industry and other organisations, and teaching innovations.	Revised/enhanced programme offerings and operations.	Colleges, DPR, Registry, CELT, Quality Office, SU	Deans of College	Ongoing, but with status reports provided for the mid-term review (2023-24)

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
C3 Design, develop, and deliver a number of university-level, elective modules/microcredentials on key broad interest topics.	Develop a small set of university-wide modules (i.e. with no, or few pre-requisites and open to students in any College) on key topics such as Sustainability and the SDGs, leadership and cooperation, skills and employability, issues pertinent to society, and other identified areas. Explore scope to facilitate these modules within programme structures or other alternative approaches, and resource requirements/constraints.	Small set of university-level modules made available, in conjunction with Designing Futures. Evaluation of pilot delivery and recommendations for future development and additional topics.	Designing Futures, Colleges	Designing Futures	Rollout as per Designing Futures project plan. Status review at mid-term.
C4 Implementation of Graduate Attributes	Ensure graduate attributes are referenced in all programme documentation and that there is widespread awareness of these amongst students. Colleges to report on extent to which graduate attributes are being implemented/addressed. Review of the Graduate Attribute statements based on evaluation and feedback.	Summary statements of implementation of GAs. Evaluation, review, and recommendations for future updating/revision of GA statements for the next Academic Strategy.	Colleges, Designing Futures	Colleges	Colleges College reports incorporated into response for C2. GA review end of strategy period 2026
C5 Implement a Teaching & Curricular innovation scheme	Provide small-scale funding for projects based on innovation in teaching, learning, curricular design, or assessment. Funding provided by the University, Colleges, and/or via the National Forum/SATLE-LEPS schemes.	Evaluation report on the scheme. Series of short case-studies/reports covering the funded projects.	DPR, CELT, Teaching & Learning Committee, Vice Deans, SU	DPR	Reported annually. Runs throughout the period. Final evaluation report by end (2026).

iii) Assessment

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
A1 Develop a scoping tool/process for Colleges to undertake a review of assessment practices across their programmes	Focus on effective, rapid mapping of current practices, and identification of innovative approaches or already well-developed examples of authentic assessment. Tool will indicate range of possible approaches; volume, timing, and scale; emphasise alignment with learning outcomes; scope for integrative and programme level assessment; and role of assessment as of/for/as learning.	Guidebook and associated tools to enable review to take place and to identify potential opportunities for enhancement.	CELT, Exams Office, Academic Secretary, Colleges	CELT	Initial version March 2023.
A2 Colleges to review assessment practices and identify potential opportunities for enhancement or redesign	Focus will be on scope for enhancing practice, responding to practical challenges, and future development (rather than large scale audit type exercise)	Action plan for introduction of enhancements or process improvement. Reports on associated pilot implementations. New practices implemented in all Colleges by end of period of the strategy.	Colleges	Colleges	First reviews completed by mid-term review.
A3 Improve assessment and feedback literacy of students	To provide students with a better appreciation of the role of assessment in their own learning and to make best use of feedback on their own work for continuing improvement.		Colleges/Schools/Programmes, CELT	Colleges	Ongoing
A4 Pilot of student learning portfolio	Students can collect and collate materials they have produced for assessment, as part of their learning journey, through project work, and in showcasing their capabilities and employability skills. Current proposal to use OneNote as core technology given widespread availability. Review will consider viability of other options.	Design and development of simple portfolio structure and embedded self-reflection questions/tools. Report on implementation with identified pilot groups.	CELT, ViceDeans/Colleges, SU, Student Services, Designing Futures, Graduate Studies	CELT	First template Sept 2023. Evaluation phases in 2024, 2025.

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
A5 Revise policies and processes around academic integrity, plagiarism, and examinations	To look at incorporation of QQI guidelines and other relevant recommendations from NAIN and appropriate groups with regards the broad area of academic integrity in assessment and to revise and update regulations and processes for managing assessment including examinations.	Academic Integrity Policy. Academic Integrity awareness training for all students (including online materials). Revised policy and guidelines on assessment and examinations (including online, open book, practical, oral, etc.). Potential new structures/ supports for Academic Integrity issues.	CELT, Academic Secretary, Exams Office, Teaching & Learning Committee, Graduate Studies	Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs	Awareness training materials developed by Dec 2021. AI Policy completed by July 2022. Others developed and revised over the period of the strategy.
A5a Consider scope for the provision of an assessment management platform	Explore the case for a central assessment/ examination platform identifying resource requirements, interoperability and potential advantages offered.	Report with case outlined. New system for more effective management of assessment – dependent on outcome of report and resourcing.	Exams Office, Registry, ISS, SDP, CELT, Teaching & Learning Committee	Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs	Report and recommendations July 2023.

