

Adult Continuing Education (ACE) at UCC

## Self-Evaluation Report

### Quality Review 2019



# UCC

University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

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Adult Continuing Education (ACE) has been offering part-time education programmes to Cork, Munster, and beyond since 1946 and is proud to celebrate over 70 years of educational services to the community.

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/ace>

<https://www.facebook.com/ace.ucc/>

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## Foreword

The underlying vision inspiring the direction of this self-evaluation report (SER) is the recognition of Adult Continuing Education (ACE) at University College Cork (UCC) as an academic department that offers a distinctive educational experience for part-time adult learners through promoting both lifelong and life-wide learning. Currently, ACE is an administrative unit that sits within the Office of the Vice President for Learning and Teaching (OVPLT). ACE is very different to a mainstream academic department. We offer and deliver programmes in collaboration with all four of UCC's Colleges (Medicine & Health; Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences; Science, Engineering and Food Science; Business and Law) in addition to collaborative courses with external organisations (e.g. the Health Service Executive (HSE); Mental Health Ireland (MHI)) as well as bespoke courses with numerous industry partners. As such, while in many instances, the subject expertise rests with the relevant disciplines, programmes are enhanced by ACE expertise in pedagogies of adult learning. Within the ACE model of programme delivery, we mix adult education approaches with flexible part-time course provision.

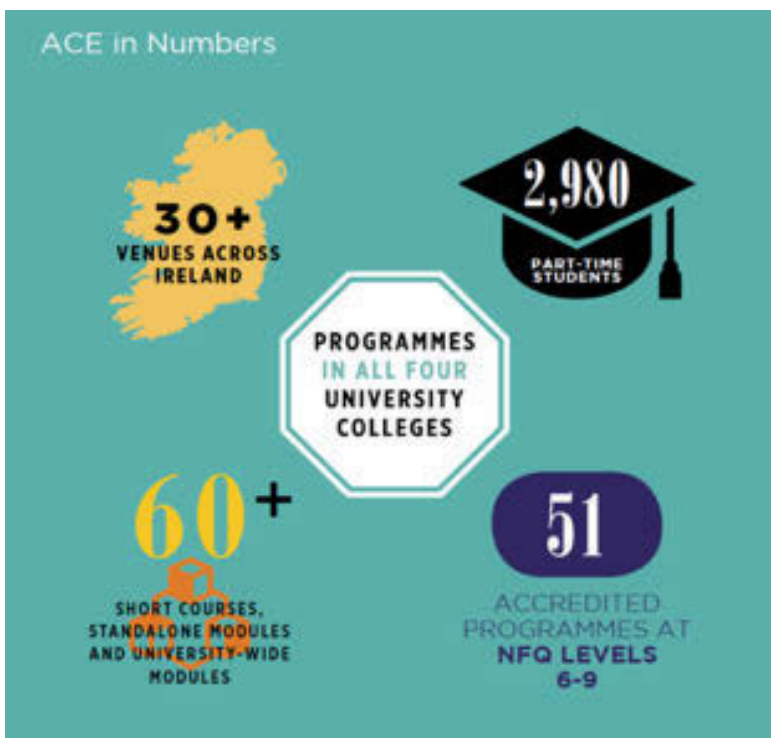
In embarking on this quality review journey, we are coming from a place of strength, upon which we will continue to build. ACE has been offering part-time education programmes to Cork, Munster, and beyond since 1946 and is proud to celebrate over 70 years of educational services to the community. We are a team of 29 core staff members based in a former period residence of historic significance, 'The Laurels', on the Western Road (pictured below), which is adjacent to, but not on the main University campus.



Reopening of the Laurels 2017

Providing educational opportunities for adult learners is our *raison d'être*. Our ethos of equality, diversity and inclusion for all is evident in our leading role in developing fair access to higher education for adult learners. Despite a decade of recession and economic turmoil, ACE has doubled its fee income in that period and our student numbers have grown from **2,107** in 2010/11 to **2,831** in 2017/18 with a peak of **3,251** in 2014/15. As of January 2019, we have 2,612 students registered across our suite of part-time programmes, with further intakes to come during the remainder of this academic year, which will bring enrolment to approximately 2,800.

ACE adult education courses provide access to higher education by actively engaging with non-traditional learners and removing barriers to participation. We provide an accessible route into higher education to those who might not otherwise access such programmes due to any number of factors including negative previous experiences of formal education; socio-economic barriers; family, community and personal factors; geographic and cultural remoteness from university; motivation, confidence and awareness of potential benefits and opportunities. The culture of ACE programmes is to break down these barriers by providing support through community outreach, academic development and pastoral care. Equally, the promotion of wellbeing is core to our mission and philosophy, underpinning our learning objectives and outcomes.



With our commitment to grassroots and community delivery, our programmes reach out to communities across the country, and connect with a diversity of adult learners. We offer progression opportunities to adult learners through the provision of qualifications from Level 6 through to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) which facilitate the development of knowledge, skills and competencies that enhance personal fulfilment and also allow participants to further their studies and enhance their employment opportunities. Partnership is a central mission of ACE, which we seek to embrace in our relationships both inside the university and in the wider community. We endeavour to ensure that those that work with us gain tangible benefits. We also endeavour to ensure that all learners on ACE programmes gain tangible benefits. Our partnerships include other educational providers, public sector institutions, community and neighbourhood organisations, the voluntary sector, industry, professional associations and international agencies like UNESCO and ASEM. Throughout this report, we hope to share with you the vision, mission, and future aspirations of ACE at UCC.

Figures based on 2016/17 data



## Part 1 Overall Analysis of ACE

### 1.1 Executive Summary

Every effort has been made to complete this self-evaluation exercise in adherence to the guidelines provided by the Quality Enhancement Unit at UCC. This report is not intended to be inclusive of all of ACE's activities and achievements, rather it is an attempt to focus on the quality and impact of our experiences, achievements and contributions, as well as on the feedback from our students and many stakeholders. As such, the emphasis of the report is on the impact we have on our learners and stakeholders, rather than on policies and procedures, although these are referenced and provided where necessary. One point to note at this juncture is that ACE is deeply embedded in the standard operations of the university and complies with all relevant UCC policies and processes. We use the same university IT systems for student records and exams. We adhere to the same examination process which includes examination boards and external examiner engagement. Our students are conferred in the same way as full-time UCC students.

Our core mission is captured in the following graphic and we hope that the SER in its entirety reflects how we engage with this mission.

### ACE Mission



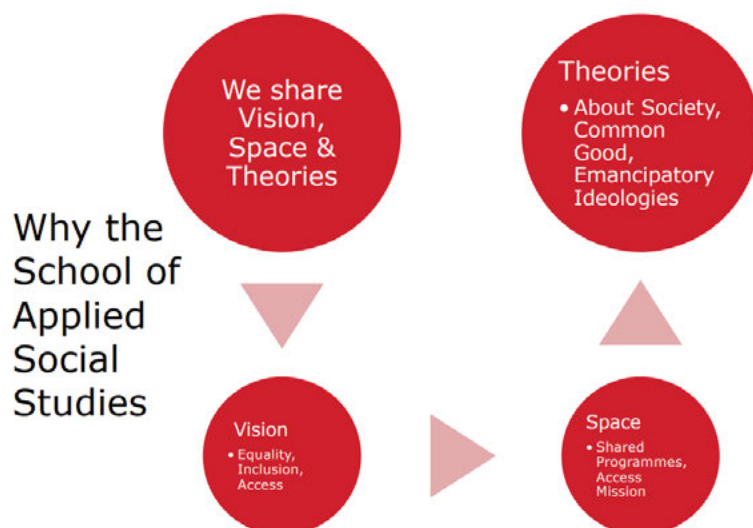
We embarked on the self-evaluation exercise as an opportunity to engage in critically important dialogue with collaborative partners and external providers through our benchmarking exercises; with ourselves as a unit within the University through the Lightning Decision Making Session and Coordinator Away Days; and with our students and stakeholders through discussion and feedback. The result of these self-evaluation activities are in two primary outputs: this self-evaluation report (SER) which includes our findings and recommendations for improvements, and a detailed set of Appendices which complement the SER.

The SER comprises six main parts. **Part 1** is an Overall Analysis of Adult Continuing Education (ACE) at UCC that includes our key goals and action points. **Part 2** provides a full overview of the activities of ACE including our vision and mission as well as details of our academic programmes, initiatives, research and key achievements in 2018. **Part 3** summarises the operational business of ACE including budgeting and financial arrangements, quality assurance mechanisms, programme delivery and curriculum planning procedures, ACE's marketing strategy and details of our collaborative relationships. **Part 4** provides details of the ACE student and staff experience, while **Part 5** outlines our approach to the self-evaluation exercises that we underwent in order to inform this Report. Part 6 summarises and provides some concluding remarks around the quality review process.

## Key Findings of the SER

Some of the key findings that have emerged from this quality review process can be summarised as follows:

- Our students:** Our student numbers have grown significantly in the last decade. Student satisfaction is also high as we strive to maintain a student-centred ethos through all of our programmes. The previous Quality Review Panel (2014) were impressed by the inspirational motivation for learning demonstrated by our students. At the time, students spoke positively of the support they received from staff, of the innovative nature of some of the courses, and confirmed that they had the means to give feedback and felt that ACE listened to their views. Since then, student satisfaction and feedback has remained consistently high and the student voice is always represented in our annual monitoring processes, especially through the Programme Committee reports. Nonetheless, there are still areas where we are striving to make improvements, particularly in relation to access for our students to the full range of student services and supports on offer in the university. For the 2018/19 academic year, ACE students had free access to the Mardyke Sports Arena for the first time. Up until now, they were charged a reduced membership rate, while full-time students could access these facilities for free. While this is certainly an improvement, ACE students are still not afforded equal access to the university's counselling and disability support services, for instance, although efforts are made by these units to support our students where possible on a case-by-case basis. In some instances this may constitute a double disadvantage, for instance issues around disability and mental health may have been factors preventing those students from participating in third Level education in the first place. Negotiating for recognition of parity with full-time UCC students remains an important goal for ACE.
- Programme Development:** Several new programmes have been added to our suite of courses with more due for commencement in 2019. This report will highlight our efforts in this regard. We have a goal of having a significant presence in all four Colleges of the university in order to meet the diverse needs of potential students. We also have significant financial challenges that require us to ensure our portfolio is economically balanced. In this latter respect the over-reliance on some disciplines was brought sharply into focus this year with the loss of several of our core programmes to the new Cork University Business School (CUBS). In an attempt to mitigate against further risk, we are trying to diversify our portfolio of programmes. While there are a number of disciplines where we can demonstrate a need for part-time course provision, it is not always possible for us to convince our colleagues in these disciplines to work with us in developing such programmes. Further encouragement to academic departments from senior university management would be very much welcomed in this regard.
- Finance:** ACE's income has significantly grown over the last eight years. However, there is a lot of uncertainty around maintaining current income levels/growth from year to year. This uncertainty arises for a number of reasons. The last two years have seen significant growth in Springboard+ and industry-led programmes; these two income sources represent approximately one third of ACE's total fee income. ACE/UCC has successfully attracted high student numbers through the Springboard+ scheme since its inception, however the scheme is government funded and there is no assurance as to the continuance of the scheme from year to year. Similarly industry-led programmes are dependent on the availability of individual company education and training budgets and the priorities of senior management. All ACE programmes have a Departmental anchor within UCC. If priorities change within a Department/School, they can unilaterally withdraw the ACE programme. For these reasons it is imperative that ACE diversify its income sources. One of ACE's key strategic priorities in this regard is the development of online programmes. It also needs to negotiate with university management a stability clause that allows for ordered withdrawal of programmes by mutual agreement.
- Development of Online Programmes:** Through the benchmarking exercise at the Department of Continuing Education, Oxford University, we identified the further development of online programmes as a strong potential growth area for ACE. As a result, online programme development has been designated as a key strategic priority for the future of ACE and we have prepared an associated business plan for the next five years which is included in this report. While this project has huge potential to contribute to the future sustainability of ACE, it will also require a substantial amount of commitment, drive and dedication from the ACE management team to see it through to completion.
- Research:** Further development of our research portfolio remains a central aim of ACE. ACE management encourages all staff to undertake research, to publish, and to present lectures and posters at national and international conferences, which a number of staff do. However, research has not traditionally been part of the job description of staff in ACE (except the Director), although this is starting to change. Realistically, there are limits to how much ACE can engage in research unless it becomes a more explicit aspect of job roles and the unit itself has a designated research role within the university. It is proposed to address staff roles through a review being conducted by an external consultant. ACE's overall mission will be addressed through a proposed new link to the School of Applied Social Studies, UCC. The framework for this development has arisen through the national benchmarking exercise with the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University, in which we included the Head of the School of Applied Social Studies. We recognise that our research portfolio impacts in two ways within the university, firstly it embeds adult education scholarship as an area of bona fide study within UCC; secondly it will enhance the application of adult education theories and practice not just in ACE programmes but more widely within the university. Given that UCC is a strongly research focused university, it will bring all aspects of the ACE mission into a more central place in the university.



Currently ACE contributes to local, national and international communities in education and lifelong learning, details of which are included in the relevant sections of this report. In 2019/20 ACE will become the host of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Lifelong Learning Hub. Partners include Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the ASEAN Secretariat, China, India, Japan and the European Commission. The potential for increasing our multinational research activity through this forum is enormous given the hub's five research networks driven by academics in universities in Korea, the UK, Germany, China and Malaysia.

- Access and Progression Pathways:** Some advances have been made in this regard and continues to be a focus for ACE reflecting the UCC Strategic goals of to 'enhance access to lifelong learning' and to 'continue our commitment to widening participation and enhancing access for all students, fostering an inclusive environment'. In 2017 a progression route allowing graduates of the part-time Diploma in Social Studies (60 ECTS over two

years, leading to NFQ Level 7 Special Purpose Award) to go directly into Year Two of the full-time Bachelor of Social Science, allowing them to accumulate an additional 120 ECTS over two full-time academic years leading to a 180 ECTS, NFQ Level 8 undergraduate degree. This was developed in partnership with the School of Applied Social Studies. This access route paves the way for the development of similar type initiatives. Work is currently underway in mapping elements of the Diploma in Youth & Community Work to the Bachelor of Social Science (Youth & Community Work) which aims to enhance student progression. Currently graduates of UCC NFQ Level 6 and Level 7 awards obtained via ACE, have to undertake the MSAP (Mature Students Admissions Pathway) Examination for very many programmes, while those holding NFQ Level 5 qualifications obtained via other QQI institutions are exempt. This anomaly has been recognised by the university, it is a key priority for ACE to remove the requirement for UCC graduates of NFQ Level 6/7 to undertake MSAP examination as it is a financial and psychological barrier to progressing in third level education.