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
D3 Provide training materials (and support) on curricular design and management (C1, C1a) for programme teams			CELT, Quality Office, Registry, Colleges	CELT	
D4 Ensure training, CPD, leadership, and mentoring are appropriately incorporated into workload models and career planning/ progression.			DPR, HR, Colleges	DPR	
D5 Maximise the benefits of the Investment in new information systems and streamline administrative processes	Implement the goals of the Student Digital Pathways project, following its timeline and targets.	Modern, efficient, and effective information systems for managing student lifecycle, programme development, etc.	SDP team, Registry, Colleges, Graduate Studies	SDP Team	
D6 Empower programme teams to work creatively and collaboratively in their programmes	Provide training (D1, D2, D3) with team based cohorts and availability of training materials and resources. Training to encompass curricular design aspects with opportunities for team and leadership development (HR)	Enhanced quality of programme design and coordination and increased collegiality.	CELT, HR, DPR	CELT	
D7 Provision of seminars, workshops, and annual conference/ event on Teaching & Learning.	Provide regular seminar programme throughout the academic year, specific workshops, and re-instate the annual T&L Conference	Increased awareness of key issues in T&L, sharing of practice, collaboration, development of new ideas, promotion of scholarship of T&L.	CELT, Teaching & Learning Committee	CELT	Ongoing.
D8 Provide support for staff and programme teams aiming to teach through Irish	Training, Mentoring		Colleges, Irish Language Officer, Acadamh	Irish Language Officer	

Strategic Priority Area 2 - Developing & Empowering our Staff

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
D1 Develop a comprehensive professional development framework in academic practice	Review and revise current CELT framework in line with national and international developments, to enhance flexibility and modes of participation, including consideration of short courses, workshops, informal CPD, and qualifications. Map both the qualifications and the CPD opportunities onto career progression/ promotion.	New framework for CPD. Range of courses and self-study materials, RPL routes, RPL Assessment digital credentials.	CELT Researcher Development Centre, Graduate Studies, HR	Director CELT	May 2023
D2 Expand enrolment on CELT programmes and courses, including making opportunities available for professional staff who support teaching and learning.	Provide additional places on existing CELT courses, and provision for new CPD opportunities. Providing scope for professional staff who are supporting teaching and learning will help to strengthen collaboration and collegiality, in addition to ensuring common understanding of educational goals and approaches. This will be subject to staff resourcing being made available.	Greater number and proportion of staff with such qualifications and with recorded CPD completion. Opportunities for Team/ School based PD and training. Enhanced capacity for future development and greater scope for extending scholarship and research in teaching and learning.	CELT, HR	DPR, CELT	

Strategic Priority Area 3 - Our Teaching & Learning Environment

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
E1 Establish a Teaching & Learning Spaces Steering Group	The group will take forward the work of the T&L Spaces report, identify new priorities, advise on and lead developments in the upgrading, refurbishment, design, and enhancement of teaching and learning spaces across the institution. It will feed into the T&L Committee and will comprise membership from all appropriate units and areas of the University	Strategic prioritisation and coordination of future developments in teaching and learning spaces (e.g. lecture theatres, classrooms, laboratories, etc.).	CELT, Colleges, Buildings & Estates, ISS, Library, Student Services, SU	DPR/COO	Established by Jan 2022.
E2 Produce a costed action plan for a phased programme of upgrades, refurbishment and redesign of teaching venues and identification of opportunities for learning/study/groupwork spaces.	A key first action of the TLSSG (E1), focusing both on the physical spaces and the technologies available within the venues.	Costed recommendations/action plan.	CELT, Colleges, Buildings & Estates, ISS, Library, Student Services, SU	COO	
E2a Implement recommendations of E2	Subject to budget being identified/provided, but crucial to the quality of the teaching & learning experience	Upgraded and state-of-the-art teaching spaces. Increased range of pedagogic approaches available.	B&E, CELT, ISS, T&L Committee, SU	UMT	
E2b Pilot redevelopment of venues	By way of a 'demonstrator', identify one or two teaching venues (e.g. lecture theatre) which can be adapted/redesigned to facilitate more collaborative and participatory teaching and learning approaches.	Demonstrator/pilot venue(s) available for teaching and active learning.	B&E, CELT, ISS, T&L Committee	Director of CELT	
E3 Successfully deliver the Learning Commons /New Library	Ensure that the Learning Commons project is delivered.	Provision of a transformative learning space and new library at the heart of the campus.	Library, B&E, ISS, CELT, DPR	Learning Commons/ Library Project Team	Project dates