- **Collaborative partnerships:** ACE continues to form collaborative partnerships with other educational providers, public sector institutions, community and neighbourhood organisations, the voluntary sector, industry, professional associations in various mutually beneficial ways. These collaborations are highlighted throughout this report. In order to respond to the very changing needs of society ACE will continue to invite, foster and promote such partnerships. Two current examples give a sense of the diversity of such partnerships: At a global Level we are working with UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) to develop an online course for Learning Cities aimed at high ranking city officials and we are also liaising with the Cork Volunteer Centre to develop a training course for small voluntary organisations in the Cork region. Such partnerships are crucial to ACE as they allow us to reach out and make an impact in diverse contexts.
- **Professionalisation of ACE Programme Coordinator Role:** The professionalisation of the ACE co-ordinator role remains a high priority. This role is a hybrid post as it has both academic and administrative responsibilities. There are approximately 20 of these posts in ACE, including fulltime and part time. Historically, this post was aligned to the Senior Executive Assistant (SEA) pay scale as there is an obligation to align all staff grades to a relevant existing public sector pay scale. The selected scale was deemed appropriate in terms of remuneration. However, over time this has proved problematic on a number of Levels. In recruitment it is not possible to list the 'essential criteria' necessary to fulfil the role as only those pertaining to the SEA role may be listed. New staff are placed on the first point of the scale, which does not reflect the expected level of education and experience of successful candidates. There is no career promotion process for Coordinators as they are linked to the SEA scale where promotion is obtained through a process which operates against a set of exclusively administrative criteria. Retention of Coordinators proves problematic especially in a vibrant jobs market. To address the inequities for Coordinators, to maintain a highly motivated, committed and experienced team and to embed best practice in adult education delivery and scholarship the ACE Management Team have commenced a review process, which is being led by an external expert in HR and IR. It is hoped that this process will allow open, transparent and fair recruitment processes, career progression opportunities, a review of salary and especially entry points onto scale and give the University Management Team a model that can be implemented with positive benefits for staff, ACE, UCC and the communities we serve. In tandem with this development ACE has also launched a staff development project in collaboration with Maynooth University that is primarily aimed at Coordinators, to allow them acquire formal adult education qualification (see below).
- **Staff-development:** Based on our benchmarking trip to the Department of Adult Continuing Education at Maynooth University, two training workshops are to be delivered to ACE staff over the coming months. Staff who complete these workshops and who express an interest in further study in these areas will then be afforded the opportunity to undertake one of two Certificate programmes delivered by Maynooth: the Certificate in Adult and Community Education or the Certificate in Adult Guidance, Theory and Practice. It is hoped to deliver the Maynooth NFQ Level 8 Certificate in Adult and Community Education (<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/undergraduate-studies/courses/certificate-adult-and-community-education>) in Cork city for a group of ACE Coordinators. This will have many direct benefits for both the staff participating and for the overall ACE mission. We hope that such an investment in our staff will further contribute to the enhancement of our own community of practice.
- **RPL:** The 2014 Interim Quality Review Panel noted that the field of recognition of prior learning (RPL) was one area which ACE could usefully contribute to. Since then, we have made significant advances in that regard. ACE represents UCC on the RPL Practitioners Network Ireland. The network, which was established in 2015, aims to:
  - » provide a coherent practitioner voice to shape and inform policy development
  - » support the development of a community of practice, providing opportunities to share learning, face to face, online and through practical sharing of toolkits and resources
  - » promote good practice, informed by national and international practitioner and policy perspectives (<http://www.rpl.ie>)

Based on this networking activity, ACE undertook a pilot project on behalf of UCC whereby a group cohort RPL approach resulted in 17 farmers from the South West of Ireland graduating with a Diploma in Environmental Science and Social Policy (Full report provided as Appendix I). As a result of this initiative, a sub-committee of UCC's Academic Standards and Development Committee (ADSC) was established to review UCC's RPL policy. ACE has a staff member on that committee and this work is ongoing.

## 1.2 Brief History and Introduction to Adult Continuing Education at UCC

Lifelong learning began at UCC in 1911 during the Presidential term of Bertram Windle. In 1916, a radical new initiative was undertaken that was to pave the way for the opening up of third-level education to the working class in Munster. The early decades of the 20th century in Ireland were not only revolutionary in political terms, but also socially and educationally. This initiative consisted of a series of weekly public lectures and discussions, or 'Economic Conferences', which were organised for the working class of Cork city. Academics, clergy and trade unionists all presented papers and contributed to the discussions that followed.

The ten conferences that took place, cut short by the 1916 Easter Rising, were organised by Alfred O'Rahilly and Professor Timothy Smiddy, two men who went on to play significant roles in the fledgling Irish Free State. O'Rahilly, who later served as President of UCC, was a founding figure in the development of Adult Education in Ireland.

*"The primary aim [of the Conferences] was to discover or create a demand for higher education among the workers of Cork, and to promote fellowship and knowledge among all who were interested in social welfare and progress. The ulterior aim of the Conferences was to prove the desirability of organising (1) a regular series of University Extension Lectures (2) a special course of instruction at the University for social and charitable workers, and (3) a regular system of University Tutorial Classes for workmen. It rested with the citizens of Cork to prove their practical interest in these educational and civic ideals (Workers' Republic 11 March 1916)."*

The 'Economic Conferences' were the blueprint for the development of Adult Education at UCC over the next 30 years.

Then in 1946, UCC President Alfred O’Rahilly, who played a pivotal role in forging a strong partnership between UCC and the growing Irish labour movement, established a dedicated adult education department. The first Diploma in Social and Economic Science course was formally opened at a public meeting in UCC on the 14th October, 1946 and 24 students were awarded the Diploma in June 1948. The graduates of that programme played leading roles in public life over the coming decades.



Given its long history, ACE has a special place in the Irish education system, it celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. Since those early beginnings, ACE’s purpose has been to provide opportunities in lifelong learning for all adults irrespective of age and previous educational achievements.

1950 Diploma Economic Science

## ACE at Present

The 2017/18 academic year saw 1,882 students enrolled on accredited ACE programmes. The remaining 931 students were registered for the non-accredited short course programme series. As part of its full suite of programme offerings in 2017/18, ACE had seven Springboard+ Programmes ( Advanced Languages and Global Communication HDip; (Bio) Pharma Processing, PG Cert; Digital Arts and Humanities, MA; Operator Development (Pharma Manufacturing), Cert; Process & Chemical Engineering, Cert; Procurement Management, Cert; Project Management, PG Cert), one Online Programme (Autism Cert) and one Distance Learning programme (Lean Supply Chain Management) on its books. It is useful to note the breadth and diverse footprint of ACE programmes across 52 outreach centres in 15 towns and cities around Ireland last year. The Higher Diploma in Leadership Development has also been delivered in Dubai since 2017 and the online programmes (Autism, Trauma Studies) has seen ACE reach students in countries such as Australia, Germany, Reunion-French territory, Namibia, Singapore and the Basque region of Spain.

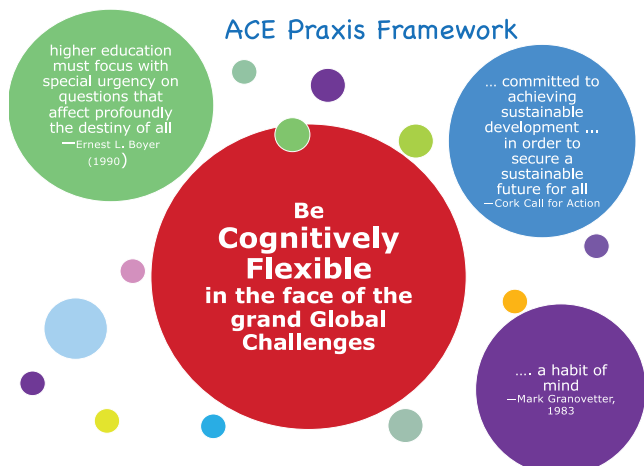
### 1.3 ACE Mission for UCC

Wider society needs proactively engaged universities to contribute to addressing the complexities of contemporary social, political, economic, environmental and wellbeing challenges. These range from planetary grand challenges like those articulated in the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals to everyday ones facing individuals and communities in their homes and neighbourhoods. Very often there are causal links across the spectrum of challenges. Adult Education departments with the sort of dual mandate that ACE delivers for UCC can be one of the leading ways the university can respond to wider societal needs. Remaining mindful of higher level missions while also delivering individual and community educational needs is critically important. To bring coherence to what ACE does, it may be useful to firstly identify four broad domains of engagement, the first two around the overall university mission, the third about how we engage inside and outside the university and the fourth how we need to academically conceptualise our work.

#### University Four Roles (Ernest L Boyer, 1990)

- 01 Knowledge **Generation**
  - Research
- 02 Knowledge **Integration**
  - Enhancing Disciplinary Scholarship
- 03 Knowledge **Transmission**
  - Teaching Function
- 04 Knowledge **Application**
  - Real Contexts

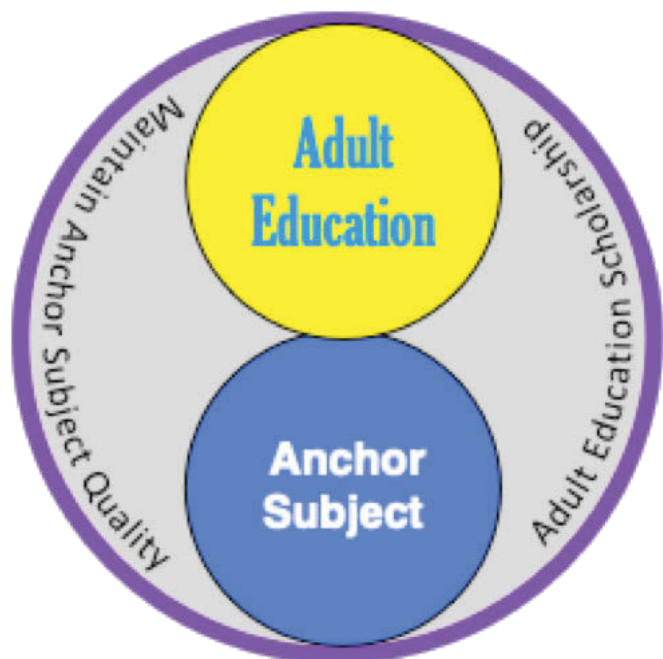
The first university mode of response, ‘Science and Community’, draws on Boyer’s (1990) imperative that ‘higher education must focus with special urgency on questions that affect profoundly the destiny of all’ (77). He proposed a model with four key scholarship functions: discovery, integration, application and teaching. To meet Boyer’s imperative universities must be both engaged as communities of scholars and intellectuals and simultaneously conscious of the needs of society.



The second mode of response, ‘Building Bridges and Cognitive Flexibility’, is built around Granovetter’s (1973, 1974, 1983) theory on the strength of weak ties. His work is extremely important in helping us understand two closely related concepts, bridging weak social ties and cognitive flexibility. Both of which are critical for the generation of bottom-up resilience and openness to consider ideas, concepts and solutions that are novel and emerging from worldviews to which we may not personally subscribe.

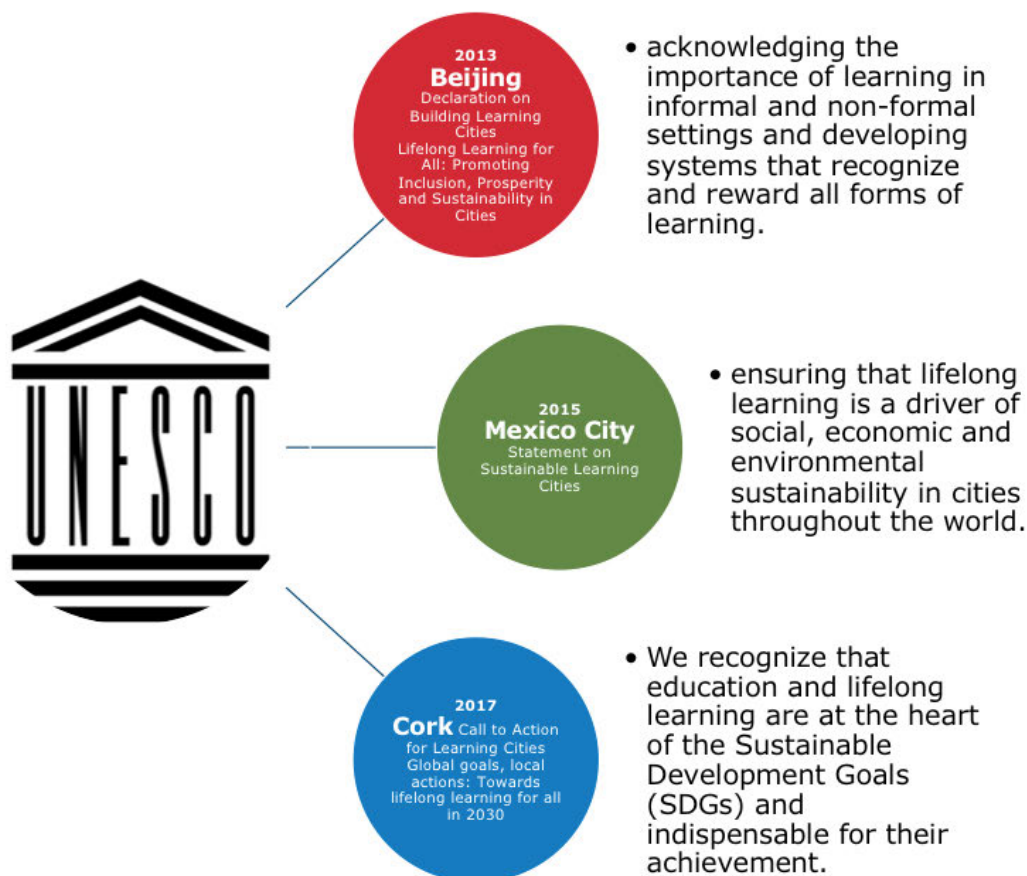
The building bridges aspect is a theme developed by Granovetter (1973, 1974, 1983) in which he identifies education as an important bridging mechanism. These bridges, beyond existing sets of weak social ties, open up a host of new opportunities. This is particularly important for socio-economically disadvantaged and migrant communities. The bridges created through weak social ties not only bring people and communities in contact with valuable external assets of all kinds, but can also create serendipitous opportunities.

In 2012 ACE committed to leading a networked university initiative to drive greater engagement with external partners such as community groups, industry, other educational providers, the third sector, professional associations, governmental agencies, regional development agencies, social partners, and citizens. Partnership is also about redefining the university as an engaged ally in the pursuit of commonly agreed goals, rather than being an elite actor bringing top-down solutions. This placed an emphasis on building mutually beneficial networks for better outcomes for adult learners, UCC and society in general. This approach addresses both Boyer's 'destiny of all' goal and also sets out to achieve neighbourhood and individual empowerment around education and wider life chances, which includes enhancing networks, and building the 'weak ties' described by Granovetter.



The fourth dimension of ACE's praxis rests on how we conceptualise our academic mission. We see this residing in two complementary domains. First we have been actively building our relationship with the scholarship around adult education and andragogy. This is important to inform our own practice, to allow us reflect on our approaches, but also to challenge the predominance of a 'learnification' approach to education that blurs the essential principle 'that the learning of adults is not one-dimensional but can serve a range of different purposes' (Biesta & Leary, 2012: 5). The second academic mission resides in the subject area specialisms that underpin all ACE programmes at present (though we envisage ACE developing new programmes in the field of adult education). In this context we have established systems and processes to ensure that the academic quality of programmes delivered through ACE are commensurate with the academic quality of other programmes delivered by the anchor academic unit. These principles are enshrined in missions of the ACE Academic Standards Board (ASB), Programme Committees including annual reviews, engagement with External Examiners including the production of an annual Composite Examiners' Report and our assessment and examinations processes.