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
E4 Design a comprehensive digital learning environment based on a core suite of tools and technologies that will provide a sustainable framework for future operations and innovation.	Review the current suite of tools including the VLE, digital video management, interactive authoring software, etc., and select a core bundle/suite. Appropriate integration with other systems (via SDP). Aligning license periods to ensure medium and long-term continuity, and securing necessary funding.	A comprehensive, holistic core suite of tools and technologies, integrated with key information systems and allowing a wide range of pedagogical approaches and programme delivery modes.	CELT, ISS, Vice Deans, Teaching & Learning Committee	CELT	Extend necessary tools to Sept 2023. Alignment of licensing, core suite procured, integrated with SDP for first phase rollout Sept 2023.
E5 Provide professional development, support, and multimedia production capabilities to academic units and programme teams	Recognise the need for continued support for multimedia production facilities and the essential role of Learning Technologists/Multimedia Developers in supporting teaching and learning development and innovation. Provide relevant training programmes (D1, D2, D3).	Appropriate staffing roles (permanent rather than short-term contract) and levels in support of Colleges and Schools. Additional mini-studios, plus continued development of existing studio facilities.	DPR, CELT, Colleges	DPR	Secure permanent College LT posts Mar 2022.

Strategic Priority Area 4 - Our Community and Beyond

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
W1 Ensure that all programmes nurture critical thinking, enterprise, and creativity, and that the graduate attribute meet the needs of the students themselves, those who would seek to employ them, and wider society.	Achieved through range of specific actions, including L1, L1a, L2, C1, C1a, C2, C3, C4, A4. Also closely connected with the work of Designing Futures.	Enhanced reputation for the quality of our graduates. Improved student satisfaction and performance.	Colleges, CELT, Student Services, Library, Designing Futures	DPR	Continuing review and activities throughout the duration of the strategy.
W2 Provide students with opportunities to demonstrate efforts, commitment, skills, and experience through co-curricular and extra-curricular awards.	Use of digital badges/credentials, personal portfolios, and connection with the Diploma Supplement, where possible. Designing Futures, Alive, Employability Award, LIFT leadership programme, Digital Champions, etc., all contribute. Build on and enhance work in civic engagement.	Broad range of opportunities within and beyond formal courses. Evaluation of badging and portfolios	Designing Futures, Student Services, CDC, CKI, SU, Library, CELT, RDC, Graduate Studies	Designing Futures	As per the strategic and operational plan for Designing Futures and the Student Success Strategy.

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
W3 Ensuring that meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and other actions related to the climate emergency and other environmental and societal challenges are reflected in our curricular and co-curricular offerings to students.	Addressed through other actions relating to curricular design, including provision of university-level modules, etc. (L3, C1, C1a, C2, C3, C4)	Clear demonstration across curriculum and other opportunities of recognition and response to major societal and environmental challenges. Enhanced reputation for relevance of our programmes.	Colleges & Schools, CUSP, CELT, Student Services, Library, Designing Futures, SU	DPR	Throughout the duration of the strategy
W4 Strengthen connections with alumni, partner institutions, business and industry, public services, NGOs, and professional bodies.	Develop and enhance deep, collaborative partnerships, student placements, curricular co-creation, continuing professional development programmes and support contributions to public discourse. Achieved through a number of actions including C1, C2, C4 and the establishment of employer/industry/public sector/ professional bodies liaison groups and representation, where appropriate, on boards and committees. Included in programme validation and quality reviews.	Clear, strong connections between programmes and wider society/economy.	Colleges, Schools, Disciplines. CDC, VP Engagement, Quality Office, VP Research, CALPD		Throughout the duration of the strategy
W4a Internationalise the curriculum using cultural diversity in teaching	Decolonise curriculum in order to ensure teaching is globally relevant	Strengthen the use of international contexts in all programmes	Global Galway/ Colleges/ Schools	VP International/ Colleges	Throughout the duration of the strategy and in line with Global Galway strategy
W5 Promote and encourage participation of students and staff in international partnerships, exchange, and placements.	Build on existing partnerships (ENLIGHT, Coimbra Group, research alliances, Erasmus+, etc.) to strengthen international connections and a disposition towards collaboration and an international/global perspective.	Connect staff and students to international networks and recruitment markets	Global Galway, Erasmus Office, International Office, Research Office, Graduate Studies, Colleges	VP International	As per plans for Global Galway, ENLIGHT, and other related initiatives. Throughout the duration of the strategy
W6 Create a welcoming culture for staff and students from diverse backgrounds and cultures and value their contribution to the learning environment.	Provide awareness raising and training on intercultural communication, empathy, and diversity. Seek opportunities for students to have an international/global experience/perspective. Also connected with C1b, C3, C4, W3, W5	Training programmes, events, and embedding of relevant aspects within programmes.	Global Galway, VP International, DPR, Dean of Students, Colleges, SU, Graduate Studies	VP International	Throughout the duration of the strategy