ACE is very strongly engaged in Cork UNESCO Learning City, being represented on its steering committee and contributing to two of its flagship activities, the annual Cork Lifelong Learning Festival and as the host for the Cork Learning Neighbourhoods project. In addition it has become part of the global conversation around the development of learning cities. ACE personnel have contributed to learning city conferences in Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, some on the invitation of UNESCO. It has also been the lead UCC partner for the development of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) online video project and is currently hosting a project to develop an online course for Learning Cities aimed at high ranking city officials. This has significantly shaped ACE's perspectives on both urban and rural challenges around adult education and lifelong learning also the need for more engagement with the global challenges outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals.





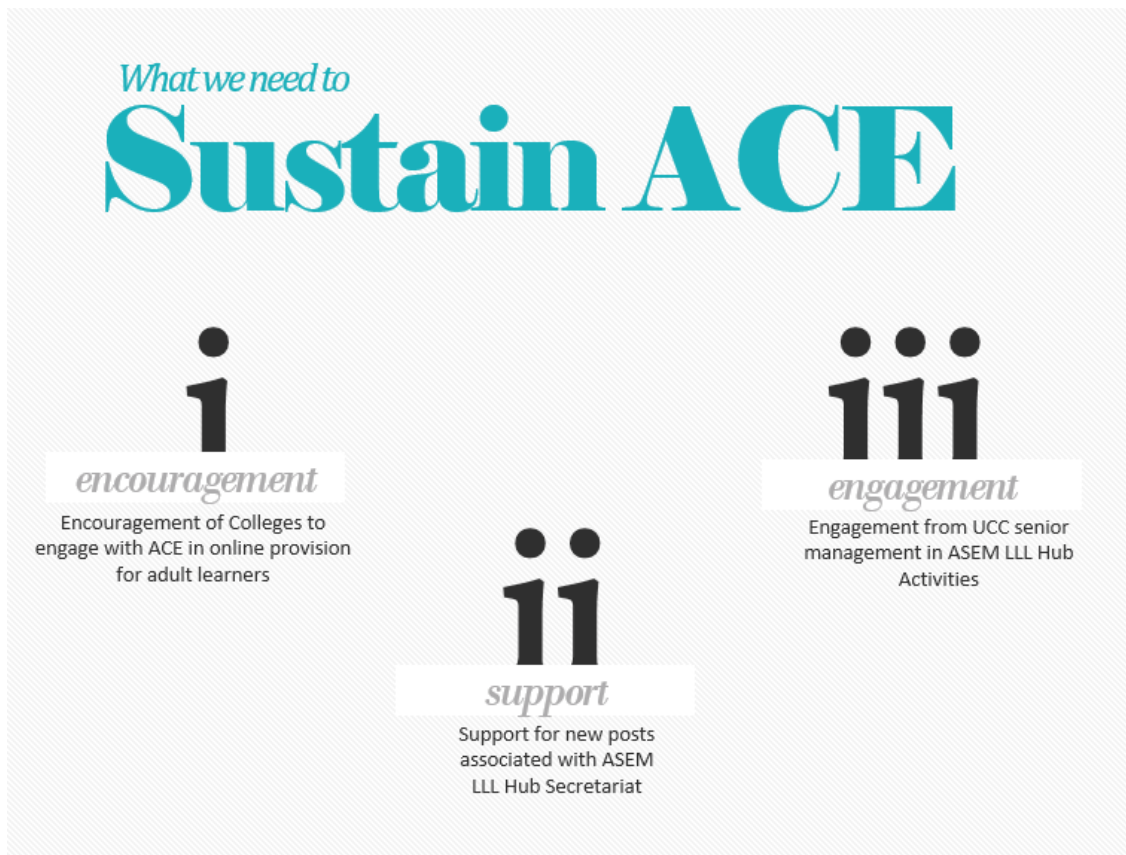
## 1.4 Key Goals for ACE

The Quality Review process has helped ACE to define key objectives that need to be maintained and/or enhanced and/or developed:

- **Students**
  - » We need to ensure quality of delivery of all ACE programmes that enhance the student experience in line with international best practice around the education of adults.
  - » We need to ensure diversity of intake, making sure that less represented groups are not left behind.
  - » We need to ensure that the student voice is heard in formation of our policies.
  - » We need to ensure that we maintain an age friendly and an intergenerational ethos.
- **Programme Development**
  - » We need to ensure a broad portfolio of programmes that remains responsive and relevant to individual and community needs.
  - » We need to extend our programme reach within the university in order to deliver the range of programmes required.
  - » We develop new programmes in collaboration with other educational providers.
  - » We will develop programmes on adult education, based on our emerging academic role.
- **Finance**
  - » We need to ensure the financial stability of ACE through a balanced portfolio, which includes programmes with relatively high fee income.
  - » We need to develop a university guaranteed stability clause that allows for ordered withdrawal of programmes by mutual agreement.
  - » We need more proactive support from university management than encourages Departments/Schools to develop and promote ACE programmes.
- **Development of Online Programmes**
  - » We need to significantly expand our online delivery both to meet changing student need and to ensure our long term sustainability.
  - » We will need to establish an infrastructure, systems, processes and expertise to support the development of online programmes.
  - » We need to develop more enhanced blended learning models in order to:
    - deliver programmes in remote rural communities, where potential student numbers are low;
    - meet the needs of particular communities such as prisoners;
    - deliver highly specialised courses beyond the campus;
    - open access to individuals and groups who would not have easy access to centres of learning.
- **Research**
  - » ACE will need to further develop its overall research portfolio.
  - » Research needs to become a more explicit aspect of job roles and be considered in promotion and recruitment.
  - » ACE needs to develop a specific research and teaching role in adult education (most likely within the School of Applied Social Studies).
  - » Through the proposed hosting of the Chair of ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM-LLL-Hub) new opportunities for research will emerge.
  - » ACE staff need to be facilitated and encouraged to continue to develop their research profiles at national level and through international networks like ESREA, EDEN, EUCEN, AAACE, etc.
  - » More ACE staff need to establish profiles in the UCC IRIS system.
  - » ACE needs to identify research funding opportunities nationally and internationally.
  - » ACE staff need to avail of research training opportunities through Erasmus+ and other mechanisms.
- **Access and Progression Pathways**
  - » We need to ensure that access and progression opportunities are enhanced both within UCC and beyond, in line with student needs.
  - » We need to eliminate barriers that militate against full participation in ACE programmes like language skills, literacy skills, funding, family support, spatial challenges and social and psychological inhibitors.
  - » We need to negotiate a more coherent internal UCC policy that allows seamless progression and full access to services.
  - » We need to push for the elimination of the MSAP examination for ACE graduates from NFQ Level 6 up.
  - » We need to continue to develop links with other university offices engaged in student recruitment.
- **Collaborative partnerships:**
  - » ACE will continue to form collaborative partnerships with other educational providers, public sector institutions, community and neighbourhood organisations, the voluntary sector, industry, professional associations in various mutually beneficial ways.
  - » ACE will continue to reach out to Colleges, Schools and Departments in UCC to enhance and develop UCC offering to part-time students.
- **Staff Career and Educational Support:**
  - » The professionalisation of the ACE Coordinator role remains a high priority.
  - » All grades of staff will be actively encouraged and supported to engage in education, training and CPD to enhance their own careers and wellbeing.
  - » ACE will engage with external partners like Maynooth University to create educational opportunities for staff.

- **RPL/VNIL:**

- » ACE will continue to develop its RPL practice and policy.
- » It will endeavour to allow more students use RPL as an access route to ACE delivered qualifications.
- » It will provide a coherent practitioner voice to shape and inform policy development.
- » It will support the development of a community of practice, providing opportunities to share learning, face to face, online and through practical sharing of toolkits and resources.
- » promote good practice, informed by national and international practitioner and policy perspectives (<http://www.rpl.ie>)

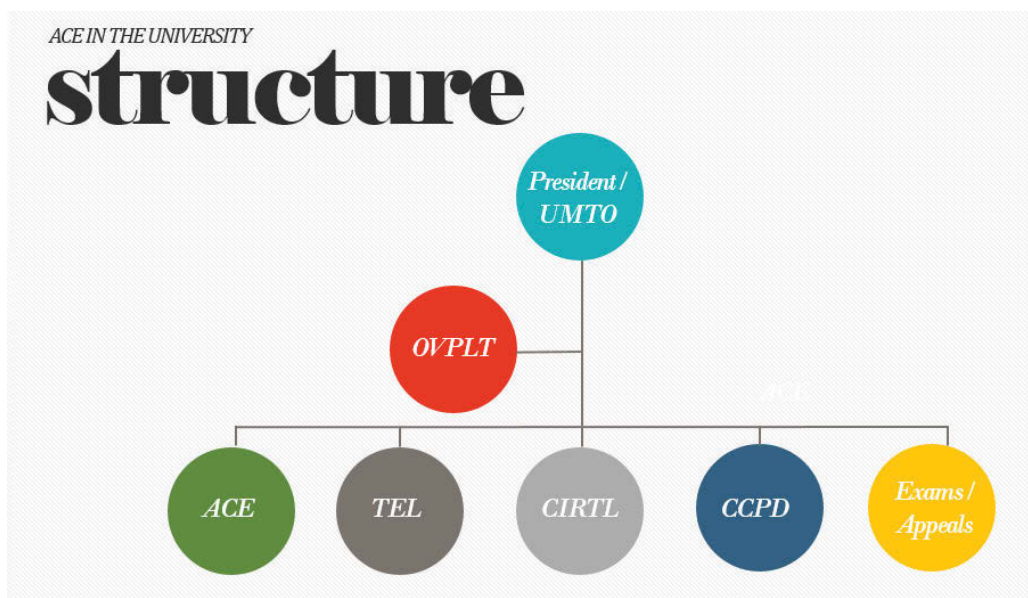


## Part 2 Overview of ACE's Activities

### 2.1 Overview of ACE

In terms of overall university structures, ACE falls within the remit of the Office of the Vice President of Learning and Teaching (OVPLT), the aim of which is to enhance learning and teaching and to provide support and recognition for all those involved in learning and teaching at UCC. We share this space with a number of other centres within the University: Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL); Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL); Centre for Continuing Professional Development (CCPD); the Exams/Appeals Office; and the Language Centre.

The Director of ACE, Dr Séamus Ó Tuama, sits on the University's Academic Council, Academic Board (AB) and on the Academic Development Standards Committee (ADSC) and the Equality Committee, he is also an ex officio member of other university committees, which are delegated to other ACE staff members. The Assistant Director, Lyndsey El Amoud, sits on the Centre for CPD Directorate, College of Business and Law Council, and the Academic Council Learning and Teaching Committee. A number of the ACE management team also serve on the various university working committees.



## ACE in Numbers

ACE has the most diverse and sophisticated offering in the Irish university adult education system offering over 50 accredited programmes in partnership with all four UCC colleges from NFQ Level 6 to Level 9, in addition to a flourishing short course suite of programmes and various stand-alone modules. We work with almost 3,000 part-time adult learners on an annual basis in over 30 venues around the country. Our core aim is to try to give as many adults as possible the chance to experience a university education.

**Table 1: ACE Number of Offering Types 2015 - 2019**

Programme Type	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Modules	5	9	10	12	8
Certificate	19	27	27	30	27
Cert/Dip	35	38	38	39	31
Diploma	4	6	5	6	10
Degree	2	4	7	4	2
PG Cert	3	5	3	2	2
PG Dip	4	4	1	2	3
Higher Diploma	15	17	16	14	13
Masters	9	9	8	9	9
<b>Total Number of Cohorts</b>	<b>96*</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>105</b>

*\*As of January 2019*

A full listing of ACE programmes on offer for 2018/19 is available in Appendix A. As can be seen from Table 1, ACE delivers programme across the NFQ range from Level 6 upwards.

**Table 2: ACE Student Numbers 2010/11 – 2017/18**

Year	Accredited Programmes	Short Courses	Total
2010/11	1327	780	2107
2011/12	1243	1074	2317
2012/13	1286	850	2136
2013/14	2281	950	3231
2014/15	2387	864	3251
2015/16	2274	831	3105
2016/17	2259	948	3207
2017/18	1882	931	2813

A full break down of student numbers by programme type per year is available in Appendix B.1. As can be seen from Table 2, our student numbers have increased from approximately **2,100** in 2010/11 to approximately **2,800** in 2017/18.

**Table 3: ACE Student numbers by Programme Type**

	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
<b>Modules</b>	126	135	128	113
<b>Certificate</b>	349	533	529	501
<b>Cert/Dip</b>	719	963	1053	1018
<b>Diploma</b>	88	57	100	271
<b>Degree</b>	44	82	76	67
<b>PG Cert</b>	32	21	13	3
<b>PG Dip</b>	23	8	2	21
<b>Higher Diploma</b>	334	311	281	266
<b>Masters</b>	167	149	92	127
	1882	2259	2274	2387

ACE is an important pathway into mainstream university programmes. Since 2001, almost 17,000 adults have formally graduated with a UCC qualification from ACE. Interestingly, over 1,500 (10%) of these students have then progressed to full-time UCC degree programmes. As such, ACE can be utilised as a feeder route to the mature student entry to full-time UCC degree programmes. Also worthy of note is the fact that 1,200 UCC graduates have then pursued an ACE qualification which demonstrates the role ACE plays in addressing the lifelong learning needs of UCC alumni.



## 2.2 Overview of ACE's Academic Programmes

### Adult & Community Education Programmes

ACE offers a broad suite of fully accredited part-time adult and community education programmes in collaboration with a number of academic schools and departments across the university. These programmes form a key part of the university's community engagement, access and mature student recruitment, as well as establishing the university's footprint in parts of the country that might not otherwise look to UCC. The programmes are delivered in multiple accessible formats via online, block delivery, blended and face-to-face modes on campus and at outreach venues all over Ireland. The outreach element of this provision is hugely important in reaching marginalised individuals and communities, and it contributes to increasing access to higher education for adult learners. Currently there are 275+ students undertaking ACE programmes on an outreach basis in twelve different centres across Ireland including Dublin, Limerick, Cavan, Kerry, Kilkenny and Laois. A key focus of our work in this area is to build partnerships with other educational providers, as well as the community and voluntary sector, in order to deliver a high quality university education in a flexible way that responds to local need on the ground.

*"I was learning a language that enabled me to reassess my own experiences in a coherent framework that gave definition and understanding to what had previously been for me an inexpressible experience"*

*Kevin, Graduate of Certificate in Mental Health in the Community.*

Two new Adult and Community Education programmes were launched in 2018/2019:

#### Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming

Social Farming is the practice of offering activity on family farms as a form of a social support service. In social farming the farm remains a working farm at its core, but invites people with a disability to participate in the day to day activities of the farm facilitating social inclusion, as well as rural and economic development. This Level 6 Special Purpose Award is the first programme of its kind in Europe which provides education and training opportunities to those working with people with disabilities both on and off host farms. This qualification will give students the opportunity to take up roles such as support workers and job coaches on other host farms or in the community.