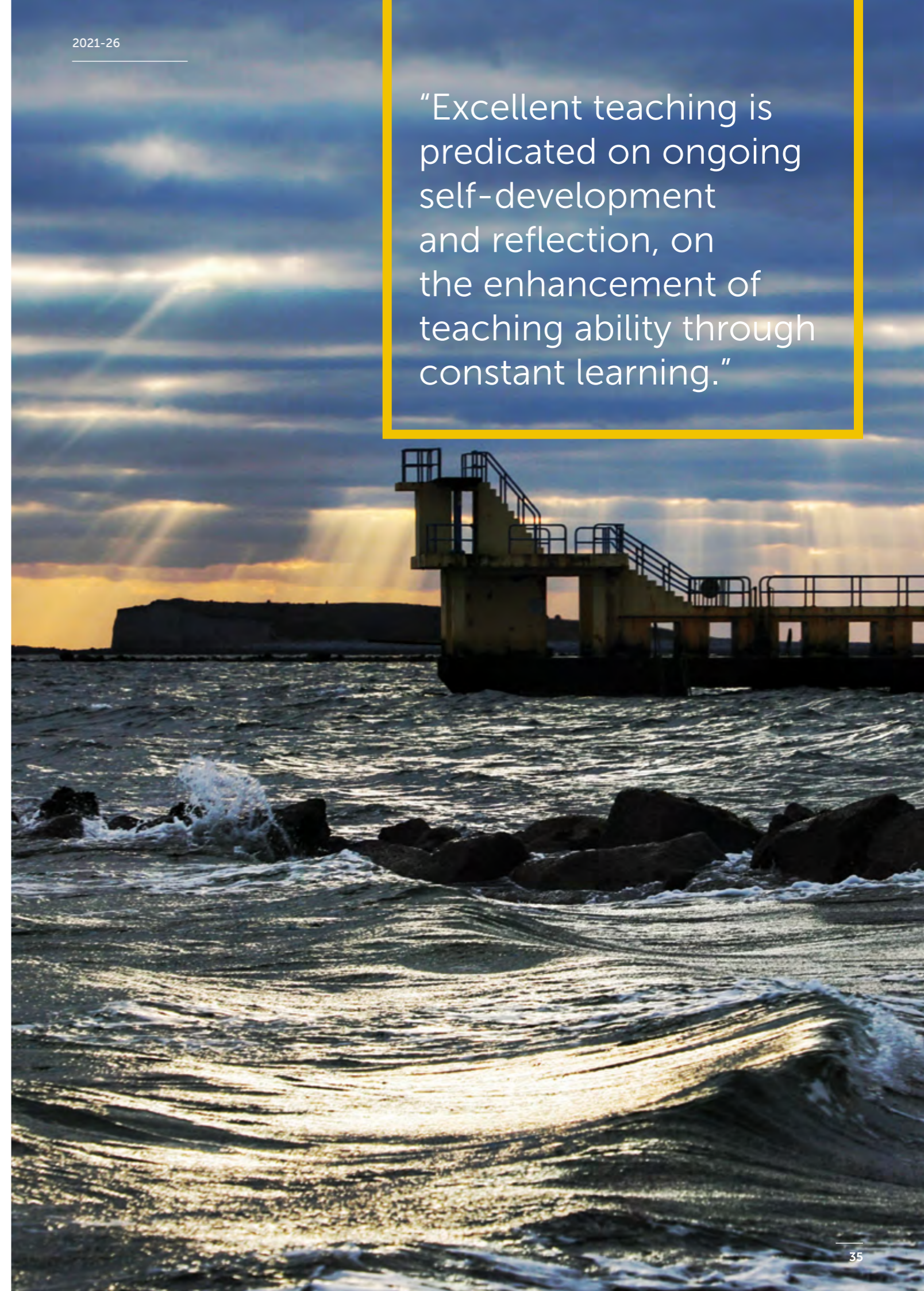
Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
W6a Provide necessary supports to ensure international staff and students realise their potential	Assisting international staff and students compete at same level as peers.	Inclusion of new programme in FEP. Increased availability in English for academic purposes.	International Office, HR	VP International	
W7 Provide students with opportunities to benefit from the distinctive aspects of Galway and the region.	Achieved through other actions, including relevant aspects of curriculum: C2, C3, W2, and W6. Broaden the range of courses offered through the medium of Irish and provide opportunities for all who wish to learn or enhance their use of the language.		Colleges & Schools, Irish Language Officer, Designing Futures, CUSP	Colleges	
W8 Ensure that graduates have an opportunity to continuously upskill through flexible modes of learning.	Broaden the range of courses delivered in a flexible mode for graduates and industry partners.	Broad range of course opportunities available through flexible course structures and modes of delivery.	Colleges, Schools, Disciplines, CALPD	Colleges	Throughout the duration of the strategy