#### Diploma in Social Studies

ACE was proud to launch the newly designed Level 7 Diploma in Social Studies in autumn 2018. The original Diploma in Social Studies was the longest standing programme in ACE. First delivered in 1946, it has had over 10,000 graduates from across the country. It is an interdisciplinary programme that introduces students to the disciplines of sociology, psychology, social policy, economics and philosophy. It aims to develop skills around critical analysis and divergent thinking in examining contemporary society. The newly designed programme was developed in collaboration with the School of Applied Social Studies in UCC and provides a unique pathway into the Bachelors degree in Social Science. Successful graduates of the Diploma will be eligible to apply for entry into Year 2 of the degree programme.

ACE has partnered with the Cork College of Commerce (local further education college) in the delivery of the programme and classes take place in both the College of Commerce and the UCC campus. This has expanded the offering to a wider target audience. The partnership approach to this programme promotes the ethos of the Learning Neighbourhoods initiative (of which UCC is a partner) in working together to build a culture of lifelong learning in our communities. We have 34 students undertaking the Diploma this year. The programme was officially launched by Cllr. Mick Finn, on Thursday September 27<sup>th</sup> 2018 at the Cork Learning City Day, in the College of Commerce.

### Continuing Education Programmes

Continuing education has been part of the mission of ACE from the first course offered in 1946 and includes a focus on part-time courses for adults wishing to upskill in their respective professional fields. Our continuing education programmes are developed in partnership with industry representatives and professional bodies and include disciplines such as health and safety, management, coaching and pharma manufacturing. There are currently 260+ students registered on twelve continuing education programmes which are delivered on a part-time basis in UCC. Among the external partners involved in these programmes are the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD); Velopi; WAVE Trauma Centre; and IDDea Consulting.

Two new Continuing Education programmes were launched in 2018/2019:

#### Postgraduate Diploma in Trauma Studies

The first intake on the new Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma in Trauma Studies began their studies at the end of January 2019. Designed and delivered in partnership with the Discipline of Criminology in UCC and the WAVE Trauma Centre in Belfast, this wholly online programme is the first of its kind on the island of Ireland. This course focuses on both the individual and societal implications of trauma and draws on examples and experiences from individuals who survived, and societies emerging from, violent political conflict. The course deals with trauma as a universal process and the experience of the WAVE team, both in Northern Ireland and in the Balkans informs the content and the delivery of this programme.

## Diploma in Management Practice

The Level 7 Diploma in Management Practice introduces students to key theories and skills related to the practice of management within their own organisation through the lens of self, team and the organisation. The programme is designed to introduce participants to key management principles, best practices and practical ready-to-apply tools in order to help students build their own managerial skill-set, while delivering immediate improvements to their organisation. The programme has a core focus on people management and addresses issues such as employee relations, conflict resolution and HR planning. It also introduces students to key areas such as managing finance, marketing, strategy and decision-making.

The programme is particularly valuable to managers in any sector who have had little or no formal management training and want to strengthen their managerial capabilities through the completion of a formal third Level management qualification that is highly practical in its orientation. It is also suitable for people working in non-managerial roles who wish to improve their career development in preparation for future management roles. Over forty students enrolled on the first intake of the programme in autumn 2018.

## Enterprise Engagement Programmes

Our enterprise engagement programmes are custom designed for industry clients in collaboration with the relevant UCC academic unit and are typically delivered onsite within those client organisations. Courses generally include a focus on management, team development and leadership development. Current industry clients include DePuy Synthes; Janssen Pharmaceuticals; Allianz Worldwide Care; Gilead Science; BioMarin; Pfizer; Education and Training Boards Ireland; Asavie; Shire/Takeda; and Ergo. There are over 200 students currently enrolled on Level 7 and Level 8 programmes which are being delivered at sites across Cork, Dublin, Kildare and Dubai.

Due to the success of the partnership between ACE and Pfizer in Cork which was first established in 2008, Pfizer began rolling out ACE programmes to its Dublin and Kildare sites in November 2018 with a view to upskilling 250+ employees over the next two years. Other new business for 2018/19 has also been secured with DePuy Synthes, Janssen, Asavie, Shire/Takeda and Ergo.

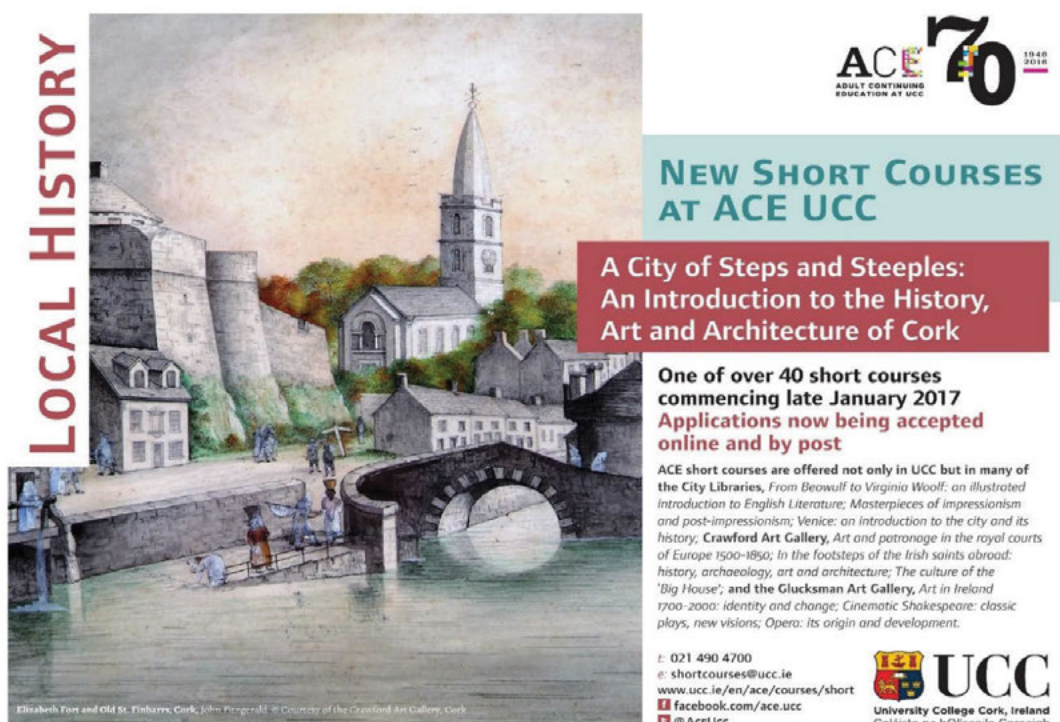
## Springboard+ Programmes

In May 2011, the Irish Government launched **Springboard+** as a national labour market activation scheme offering free places to jobseekers on part-time courses in areas of identified skills need such as information and communications technology (ICT), high Level manufacturing (including bio-pharma and medical device technologies), international financial services, skills to trade internationally, and cross-enterprise skills. Springboard+ is co-funded by the Irish government and the European Social Fund (ESF) as part of the ESF programme for employability, inclusion and learning 2014-2020. In 2017, Springboard+ was expanded to also offer those in employment 90% fee subsidies on designated courses, so that such individuals could upskill to meet a specific emerging skills gap and better prepare them for the future of work. Since the inception of the scheme, ACE has coordinated UCC's annual response to the Springboard+ call. The employment outcomes of UCC Springboard+ students from 2011 to 2018 demonstrate that 77% of graduates have secured employment, which is 9% above the national average for Springboard+ providers. A full report on ACE's involvement with Springboard+ is available in the Appendices (Appendix J).

## Short Courses

ACE is a leading provider of Short Courses in the Irish university context. These courses cover a wide spectrum of subject areas of general interest with a portfolio of approximately 90 courses and 1,000 enrolled students annually. Courses are delivered by current and retired academic staff and external experts. The normal duration is 6, 8 or 10 weeks. They are delivered on campus and in outreach venues, both during the day and in the evening. The short courses make an important contribution to the university's engagement in the city and enhance the general cultural and educational landscape in Cork. Among the external stakeholders collaborating with UCC in this area are Cork City Council, Cork Arts Theatre, Crawford Art Gallery, Irish Heritage Trust and the Glucksman Art Gallery on campus. Candidates who complete any ACE Short Course receive a Certificate of Attendance.

*"I couldn't live without these courses, they are really important in my life...[they] have opened a world rich in opportunities for life enhancement"*  
—Teresa, Short Course Participant.



**LOCAL HISTORY**

**ACE 70**  
ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION AT UCC 1948-2018

**NEW SHORT COURSES AT ACE UCC**

**A City of Steps and Steeples: An Introduction to the History, Art and Architecture of Cork**

**One of over 40 short courses commencing late January 2017 Applications now being accepted online and by post**

ACE short courses are offered not only in UCC but in many of the City Libraries, *From Beowulf to Virginia Woolf: an illustrated introduction to English Literature; Masterpieces of impressionism and post-impressionism; Venice: an introduction to the city and its history; Crawford Art Gallery, Art and patronage in the royal courts of Europe 1500-1850; In the footsteps of the Irish saints abroad: history, archaeology, art and architecture; The culture of the 'Big House'; and the Glucksman Art Gallery, Art in Ireland 1700-2000: identity and change; Cinematic Shakespeare: classic plays, new visions; Opera: its origin and development.*

021 490 4700  
shortcourses@ucc.ie  
www.ucc.ie/en/ace/courses/short  
facebook.com/ace.ucc  
@AceUcc

**UCC**  
University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Elizabeth Fort and Old St. Finbarrs, Cork, John Fitzgerald. © Courtesy of the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.

Short Course Example

## UCC's Connected Curriculum

The Academic Strategy (2018-2022) for UCC, centres on the concept of a Connected Curriculum.



As part of its Priority One Operational Plan, UCC is endeavouring to identify examples of good practice. We think that our **Diploma in Environmental Science and Social Policy** (NFQ Level 7) would be an ideal programme for 'surfacing good practice'. It hits five if not six of the criteria in the Connected Curriculum diagram above and is also academically anchored in two Schools: the School of Applied Social Studies and School of BEES (Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences). It has a diverse teaching team from both colleges and industry which are brought together to offer a holistic approach to the delivery of the programme. Using a blended programme delivery this course reaches beyond the UCC campus and is part of the offering to students in geographically disadvantaged areas, long distances from a third Level institution such as in South Kerry, West Cork and abroad using live recorded weekly lectures alongside face-to-face practice based field work.

Beyond the class, this programme has a global reach with its content covering key global issues such as climate change and the sustainable development goals by connecting the social, environmental and economic development principles through the curriculum guided by the programme anchor schools to ensure our students understand how we can meet the needs of today without compromising the needs of future generations. Additionally, research on the impact of environmental education at local Level is an area currently being explored.

Students from this programme have found employment in many areas: bio pharmaceutical, engineering, health and safety, education, county councils, state agencies, conservation using the many employability based skills embedded in the programme in both its delivery and design; project and group work, presentations, field a work, report writing, case studies.

### 2.3. Overview of Current ACE Initiatives

#### The Free University - Lifelong Learning Festival (#CorkLovesLearning)

ACE plays a central role in the Cork City Lifelong Learning Festival, which is an internationally recognised event of educational significance. The Festival runs over one week in spring with the objective of engaging the general public with the work of the City's educational institutions. The festival's motto is 'Investigate, Participate, Celebrate' and the public are encouraged to do that by taking part in workshops, classes, watching demonstrations, trying out new skills and seeing others demonstrate what they are learning. Since 2013, ACE has augmented its contribution to the Festival with the inception of the 'Free University' - a week-long series of lectures which are free and open to the public. We typically offer up to thirty free lecturers in UCC and right across Cork in a variety of venues; including libraries, museums, community centres, parks, sports grounds, private businesses and green spaces.

#### Skellig Centre for Research and Innovation (Skellig CRI)

The Skellig Centre for Research and Innovation (Skellig CRI) is a unique higher education and community development partnership between Kerry County Council, UCC and South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP). The Centre is based in Cahersiveen and provides a space which is open to educational institutes both nationally and internationally in order to facilitate the delivery of higher education programmes, research and practice locally in the Skellig Coast region. ACE is the UCC lead for this project engaging with the four University colleges to bring student and research-based activity to South Kerry.



Skellig Cri

Through the Skellig Engagement Fund, six projects from UCC are underway in the region:

1. School of Medicine, UCC - Healthcare project with Coláiste na Sceilge TY students
2. School of Geography, UCC - Citizen science research with community and schools
3. School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, UCC - Geo-tourism research project
4. School of Food and Nutritional Sciences, UCC - Specialised marketing workshops for artisan/speciality food producers
5. School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, UCC - Bat survey and conservation research and engagement with local schools
6. School of Geography, UCC - Social inclusion research project

Other Student based activities include:

- 12 students studying locally in Cahersiveen on the Diploma in Environmental Science and Social Policy
- 15 students studying a newly designed Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming
- Over 350 other students engaged with Skellig CRI and UCC across the following workshops, short courses and talks in 2018:
  - » Personal and Management Coaching; Mindfulness in the Everyday; Introduction to Astronomy; Geography and Geology fieldtrips; Creative Writin;; Speciality Food Marketing; Skellig Vision 2050 Community Engagement Workshop; Women's studies; Social Farming Programme consultation days; Changing Landscape of Valentia talk.



*Students studying in Cahersiveen*

#### **Other Activity:**

- Skellig CRI welcomed the UCC President Professor Patrick O'Shea to the region for a visit where he met with the local community and spoke with students in Coláiste na Sceilge.
- Skellig CRI is also closely aligned with local groups and organisations including the following: Úibh Ráthach Task Force and Skellig Coast Tourism Network, ADAPT Interreg, Fáilte Ireland, NAISC Skellig Diaspora Network projects.

## **2.4 Overview of Research at ACE**

The research focus of ACE is committed to the promotion and advancement of lifelong learning within higher education. We conduct, promote and disseminate theoretical and empirical research on the education of adults and adult learning through research networks, conferences and publications. ACE is a founding member of **HELLIN** (Higher Education Lifelong Learning Ireland Network) and is a member of **EUCEN** (European University Continuing Education Network), **ESREA** (European Society of Research on the Education of Adults) and **AAACE** (American Association of Adult & Continuing Education). Research output from ACE staff includes international peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, research reports and conference papers. While the research space is still one that ACE needs to foster, we are engaged in a number of research endeavours as follows:

### **The West Cork Dairy Farmers' RPL (recognition of prior learning) Project**

UCC's Academic Strategy 2018 - 2022 "The Connected University" identifies the review and consolidation of its Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies under its Priority 5 Action Points. In 2016/17 ACE piloted a group cohort RPL Project which resulted in 17 farmers from the South West of Ireland gaining both access to and exemptions from five modules (40 credits out of a total of 60) on UCC's Diploma in Environmental Science and Social Policy (NFQ Level 7). This Pilot Project was the first of its kind in UCC.

Through their participation in the Carbery Greener Dairy Farms Project (CGDF), these farmers had achieved learning, competencies, experience and skills that were recognised as equivalent to the learning outcomes of the Diploma in Environmental Science and Social Policy through a recognition of prior learning (RPL) process. The project involved a close working collaboration between ACE and the Carbery Multinational Group which is headquartered at Balineen, Co. Cork. The farmers graduated with the Diploma in 2018 and a further seven farmers are undertaking the Diploma programme in 2018/19. (A full report of this project is provided in Appendix I).



*West Cork Farmers Graduate October 2018*

### **Carrigtwohill Research Project**

ACE has collaborated with the Carrigtwohill Family Resource Centre (which provides services to 33 different nationalities) on an integration and inclusion project, encompassing research which examines immigrant perspectives of migration and Irish society, as well as the principles of integration and inclusion, tolerance and acceptance. A training initiative has also been developed to explore how social, cultural, and political practices specifically impact on female immigrants in Ireland.



In September 2015, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning presented Cork with a Learning City Award at the second International Conference on Learning Cities in Mexico City. At that time, Cork was one of only three cities in Europe and one of twelve cities worldwide to achieve this special honour.

The Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities (2013) makes a commitment to social inclusion and expanding access to and participation in lifelong learning. However, as the Cork City Profile (2014) highlights, there remains a 'distinct spatial component to educational disadvantage in [Cork] city'.

The concept of Learning Neighbourhoods was presented by Peter Kearns (former Director of PASCAL International Observatory Learning City Network) at a seminar with UNESCO during the 2015 Cork Lifelong Learning Festival. A Learning Neighbourhood is thus described as an area that has an ongoing commitment to learning, providing inclusive and diverse learning opportunities for whole communities through partnership and collaboration. The Growing Lifelong Learning in Cork (GLLiC) steering group decided that the Learning Neighbourhood approach could help tackle aspects of educational disadvantage and therefore decided to pilot a Learning Neighbourhood Programme in 2015-2016 in areas that face educational disadvantage. ACE as one of the founding partners of this initiative continues to be the anchor for Cork Learning Neighbourhoods, which is run in cooperation with Cork Education and Training Board (ETB), Cork Institute of Technology (CIT), and Cork City Council. This initiative celebrates existing learning opportunities, while also creating new activities and events within the local area to support, develop and promote active local lifelong learning. Each learning neighbourhood has a local coordinating group which is made up of local organisations and residents who develop a learning plan, promote learning opportunities and organise and run the events for the year. These groups vary in each neighbourhood but have representatives from local schools; youth groups; community education providers; businesses and residents. While the initial neighbourhoods selected in 2015 were Ballyphehane and Knocknaheeny, the programme has now expanded to include Togher and Mayfield (2016 – 2017) and South Parish and the Glen (2018 – 2019). These communities plan and organise many events throughout the year including a Learning Trail; Art Sale; Showcase/Community Expo; Faces of Learning; Lecture series; Community Workshops; Outreach programmes and UCC visits.



**Learning Neighbourhood Principles:**

- Co-create
- Consult and involve
- Celebrate what is good
- Communicate and connect
- Develop the sustainability of initiatives
- Develop a bottom up approach
- Promote 'new' as well as support existing activities
- Promote equality and inclusion







Further details of ACE's involvement with the Learning Neighbourhoods can be found through the following publications:

- O'Sullivan, S., S. Ó Tuama & L. Kenny (2017) 'Universities as key responders to education inequality'. *Global Discourse*, 7:4, 527-538.
- O'Sullivan, S. & Kenny, L. (2017) *Cork Learning Neighbourhoods*. Centre for Adult Continuing Education, University College

Cork. <http://www.corklearningcity.ie/media/Learning%20Neighbourhoods%202017.pdf>

- Ó Tuama, S. & O'Sullivan, S. (2015) 'Designing and Implementing Learning Neighbourhoods in Cork's UNESCO Learning City Project' CIAE (Commission on International Adult Education) Pre-Conference at AAACE Conference, Oklahoma City, USA.
- O'Sullivan, S. & Kenny, L. (2016) *Learning Neighbourhoods pilot programme*. Centre for Adult Continuing Education, University College Cork. [https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/studyatucc/adulted/LearningNeighbourhoodsPilotReview\[5129\].pdf](https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/studyatucc/adulted/LearningNeighbourhoodsPilotReview[5129].pdf)



## Staff Research

Many programme co-ordinators have institutional research information profiles (IRIS) and more staff are migrating towards creating these. This initiative has become increasingly important in recent years as we try to further develop our academic research profile and need greater visibility of the research being conducted by ACE staff. IRIS profiles are linked to staff profiles through the ACE webpage. <http://www.ucc.ie/en/ace>

In recent years there has been a substantial increase in the role of local government in the operational practices and funding of the voluntary and community sector in Ireland. Government policy development in this area has been aligned with changes which have had a significant impact on the sector. Accordingly, the study and work of students and practitioners on the Diploma Youth and Community Work also have been impacted upon, as they now operate in a much changed landscape of community development to that previously experienced. Research into policy changes that effect youth and community work and its loci of the Irish voluntary and community sector has been conducted by a number of academics from UCC. One researcher, ACE programme co-ordinator and lecturer, Déirdre O'Byrne has been heavily involved in this research. The findings of the research have been disseminated nationally and internationally by publication and through conferences. Additionally, this primary research has also contributed to pedagogical knowledge within the Diploma Youth and Community Work.

Forde, C., O'Byrne, D., ÓhAdhmaill, F. (2016) *Community Development in Ireland under Austerity and Local Government Change: Policy and Practice* in Forde, C., O'Byrne, D, O'Connor, R., ÓhAdhmaill, F., Power, C. (2016). *The Changing Landscape of Local and Community Development in Ireland*. ISS21, University College Cork.

## 2.5 Overview of ACE's key achievements in 2018

### AONTAS STAR AWARD Shortlisting

The Certificate in Mental Health in the Community was shortlisted in 2018 for an AONTAS STAR Award for the second time in two years. This Level 6 Certificate is delivered in partnership with Mental Health Ireland (MHI) in a number of outreach centres around the country. The Certificate was shortlisted within the Third Level Access and Engagement category which considered the work of projects that provided access to adult learners from low income backgrounds/learners with disabilities into third Level programmes and/or initiatives that promote partnership between higher education providers and local communities. This programme is highlighted as a case study later in this report.

## Pfizer Award

The Certificate in Operations Supervision (Pharma Manufacturing) delivered to Pfizer staff in Little Island, Cork has been awarded a national Impact award within the Pfizer Ireland network and has been nominated for a global award. This programme was also shortlisted for the Best Business and Third Level Institution Collaboration award at the 2019 Education Awards and the 2018 Pharma Awards. Due to the success of this programme and a subsequent programme (which has been running in Cork for the last 10 years), Pfizer has started rolling out programmes to its Dublin and Kildare sites since November 2018 with a view to upskilling 200+ employees over the next two years.

Congratulations to our colleagues in Cork for being shortlisted for The Education Awards 2019. Their work is being recognised in the Best Business & Third Level Institution Collaboration category  
[#EducationAwardsIRL](#)



## Cork Prison Initiative

ACE, in collaboration with the Educational Unit in Cork Prison, continued its education initiative, delivering three 10-week short courses at the prison over the last two years:

- An Introduction to Art Appreciation
- An Introduction to Literature
- A City of Steps and Steeples: A History Cork

This partnership has continued to flourish in 2019 with the first ever delivery of a UCC accredited programme in the prison. The Certificate in Mental Health in the Community commenced in February 2019 with a very positive uptake of 16 participants.



*The Education Unit, Cork Prison launched Inside Out, an exhibition of artwork by the students of this course on June 22, 2018 on Spike Island.*

## Academic Conferences and Workshops

Dr Séamus Ó Tuama was a keynote speaker at the Asia-Europe Foundation conference titled 'Flexible Learning Pathways: Asia-Europe Conference on Lifelong Learning and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' in Hanoi, Vietnam on December 13-14, 2018. He also delivered a paper on UCC's engagement in Cork Learning City.

Dr Séamus Ó Tuama and Professor Cathal O'Connell (School of Applied Social Studies) delivered a workshop series at USSH, which is part of the National University of Vietnam, Hanoi in December, 2018.

## Credit Union Summer School

ACE and the Centre for Cooperative Studies, UCC ran the Credit Union Summer School on 30 – 31 May 2018, with over 100 delegates attending from credit unions all over Ireland. The theme of the summer school was 'Reinventing and designing credit unions for the future.' Speakers included Michel Bauwens, Founder of P2P Foundation and Leading Theorist on Collaborative Economy; Ed Mayo, Vice-President of Co-operatives Europe and Secretary General of Co-ops UK; Simon Parkinson, CEO and Principal, Co-operative College UK; and Brian Corr, Head of Credit Union Policy, Department of Finance.

## Library Lecture Series

In 2018, to mark the centenary of women's suffrage, ACE in conjunction with Cork County Library service delivered a series of lectures focusing on women's issues in library branches around Co. Cork. These lectures were delivered by ACE staff and covered a wide variety of topics including women in the home and family, and women in conflict.

## Bertram Windle Award

This annual award for an outstanding contribution to Lifelong Learning was presented to the 'Growing Lifelong Learning in Cork' Committee in recognition of their hosting and organisation of the 3rd UNESCO Learning Cities Conference, which took place in Cork in September 2017.



## Alfred O'Rahilly Lecture

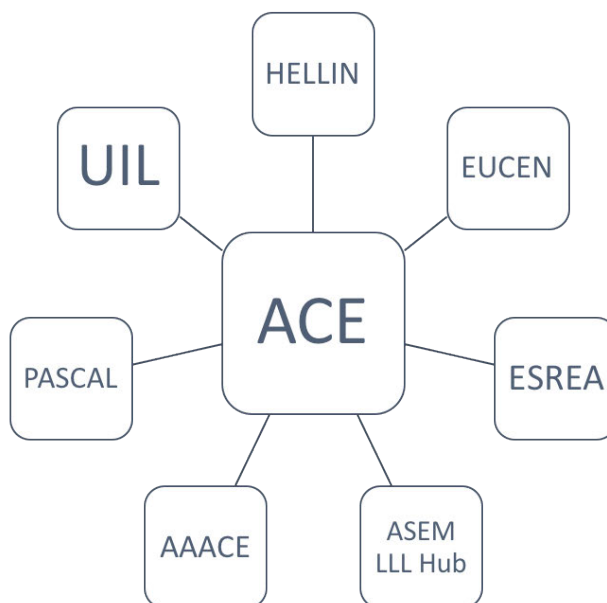
The inaugural Alfred O'Rahilly Lecture was given by Prof. Fred Powell at an ACE Conferring Ceremony on 16 November 2017 entitled 'The University, Society and Democracy'.

## Diploma in Local & Regional Studies – Midleton, Co. Cork

ACE ran this two-year Level 7 outreach programme in Middleton GAA club over 2017 and 2018. As part of the course, 14 students undertook original research on the local history and heritage of East Cork. They will be conferred in UCC in April 2019. Notably, members of the class went on to found 'Midleton & Ballinacurra Historical Society', a thriving local society operating out of Midleton Library.

## 2.6 ACE and the National/International Lifelong Learning Agenda

ACE is committed to the national and international agenda of the advancement of lifelong learning opportunities and scholarship. ACE is a member of and regularly contributes to the following international networks:



### HELLIN

ACE is a member of the Higher Education Lifelong Learning Ireland Network. Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama is a founding member of the HELLIN steering committee. Staff from ACE also contribute to the annual HELLIN Conferences. For example,

Staunton, C., Gascoigne, B., Ó Tuama, S., O'Neill, S., & Buckley, E. (2018). RPL at University College Cork: The West Cork Dairy Farmers' Project. Presented at the HELLIN Conference 2018 "Transitions: Lifelong Learning & Higher Education," Maynooth University, December 2018.

Staunton, C., Gascoigne, B., Ó Tuama, S., & O'Neill, S. (2017). Establishing an RPL methodology for a group of West Cork Farmers. Paper presented at the HELLIN Conference, University of Limerick, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

### EUCEN

ACE is a member of EUCEN (the European University Continuing Education Network) and Dr Séamus Ó Tuama is on the steering Committee. ACE hosted the HELLIN Conference at UCC in 2014 which was titled "Lifelong Learning in Ireland: Vision, Mission and Practice".

### ESREA

ACE also regularly engages with the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA). ACE staff have presented papers at ESREA conferences and have published in the journal RELA.

### ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub

In 2019/20 ACE will become the second host of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Lifelong Learning Hub. Partners in this intergovernmental organisation include the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the ASEAN Secretariat, China, India, Japan and the European Commission. This is a highly prestigious development and will bring ACE into the global sphere. This is a considerable win for the University and for education in Ireland. As such, ACE is seeking funding from both the government and UCC to sustain this project over a five year term.

## AAACE

Dr Ó Tuama is the European Ambassador the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education and attends the annual AAACE conference in that capacity. He has also contributed to a number of AAACE publications, conferences and workshops.

## PASCAL Conference 2019

ACE is hosting the XVth PASCAL Conference 16 - 19 October 2019 with the title "Learning for Resilience: People, Place and Partnership in Urban and Rural Communities." The 2019 conference will have a focus on adult/lifelong learning place-making and cohesion. This three-day international conference will bring together scholars and practitioners who develop learning opportunities in community settings. The themes of resilience and lifelong learning will cover some of the key challenges to be explored among experts and with stakeholders and community people in Cork UNESCO Learning City and at the Skellig Centre for Research and Innovation in Skellig Coast area of the Iveragh peninsula in County Kerry. The working themes for the conferences are: Learning Cities and Learning Rural Communities.

## UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

ACE also maintains close links with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg and is currently collaborating on a number of projects with UIL which will have a global reach. Over the past two years, ACE along with other Cork Learning City partners collaborated with UIL to create a suite of video tutorials on 'How to build a learning city' which illustrate and elaborate on the actions needed to establish a learning city. These videos have been shared with cities all around the world who are interested in the learning city project. The Cork partners have also been commissioned by UIL to collaborate on the development of an online course for city executives around the world to complete in preparation for becoming a learning city.

## Part 3: Overview of ACE Operations

### ACE's Budgeting and Financial arrangements

#### Budgeting arrangements

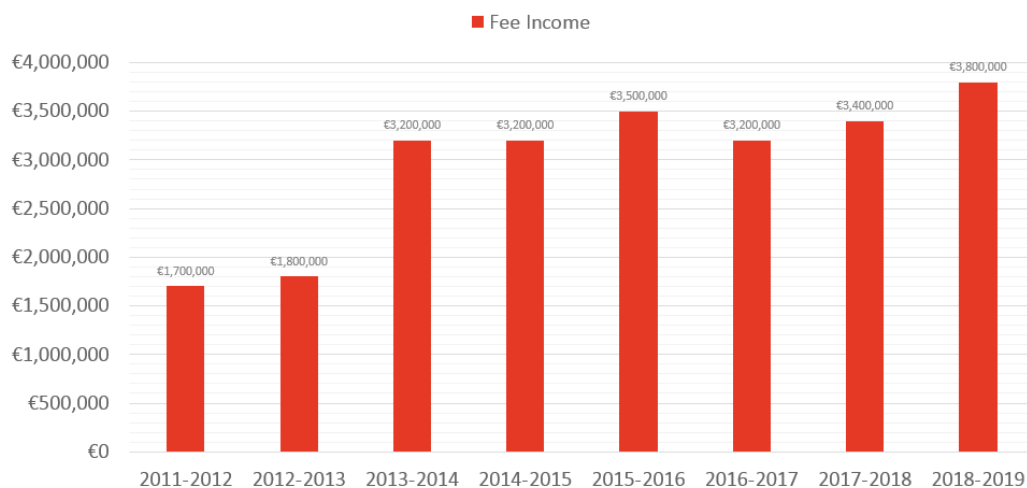
Income generated by the four UCC Colleges is allocated by the resource allocation model (RAM). The RAM allocates income by using different metrics depending on whether it is exchequer or non-exchequer income. Also, overhead expenditure is allocated to the Colleges wherever possible to reflect the cost drivers which generate this expenditure e.g. student FTEs, space usage etc. A different income model operates in ACE as ACE is an entirely self-funding unit. It is not in receipt of any income allocation from the university or state funding. ACE's primary source of income is fee income, and ACE funds all of its pay and non-pay costs. The university does not charge ACE overheads.