Strategic Priority Area 5 - Quality Enhancement

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
Q1 Conduct a review of our existing Quality Assurance Framework and implement actions arising	Review overall framework, including policies and procedures framework.	Revised Quality Framework, with full compliance with appropriate requirements (e.g. Bologna, QQI, quality legislation, sectoral frameworks). Improved Policy and Procedures Framework.	Quality Office	Director of Quality	Review completed by March 2024
Q2 Strengthen the quality of our education to provide a pedagogically informed programme of excellence that meaningfully connects with our research	Define academic roles to include good teaching rather than academic expertise and research strength only. Ensure teaching excellence is an integral part of continuous academic professional development. Ensure recognition of teaching excellence as a priority.	Increased focus on the quality of teaching. Increased opportunities for professional development in teaching. Recognition of teaching excellence as a priority.	CELT, DPR, Quality Office	DPR	Ongoing throughout the duration of the strategy

Action	Description	Outcomes	Partners	Responsibility	Timeframe
Q3 Encourage and strengthen student partnership in quality review, curricular design, and in appropriate committees.	Embed student representation and partnership, where appropriate, in programme design, operation, and review, including maximising participation in the Class Reps scheme, staff-student liaison committees, etc.	Enhanced sense of partnership. Student voice recognised as a key input to decision-making,	Quality Office, Dean of Students, SU, Colleges & Schools, Dean of Graduate Studies	Director of Quality/DPR	Ongoing throughout the duration of the strategy.
Q4 Ensure that the University has a fit-for-purpose set of processes for evaluation and feedback, including centralised reporting of student feedback outcomes.	Summary reports to be provided annually to Office of DPR and considered by T&L Committee. Consideration of possible provision of survey tool via SDP.	Clear overview of issues raised and actions resulting, with broad picture at institutional level. Potential survey instrument made available to Schools/Colleges.	DPR, Colleges & Schools, Vice Deans for T&L, SU, Quality Office	DPR	Ongoing throughout the duration of the strategy.
Q5 Support university management, staff, Colleges, and units to participate and engage with national and European networks, representative bodies, and appropriate committees and boards in the areas of teaching and learning, quality, and strategy/policy development.	This includes engagement with groups and bodies established by the IUA, EUA, HEA, QQI, and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, in addition to relevant others pertinent to the range of services and disciplines within the institution. A review of such representation and the identification of priority commitments and consideration of workload/scheduling/representation aspects will be undertaken.	Close involvement with the development of strategy and policy at sectoral, national, and European levels. Well informed and connected management across the institution, with capacity to respond to opportunities, trends, and new developments.	UMT, Professional units and offices, Colleges	DPR	Ongoing throughout the duration of the strategy.

“Excellent teaching is predicated on ongoing self-development and reflection, on the enhancement of teaching ability through constant learning.”



Academic Strategy

Teaching & Learning

2021 - 2026



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