The Director of ACE is the budget holder and is ultimately responsible for ensuring ACE achieves a break-even/surplus position upon year end. The ACE Management Team regularly discuss income and expenditure and collectively agree on large items of expenditure. All staff are aware of and comply with UCC purchasing policies and procedures, and at all times ensure value for money is received.

#### Overview of fee income

Below is an overview of ACE's fee income. There has been significant growth over the last eight years whereby ACE's income has grown by over 123%.

### Fee income for the last 8 financial years



There has been growth across all areas in ACE, however the last two years have seen significant growth in Springboard+ and industr- led programmes.

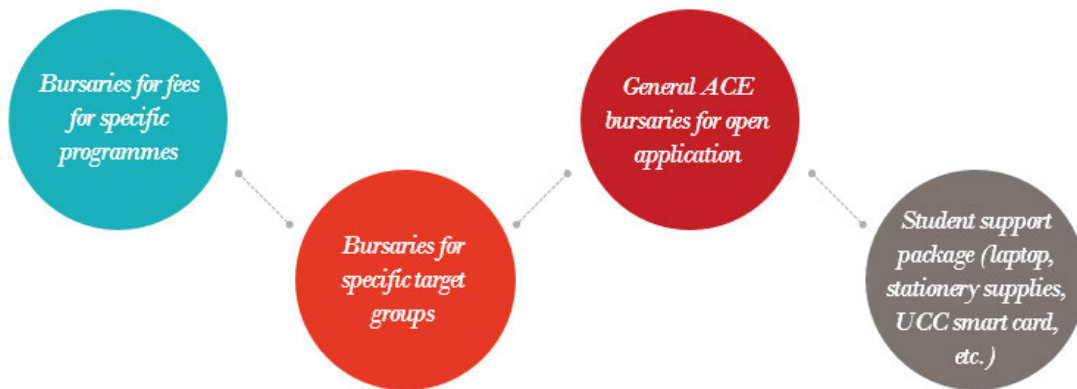
Since 2011/12 ACE has transferred €5.2 million of income to UCC colleges and departments. ACE works with all four colleges within the university, as well as the Careers Service. In the last three years, approximately €800,000 per year of ACE's income was transferred back to UCC departments and colleges. Many departments use this income to supplement their budgets and fund PhD scholarships, thereby generating additional revenue for the university through state grant funding.

# transfers



ACE recently engaged with UCC’s Development Office in relation to exploring how donors and philanthropic funds could support ACE. Such funding could be used to support individual students or provide support for learning opportunities in specific communities (see below).

## support for individual part-time students



## support for communities



### 3.2 Academic Standards

ACE adopts a number of quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the rigour and integrity of our programmes.

#### ACE’s Academic Standards Board (ASB)

The ACE Academic Standards Board (ASB) has oversight of all the academic undertakings of ACE. The ACE ASB sits on average six times per year. The terms of reference of this Board are included in Appendix C.2. As regards ACE’s curriculum, all new programme proposals and any changes to existing programmes must be first approved at ACE ASB. In most cases, changes are requested by the Programme Co-ordinator on the basis of ongoing developments within a programme or based on recommendations made by an External Examiner during the External Examining Process. The intention of

this process is to allow the Academic Standards Board to monitor the extent of on-going changes to modules and programmes and to be alerted to any impact these changes may have on the future of ACE as a whole. Programme Committees act as sub-committees of the ACE Academic Standards Board and their functions are to review the previous academic year of each course giving consideration to key developments during the reporting period.

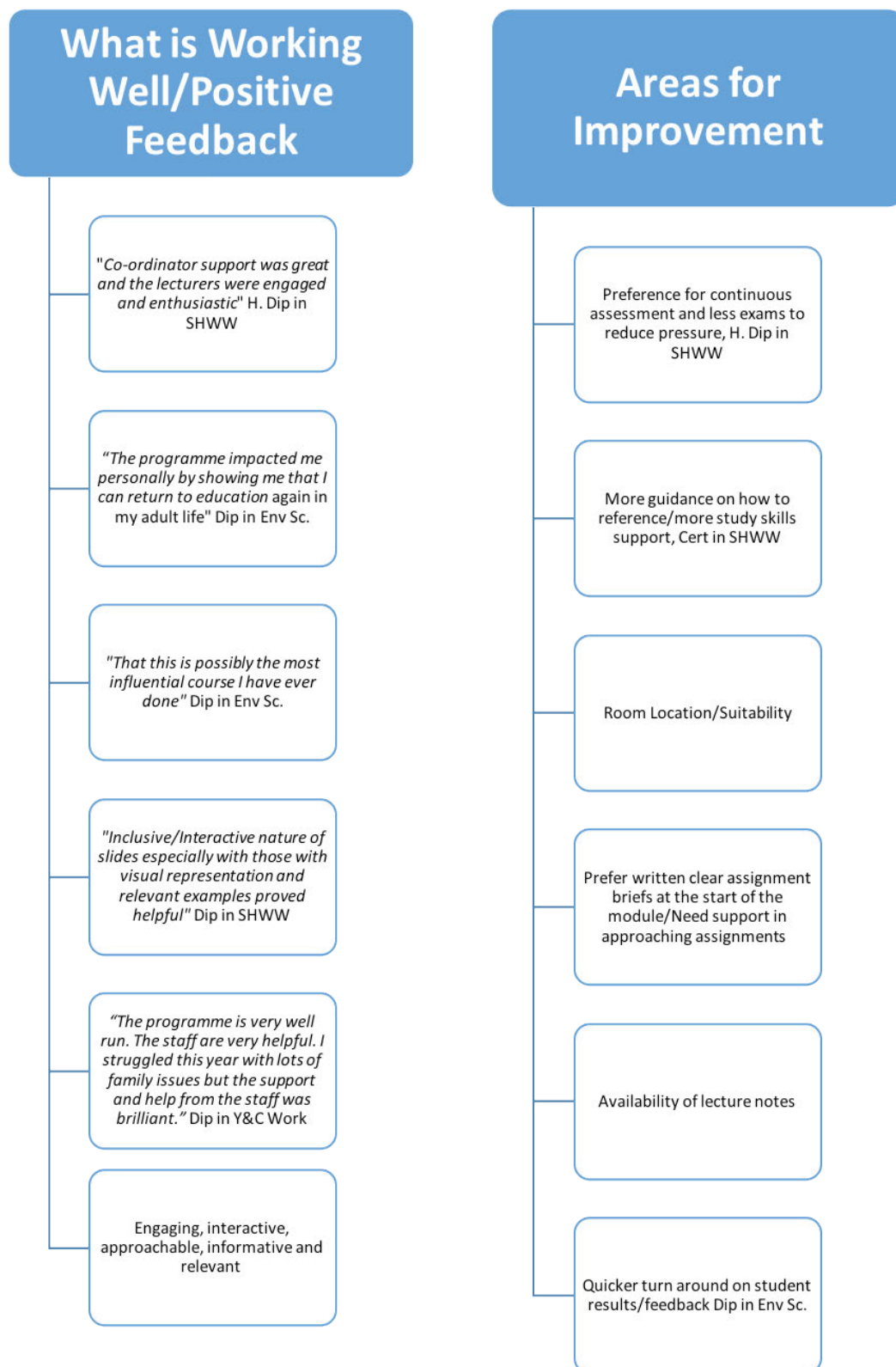
## Feedback Policy and Module Evaluation

### Feedback Policy

We expect appropriately detailed constructive feedback to be returned to students no later than three weeks following their submission of assessment. This is especially important for adult learners who are returning to education after a significant time lapse.

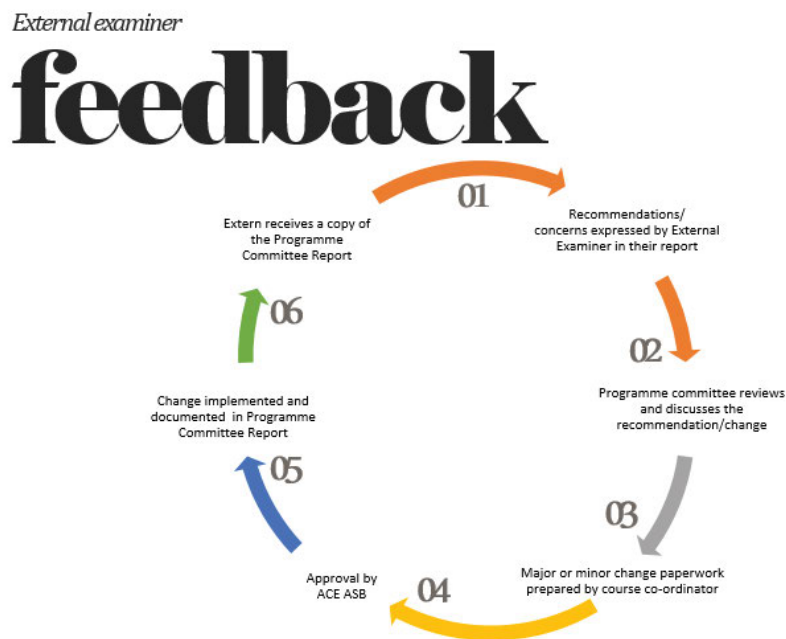
### Module Evaluation Forms

Student feedback is gathered regularly through module evaluation forms in order to evaluate a programme's delivery and to incorporate learner feedback into future planning. The Module Evaluation Form is included in Appendix E.3. A brief report on the use of these forms and the data they generate is provided in Appendix F.2. If a Programme Committee identifies any minor or major curriculum changes needed in relation to module content or assessment practices for example, approval must be sought from the ACE ASB. Resulting changes are implemented in the following academic year. The diagram below gives a flavour of some feedback provided on these forms from the 2017/18 academic year.



## The Composite External Examiners' Report

In line with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) guidelines, ACE utilises a number of annual monitoring processes in order to maintain the integrity of its functions. In relation to the external examination process, the diagram below highlights how external examiner feedback is dealt with and responded to.



ACE produces an annual Composite External Examiner Report, the focus of which is to draw together the comments and recommendations made by the External Examiners in their individual reports in order to highlight generic issues of good practice and concern relevant to ACE.

Feedback from External Examiners for 2017/18 is overwhelmingly positive and shows that ACE has a robust system of assessment and examination and maintains standards that match best practice in comparable institutions at home and abroad. Externs specifically expressed satisfaction when recommendations and suggestions made in the previous year had been taken on board and introduced to programmes when necessary.

*Key*

# findings

- 01** Externs are generally satisfied with the standard, consistency, fairness and administration of assessment and examining at ACE
- 02** Assessment criteria and marking procedures are in line with learning objectives and outcomes
- 03** ACE's standards and practices are commensurate with those at comparable institutions in Ireland and abroad
- 04** ACE students are achieving high standards, with many excellent performances, commensurate with the Level of award
- 05** Staff engagement with the process of assessment and examination is commendable
- 06** ACE uses a variety of highly effective and creative methods of assessment
- 07** Programme Committees are responsive to recommendations or concerns raised by Externs and as such the Externs are satisfied with the process

The full Composite External Examiner's Report 2017/18 is available as an Appendix (Appendix F.1).

## Programme Committees

A major development in ACE in 2013 was the approval by the ACE Board of Studies (predecessor to the ACE ASB) for the establishment of Programme Committees. The main purpose of these Committees is to ascertain that courses are monitored routinely to a sufficient degree, and in sufficient detail, to ensure the quality of their management, teaching, learning assessments, and the student experience. Its functions are to review the previous academic year of the course giving consideration to key developments during the reporting period; to consult with other Programme Committees on matters of mutual interest or concern; to provide an annual programme report to the ACE ASB as part of the annual monitoring of academic programmes. Terms of Reference of Programme Committees are contained in the Appendices (Appendix E.1). Impact of Professional/Regulatory bodies

Our suite of health and safety programmes have been significantly enhanced over the past 12 months in order to address new standards for the health and safety profession set by the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). A desk-based research exercise was undertaken in order to compare the programme content on offer in these programmes against other programmes in Ireland, the UK, Malta, Australia and New Zealand.

A working group including industry representatives was then established to identify areas in our programmes where improvement was needed in order to respond to the current needs of this sector. A number of changes were implemented to the Higher Diploma in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work for the 2018/19 academic year, with further changes to follow for the 2019/20 academic year. While these changes are relatively new, feedback from the current cohort of students is very positive. Formal examinations have been removed from the programme in favour of more case

ments. This approach ensures that graduates of the programme have the ability to apply their knowledge to real-world contexts. One of the changes that will be enacted in 19/20 is the inclusion of an environmental studies module for this programme. This will significantly enhance the employability of graduates as the majority of health and safety jobs currently include an environmental focus and we suspect that this will only become more important in the future. This review exercise also demonstrated that our Certificate in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work needs to be offered at NFQ Level 7 rather than Level 6 where it currently sits in order to better address the needs of our students. As such, a new Level 7 Certificate is currently in development to be offered for the 2019/20 academic year.

This year our disability focused programmes (including the Diploma in Disability Studies and the Higher Diploma in Facilitating Inclusion) have been reviewed and updated. Stakeholders from relevant organisations have contributed to updating the programme content in accordance with the changing policy and legislative environment in which they are working. A number of focus group consultations were also held with past graduates of the programme who are now working in the area in order to ensure that the proposed changes reflect the practice on the ground.

### 3.3. Programme delivery and curriculum planning

All ACE programmes are anchored within a relevant UCC school or department in order to ensure disciplinary academic oversight. The schools or departments then nominate a member of staff to assume the role of Academic Director for the ACE programme(s) and complete the following duties:

- Meet with/speak to part-time lecturers as required to provide guidance on module delivery and assessment, as well as helping programme team to address any potential areas of overlapping content;
- Be available where necessary for consultation regarding prospective new lecturers for the programme(s);
- Be available where necessary for consultation with ACE Programme Coordinator when direction is needed in academic matters;
- Participate in internal moderation of assessment as appropriate;
- Attend relevant programme exam boards;
- Assist the ACE team in the fulfilment of the recommendations submitted by the external examiner;
- Chair annual programme committee meetings where curricular content is reviewed and any updates or amendments are recommended;
- Attend conferring ceremony if possible.

The academic standards of ACE programmes are high, a point that is re-iterated by External Examiners (Please refer to the Composite Extern Examiner Report available as Appendix F.1).

In terms of curriculum planning, all outline programme proposals seek initial approval by the ACE Academic Standards Board (ASB) before progressing to full programme approval in line with the standards of UCC's Office of Academic Programmes and Regulations (APAR). Any major or minor changes to modules and/or programmes must be submitted in writing for consideration by the ACE Academic Standards Board. APAR distinguishes between major and minor changes. Major changes include a change in programme title or the addition of a minor award/exit route, addition of a new partner for programmes delivered in collaboration or addition of a partner to an existing UCC programme, a change in the overall credits for the programme, a substantive change in programme structure and/or regulation and so on. Minor changes constitute items such as a change in existing title and credit value of module(s), Replacement of module(s), Addition of new module(s), Discontinuation of Modules, Change in the ratio of core to elective modules, Change in descriptive text informing students about module choices etc.

### Programme Development in ACE for 2019/2020

All new programmes are developed in line with the policies and guidelines governing academic programmes through UCC's Academic Programmes and Regulations Office (APAR). This includes Programme Approval Panels which are established to provide a rigorous assessment of new programme proposals. ACE currently has a number of programmes going through this process to be launched during the 2019/20 academic year, including:

- Certificate in Foundation Studies (NFQ Level 6)
- Certificate in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (NFQ Level 7)
- Certificate in Health Promotion and Wellness at Work (NFQ Level 8)
- MSc in Mindfulness-Based Wellbeing (NFQ Level 9)

### 3.4 ACE's Marketing Strategy

Our core marketing activity is focused on student recruitment. In order to reach our target market which is very broad and varied, ACE engages in a number of key marketing approaches on an annual basis:

- Flyers and posters are produced for each course on an annual basis which are then distributed via mailings to key stakeholders, placed in strategic locations around the city (libraries, coffee shops, etc.), and used by Programme Coordinators at events;
- Digital marketing campaigns are coordinated with UCC's digital marketing staff and are deployed on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn;
- Print advertisements are placed in the local newspapers in our outreach venues;
- ACE staff engage in promotional activities at key conference events, education trade shows, trade stands in industry canteens and the Department of Social Protection offices.

A new initiative to be launched this year developed from our benchmarking visit to Oxford University. One of the primary marketing tools used by the Department of Continuing Education at Oxford is a free newspaper which is delivered at the commencement of each recruitment period to over 100,000 homes and businesses in the vicinity of the university. We are currently in the design phase of a similar newspaper which will be delivered to 80,000 homes and businesses in the Cork city and suburban areas in May 2019. This newspaper will include a number of human interest stories featuring current students, past graduates, lecturers and industry clients. It will also include editorial on the barriers faced by adult learners returning to education, as well as the supports ACE has on offer. The main purpose of this activity is to build awareness of ACE's offerings and entice readers to the ACE website to peruse our course offerings in greater detail.

ACE is also beginning to pursue closer links with media and PR in order to better promote the activities we are engaged in. Both our Director and Assistant Director will soon undergo media training sponsored by UCC's Head of Media and PR. A number of potential stories are also in development to be pitched to the national press in the coming months.



## 3.5 ACE's Collaborative Relationships

### ACE in the Community

ACE maintains strong connections to stakeholders across the country in education, industry and the community.

#### Education

- In terms of education connections, we liaise with a number of Further Education (FE) Colleges in order to deliver our programmes using their facilities (e.g. Cork College of Commerce, Limerick Further Education and Training College). We work closely with these partners in jointly advertising these programmes as the FE Colleges see this collaboration as providing a valuable progression route to higher education qualifications for FE students.
- We also work closely with our adult education colleagues from other third Level institutions through the Higher Education Lifelong Learning Ireland Network (HELLIN). Increasingly, this network is becoming a vehicle to promote the lifelong learning agenda on a national level and to lobby the government for support in this regard. We are an active member of AONTAS the National Adult Learning organisation advocating for the rights of all adults to access quality lifelong learning. We also have a strong connection to the Department of Adult and Community Education in Maynooth University. Colleagues from this department will provide in-service training to our staff in ACE over the coming months on the themes of adult guidance and the principles of adult education.
- ACE is one of the founding partners of the Cork Learning City initiative with Cork Institute of Technology, Cork Education and Training Board, and Cork City Council. We work very closely with our partners in order to promote the lifelong learning agenda locally, nationally and internationally.
- ACE has a strong relationship with the Cork Education and Training Board (CETB) who have provided funding for some programmes such as women's studies and both the short courses and accredited courses delivered in Cork prison. This year the CETB is also supporting the delivery of our Certificate in Mental Health in the Community in Cork Prison. We also avail of the CETB's biopharma training facility in Carrigaline, Co. Cork where students on our Postgraduate Certificate undertake specialist practical training in their facilities.
- ACE has developed partnerships with local development companies also such as Cork City Partnership. The Partnership is currently fully supporting the delivery of the Certificate in Mental Health in the Community in Knocknaheeny in the northeast of the city.
- This year we have undertaken a review of our Disability Focused Programmes in order to address key legislation changes, to respond to the needs of those working in the field of disability and to incorporate emerging contemporary issues. We have engaged in an extensive consultation process with key stakeholders in the field, the programme team and past and present students to inform the review. A review of our provision in the area of Youth and Community work has also been undertaken. We have developed a proposal to update our Diploma in Youth and Community Work with a view to further developing progression opportunities for students into the Degree in Youth and Community Work in UCC. This has been undertaken in conjunction with the School of Applied Social Studies, UCC.

#### Industry Links

ACE maintains strong links with industry through our network of current and past industry clients, our part-time lecturing staff, as well as our alumni. These links are regularly used to promote and advertise our programmes, seek input into programme content to ensure relevance for industry, invite employer representatives onto programme approval panels, request referee support for funding applications, provide site visits for students, and seek work placement opportunities for students.

We also maintain a strong relationship with the South-West Regional Skills Forum in order to be kept abreast of the skills needs of employers in our regions. We work closely with this forum on an annual basis in the preparation of our proposals for the government's Springboard+ scheme. Indeed, it was through collaboration with this forum that our Certificate/Diploma in Management Practice was developed and launched in 2018.

We also work in collaboration with a number of third-party providers to jointly deliver programmes such as those related to Project Management, Coaching and Mindfulness. ACE delivers a number of programmes in collaboration with third-party providers such as:

- » Postgraduate Diploma in Trauma Studies in partnership with the WAVE Trauma Centre, Belfast;
- » Certificate in Procurement Management with IDDea Consulting;
- » Diploma in Learning and Development Practice with Irish Institute of Training and Development;
- » Certificate and Higher Diploma in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work with the Institute of Occupational, Safety and Health;
- » Postgraduate Certificate in Project Management with Velopi;
- » Higher Diploma in Leadership Development and Certificate in Management and Team Development with PDI Consultants;
- » Diploma in Substance Misuse and Addiction Studies with the Health Service Executive (HSE).

## Internal Collaborations

In addition to our external partners, ACE also collaborates closely with a number of internal partners within UCC on the delivery of our part-time programmes.

<p><b>College of Business and Law</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma in Management Practice</li> <li>• Cert in Procurement Management</li> <li>• Diploma in Management and Team Development</li> <li>• Higher Diploma in Leadership Development</li> <li>• BSc Credit Union Studies</li> </ul>	<p><b>College of Science, Engineering &amp; Food Science (SEFS)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dip Process &amp; Chemical Engineering</li> <li>• Dip Specialty Food Production</li> <li>• Dip Seafood Innovation</li> <li>• Dip Food Manufacturing Management</li> <li>• Dip Food Science and Technology</li> </ul>
<p><b>College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences (CACSSS)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MA in Advanced Fieldwork Practice and Supervision (Social Work)</li> <li>• Higher Diploma in Coaching and Coaching Psychology</li> <li>• MSc Personal and Management Coaching</li> <li>• Cert in Arts</li> </ul>	<p><b>College of Medicine and Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Diploma in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work</li> <li>• Cert in Safety, Health &amp; Welfare at Work</li> <li>• Certificate in Operator Development (Pharma Manufacturing)</li> <li>• Postgraduate Certificate in (Bio) Pharma Processing</li> </ul>

## Legal Agreements

For programmes with external partners, a number of legal agreements are in place outlining the roles and responsibilities of each party in order to ensure that the quality of the programme(s) are upheld. UCC's Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs (OCLA) is responsible for preparing contracts for programmes that ACE delivers in conjunction with external teaching partners. The contract clearly details the roles and responsibilities of both UCC and the third party supplier. It provides a framework on how both parties interact on all aspects in relation to the programme including marketing, development, admission, registration, disciplinary, delivery, exam boards, appeals, quality review and graduation. The contract ensures the integrity of the programme is protected to the highest possible standard.

## Example of one of ACE's collaborative courses

### *Diploma in Substance Misuse and Addiction Studies*

In 2017, the Level 7 Special Purpose Award Diploma in Substance Misuse and Addiction Studies was developed with the School of Applied Social Studies, UCC and the HSE Cork and Kerry Addiction Services. The programme provides an introduction to the knowledge, skills and values required to equip health and social care professionals and volunteers to loosen the grip that substance misuse and addiction has on the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities and the health, social care and criminal justice resources of the state. It aspires to the Cork and Kerry alcohol strategy and the National Drugs Strategy's 2017-2025 (Department of Health, 2017) ambitions to provide high quality drug and alcohol education in community-based settings to assist individuals and families to make more informed choices around substance use and health related behaviours and aims to increase community mobilisation and capacity as a localised response to alcohol and drug problems. The programme is guided by the principles of adult learning and the rationale for the programme also recognises the value that adult education has in shaping the discourse and societal response to what is essentially a social issue. Thirty students commenced the programme in September 2017.

## Case Study: The Certificate in Mental Health in the Community

The Certificate in Mental Health in the Community programme reflects collaboration at its best and as such has been chosen as a Good Practice Case Study for this SER. The programme is a joint initiative between Mental Health Ireland (MHI) and ACE. MHI provide financial scholarships to applicants who experience disadvantage. This programme has been delivered through the establishment of a number of other partnerships including with Cork City Partnership, Cork Learning Neighbourhoods Initiative, Cork ETB, the Irish Prison Service, Cavan Monaghan Mental Health Service, Advancing Recovery Ireland Initiative, Kerry Peer Support Network, and the National Drugs Task Force. Three new deliveries commenced in January 2019 following the development of collaborations with:

The Irish Prison Service/Cork ETB - Cork Prison

Cork City Partnership/Cork Learning Neighbourhoods Initiative - Knocknaheeny, Cork City

The National Drugs Task Force - Malahide, Dublin

# Certificate in Mental Health in the Community

In partnership with Mental Health Ireland the UCC 'Certificate in Mental Health in the Community' is an innovative recovery education programme, delivered on campus and in outreach centres nationwide. This is a one-year part-time certificate award at Level 6 on the NFQ designed for the community participant. Taking a learning by doing approach, the curriculum aims to cultivate capacities of individuals and communities to encourage greater social activism on topics of mental health, and to empower students to advocate for mental health and wellbeing in their communities.

## Adult Education Ethos

This Certificate programme is delivered **with & in** communities the length and breadth of Ireland, catering for the unique needs of adult learners in higher education.

*"For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other."*

— Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed



## Programme Design:

- Collaboration, openness to diversity and ongoing programme evaluation are core characteristics.
- The promotion of wellbeing is core to our mission and philosophy, underpinning our learning objectives and outcomes.
- **Our commitment to the learner is evidenced by the co-production of teaching and learning which engages the expertise of people with lived experience of mental health and recovery, with carers and family members, with healthcare professionals and the community.**



*"A large amount of learning for me came from **listening to other learners** in the class open up about their own recovery journey. There are many new ways of thinking and working that I will take from the course and for me the important one is what Rory Doody said about...*

**making the box bigger for people, allowing room for difference and all the benefits that it can bring."**

*"I have found that this course has helped me in my personal development. I feel I am more positive, more real in myself as a human being. **I am more true to myself; I am more accepting of myself, warts and all."***

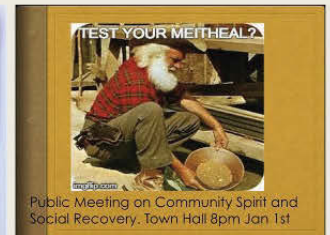
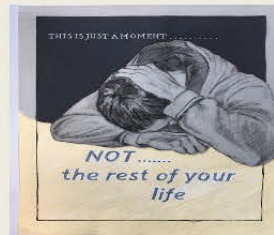
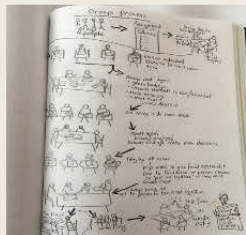
## Testimonials

*"I really looked forward to the classes. I realised **education is a vital tool** in overcoming the stigma against mental illness in society today."*

*"The knowledge gained throughout the duration of this course has had a **profound impact** on my personal and professional life and life path. As my learning flourished I began to gain invaluable insight into mental health and how I could apply it to my position as a Youth Worker in a Garda Youth Diversion Programme."*

## LEARNER CENTRED & COMMUNITY WELLBEING PROJECTS:

Learning happens inside the classroom and out in the community, through project work, site visits and transformative assessments, encouraging active processes of applying, interacting, reflecting, collaborating and connecting.



**This programme acts as driver of social change, by educating the hearts and minds of community participants on topics of mental health and wellbeing. With its commitment to grassroots and community delivery, this programme reaches into communities across the country, and connects with a diversity of adult learners. We are working in partnership with a growing number of stakeholders from the public and voluntary sector, to create educational opportunities for people from a diversity of backgrounds, all of whom have at their core the objective of promoting wellbeing, mental health recovery and social justice for all.**

## Part 4: Overview of ACE Student and Staff Experience

### 4.1 Student Learning Experience

Some adult learners may be apprehensive about coming to University for a variety of understandable reasons. In ACE we attempt in all courses to cater for the particular needs of adult learners. All ACE programmes take a very student-centred andragogical approach. For many ACE students, our programmes offer huge personal benefits in promoting their own well-being. Peer learning and the skills developed through completing the programme provides confidence and a sense of achievement that encourages students to further their personal development. For others, programmes can provide an opportunity to up-skill in their field of practice. Some graduates have progressed to new roles within their own organisations and others have gained employment in new organisations following completion of ACE programmes. Graduates have also progressed to further studies in UCC, as well as to other higher education institutions across the country.

### Assessment Strategies

#### Semesterisation

The decision to change to a formal semester-based system in UCC was taken by Academic Council on 29 June 2012. Its introduction was seen as an important part of the development and improvement in the quality and the experience of teaching and learning in UCC in order to enhance the curriculum to achieve optimum flexible delivery, accessibility and credit accumulation. As a natural consequence of semesterisation, the assessment workload in full-time UCC programmes is evenly divided across the two main College Semesters. However, ACE's programmes were allowed to remain outside of semesterisation as their part-time nature requires a degree of flexibility which means that many programmes do not fall neatly into two semesters but are in fact delivered across three semesters in any one academic cycle.

## PROMOTING WELL-BEING FOR ADULT LEARNERS

### INTRODUCTION

- *‘To research the need for a Wellbeing Action Plan to address the support needs of students participating in ACE Courses in UCC*
- *‘The benefits of life-long learning is well-documented’* AONTAS (2018)
- We have life experiences which can be helpful for our classmates.
- As a country, we have everything to gain and nothing to lose by increasing levels of participation in higher education among all Irish citizens" (National Access Plan 2015-2019)

### METHODOLOGY

- Communication with target groups by emails, phone and thorough social media.
- Online survey
- Four one to one interviews with Adult Learners
- Interview with UCC staff , Katie Nolan
- Contact with ACE and Student Union welfare

## FINDINGS

**What did we learn?**

- **Adult learners are not a homogenous group.**
  - ✓ Ages ranged from 20's to 60's
  - ✓ Family commitments including children and elderly parents.]
  - ✓ Some in employment working shifts around lectures and course demands.
  - ✓ People with disabilities
- **Motivation varies:**
  - ✓ Participants who need to up-skill in order to acquire a necessary qualification.
  - ✓ People whose children have grown up and now 'it's their time'.
- **Student Experiences: 'Isolation', 'Imposter Syndrome'**
- **60% of Respondents felt like dropping out at some point**

Category	Value
1	75
2	75
3	75
4	75
5	75
6	75
7	75
8	75
9	75
10	75
11	75
12	75

## ACTION PLAN

Our plan has been based on The Five ways to Well being (New Economics Forum- NEF 2008) We will be focusing on the **'Keep Learning'** section

**Connect-** Create opportunities for students to get to know each other, doing 'trust building' and 'getting to know you' exercises within the class. Events that help each course to link in to each other.

**Be Active-** Link in with Club/ Societies/ facilities, (Give a list of activities to students on entering the course that happen within UCC)

**Take Notice-** Create a reflective space where students can take time to understand what the stressors are in the course and identify strategies to make them manageable. Create a space at the end of every lecture to seek clarification, Link in to Mindfulness Courses, mindfulness strategies or at WRAP training

- **Keep Learning-** From the survey findings the most common theme is to create an online student handbook, to display Course outline, requirements and timetable. How to do an Assignment/Poster/Presentation (Format/Structure, give physical examples, What are the counselling and welfare supports, Process for how marking/grading is done, Parking, Restaurants/coffee shop opening times. This handbook could be developed from doing focus groups/online surveys with existing learners.
- **Give-** Do something that will support another person on the course
- **Other Recommendations :** Have a **'mentor'** available to students outside of class times\* Have a **class rep** for each course and a meaningful and effective space where issues can be discussed related to course and appropriate avenue to feedback to course co-ordinators. Option to do course without QQI.

**Ongoing Evaluation,** identify **progression routes**, into employment or further study. Develop a comprehensive **well-being plan for all ACE students**.  
Designed and researched by: Nicola Meacle, Norma Roche, Mary Keane and Liam Twomney.

## REFERENCES

Aontas, (2018) *'Lifelong Learning for all'*  
<https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/Lifelong%20Learning/Life%20Long%20Learning%20for%20All%20-%20Intro.pdf> (accessed on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2019)

Higher Education Authority (2015) *National Access Plan, 2015-2019*, <http://hea.ie/policy/national-access-plan/national-access-plan-2015-2019>

New Economics Forum, NEF (2008). *'The Five ways to Well being'*. UK, <https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-evidence>

## Academic Approach to Assessment

Summative and formative assessment activities foster interaction and collaboration both inside and outside the classroom to achieve an inclusive environment. Taking a learning by doing approach, all ACE curricula aims to cultivate the capacities of individuals and communities. Programme coordinators liaise with their respective teaching teams to ensure that student workload is spread out as evenly as possible across the duration of the programme. This approach is particularly important for adult learners who have a multiplicity of other personal, professional and familial commitments. In programmes, where there is still a reliance on a significant amount of written assessment of students we are trying to be more innovative in our assessment approach which has been evidenced by External Examiner feedback.

Reflective journaling, for instance, is a common assessment approach throughout ACE programmes. This process of critical self-reflection is vital to encourage transformative learning. Students on ACE programmes come from a diverse range of backgrounds bringing lived experience and professional experience together to create a rich learning environment that promotes peer learning and co-construction of knowledge.

Group work also forms an important part of many ACE programmes whereby students engage in collaborative learning. Students on the Certificate in Mental Health in the Community, for instance, are involved in the development of a mental health promotion action plan for a particular population group or for a particular setting, culminating in a presentation of their findings in an academic poster format. An example of such a project from the 2018/19 class is included here as the topic related to adult learners specifically.

Role play is used as an instrument of assessment on a number of our programmes (e.g. MSc Human Resource Management Group and the Dip Management Practice). It is an assessment type that allows the student to explore realistic scenarios in a supported environment. Students are given real world management roles and scenarios to act and react to, in a pre-set format through conversations and an acting role which measures their ability and performance in that role. Whilst the scenarios differ across modules and programmes, there is a common thread in that the role play is part of a conversation and interaction with another individual(s). The performance is marked with pre-set criteria that incorporates behavioural indicators, such as; rapport, active listening and positive interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to name just a few. Depending on the intended activity outlined in a scenario, students play a role that could be similar to a role that they may currently occupy or most likely will occupy in the future. They may also be asked to act the opposite part, to gain experience and a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of a real life situation. Both roles offer an opportunity of significant learning and experience for the student. Examples of role play used to date have been scenarios involving annual performance reviews and dealing with employees who have been presenting with absenteeism.

The assessment process for the ACE coaching programmes coaching programmes requires the student to hone their academic research skills and to be proficient with engaging with on-line journals, correct referencing and an ability to engage in academic analysis of literature relevant to the subject. While academic research and writing is the norm, the programmes also encourage students to draw on their own experience and so are informed of the work of Dewey, Schön, Gibbs etc in order to engage in effective reflective work. In larger research projects reflexivity is encouraged and while this assists in dealing with bias, it also allows the student to observe their own growth of understanding and learning. To a large extent these reflective assignments draw on a phenomenological philosophy which is curious about how the student is experiencing new learning and how they are integrating this into their own process, practice and behaviour.



*Students from the HDip Coaching*

Students undertake a 360 degree project where they identify specific elements about their own inter personal skills, management skills, coaching skills etc. that they request feedback on from colleagues. They present the results of this 360 degree project to the class where classmates give feedback along with class tutors. A written learning log of this experience and their classroom presentation are both assessed. Finally students are required to complete 50 hours of pro bono coaching in order to improve their coaching skills. These skills, along with a comprehensive portfolio of their pro bono coaching work, are observed and assessed by their coaching supervisor.

## Feedback from External Examiners regarding Assessment Practices

Findings from the Annual Composite External Examiner Report highlight that:

1. Externs are generally satisfied with the standard, consistency, fairness and administration of assessment and examining at ACE.
2. Assessment criteria and marking procedures are in line with learning objectives and outcomes.
3. ACE students are achieving high standards, with many excellent performances, commensurate with the Level of award.
4. Staff engagement with the process of assessment and examination is commendable.
5. ACE uses a variety of highly effective and creative methods of assessment.

Example of best practice in the 2017/18 report are contained in the following Comments:

**Certificate in Contemporary Living** – “Continuous assessment is, without doubt, the most appropriate strategy for this student cohort. This facilitates multiple intelligence teaching and learning approaches and allows the student to showcase a range of abilities in all modules. The use of videography, photography and creative arts are essential to the assessment strategies on this programme. It is wonderful to see these strategies used in such a positive and supportive manner. These are examples of true student centeredness and student engagement.” (Dr Sinead Foran)

**Diploma in Youth and Community Work** – “Overall, there is a good balance between academic studies and practice and which is continuous over the year and the course. This is good for the students as they get feedback on areas that they are good at and what they need to work on. The assessments are linked to the National Youth Work Occupational Standards.” (Eoin O’Neill)

**Higher Diploma in Coaching and Coaching Psychology** – “The assessment process builds throughout the programme, providing people with clear feedback and progression to build skills. The programme scope takes people on a clear journey of reflection and critical analysis from the initial conditions for successful coaching conversations through a critical analysis of key elements and techniques, reflection on ‘self as instrument’ through the mindfulness module and culminating in a valuable research project. At Diploma Level, the attention and depth of the modules is at the right Level to build confidence and skill that will be critical for those wanting to build a strong foundation and for those wishing to study further.” (Alison Whybrow)

## Learning Resources

- ACE has access to all of the university’s teaching spaces, but does not have its own teaching space. For the majority of our evening programmes, we do not have any issues making room bookings. However, this can be more difficult for programmes which are delivered via a block release approach and where teaching rooms are required for full days. It would thus be useful to have a dedicated ACE teaching space.
- ACE maintains very positive relationships with staff in the Boole Library. Requests for library resources are always thoughtfully considered. In addition, the library staff have been very generous with their time in delivering training workshops to all ACE students in the 18/19 academic year.
- ACE has developed a very strong working relationship with staff at the UCC Skills Centre. For the 18/19 academic year, a calendar of academic skills workshops was agreed and delivered to ACE students on designated evenings and at weekends. We are currently exploring technology options to ensure that this service can be extended to our outreach students for 19/20.

## Financial support

The Financial Aid Fund for Part Time Students was launched in 2018 in UCC and was awarded to ACE students. It provides financial assistance for part-time higher education students who are experiencing financial difficulties whilst attending college. It is a separate amount of monies allocated to part time students that comes under the auspices of the Student Assistance Fund.

The Student Assistance Fund is part supported by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020. The fund cannot be used for tuition fees related to the course being undertaken and is specifically intended to help students with the living costs associated with attending college. This financial aid fund, as directed by the HEA, is primarily targeted at lone parents or members of the other access target groups. However, any eligible part-time student who is facing financial difficulty should consider applying to the fund. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/finaidpt/#information-regarding-the-financial-aid-fund-for-part-time-students-2018-19>.

In 2018, 33 people in total were in receipt of the SAF from both post-grad and ACE courses. There have been 55 awards in total to-date in 2019.

## Work-placement Opportunities for ACE students

A number of students on our Springboard+ funded programmes complete a work placement each year. These placements are supported by UCC’s Careers Service. The ACE Springboard+ team also offer support to these placements in terms of a mid-placement call to both the student and host organisation to ensure that the placement is running smoothly.

Students completing the Diploma in Substance Misuse and Addiction Studies gain hands-on experience through agency visits as well as completing a one month full-time placement in a recognised treatment, rehabilitation or harm reduction setting in Year 2. All students are covered by UCC’s insurance policies and undergo Garda Vetting.

The Diploma in Youth & Community Work offers a 100 hour placement in Year 2. A Garda Vetting process, Child Protection Training and SafeTALK training are all provided as mandatory for students for the practice placement. A Practice Placement Supervisor oversees the practice placement process.

## Communicating with students

As fully registered UCC students, all ACE students are issued with their unique student numbers which allows them access to all of the UCC services including web based services (student email, Blackboard, Admin services), as well as physical spaces such as the Boole Library, Student Centre, and Maradyke Sports Arena.

### CANVAS

The University will soon migrate to a new VLE tool: CANVAS. We are working with the university's Head of Digital Learning to ensure that the transition process for ACE students to this new VLE will be as seamless as possible. With this new system, students will have access to 24/7 support from Canvas which will be a welcome development for our part-time students.

### Class Representatives

Many ACE programmes nominate class representatives whose role is to represent the views of the group and to liaise between the class, the lecturer, the coordinator and ACE. The Coordinator meets with class representatives as required throughout the year to discuss issues arising for any group. If other issues arise outside of these meetings, the class representatives generally consult a lecturer first or, in case of policy or administrative issues, the Coordinator.

### Student testimonials

Student testimonials are a great way of capturing the context of our students as adult learners returning to education and also how the support ACE offers empowers them on their academic journey. What follows are two testimonials from ACE students.

Mary completed the Certificate in Mental Health in the Community and now works as a peer support worker for the HSE.

*"Through the course and exploring myself and my own recovery, I began to develop a concept of myself. I began to see myself again as an individual and not just as a psychiatric patient or as indeed a psychiatric illness. My diagnosis no longer defined me. I learned what Recovery meant to me. What colour it was, how it impacted on my life. For many years I had wanted to return to education in UCC and through the Mental Health in the Community course I achieved that goal. I was reclaiming my identity, my personality, my life. I began to see qualities in myself that I had never realised myself. It's odd to say, but I never knew that I had a sense of humour, until a friend that I met at the course pointed it out to me. There had been no humour in my life under the Medical Model. The importance of having a diagnosis faded away to almost nothing and I started living again. Living, with hope."*

Another graduate from the Dublin delivery of the Certificate in Mental Health in the Community stated that:

*"The course was the best thing I have ever done in my life as an uneducated person I believe now that education is the key, I met lifelong friends in it and enjoyed every tutor and what I learned from each will carry with me through life. I am now on working and steering group of the Recovery College in DCU and could have never done this without the knowledge and confidence I got from course".*

Sheila completed the Autism Course in 2018 - My experience completing Autism studies

*"I was late for the induction night the first night of the course. I managed to mix up the buildings and went to the Cavanagh Building instead of the O'Rahilly Building ... twice by different routes! I remember thinking ... "that's it you have no hope of actually getting through this course – you can't even find the building and they sent you a map two weeks ago!" I felt like driving home. However, I eventually found the right place, a group of teenage students practically escorted me to the building door, Eileen Mc Bride (course coordinator) was waiting outside the lift, for "lost" students. I knew by looking at her that she was there to assist people like me! I was so delighted to have help! It was hard entering the full room – late for the "ice breaker" and stressed. That was the lowest point – it was all great from that moment on. In less than 6 months that trip in the lift has brought me back to Formal Education. I was lucky enough to attend university in the 1990's and graduate. This is do much easier!! Technology and a bunch of likeminded adults from all different backgrounds with a common interest. Our lecturers have all been inspiring – and that's for real. The course has been designed in such a way as to allow for those who have studied the topic before and for those who are new to the area. There is no stress, except for stress you may wish to place on yourself. It's up to you how much you want to work on any topic.*

*These people understand that children get sick, childminder's fail to turn up. Choices have to be made about attending a Saturday lecture or supporting a family member or relative.*

*I've learned the basics of academic writing – from a Science background this was alien to me.*

*The last essay I wrote was for my Leaving Cert English. That was 1991. After that it was all Science, diagrams and bullet points. It took a while to adjust to writing academically. I found the tutorials very helpful for this. Every assistance is available. There are online resources from U.C.C including tutorial and lecture materials.*

*I'm close to finishing my first year in ACE Autism Studies. In UCC. I discovered the course by accident while I was applying for a course in public health. The most important thing about choosing any course as an older student is that you are passionate about the subject. This course is very manageable, the staff involved in delivering the course know that we all have other lives outside of the course.*

*When I hear that as adult students we would be "supported" and assisted I really didn't understand the Level of support that would be given. Back in the 90's it was sink or swim and everyone for themselves. My experience of ACE is the complete opposite of my previous third Level experience (which was one of pressure, fear of failure and inaccessible lecturers).*

*The course is also fun, mixing with other students on the course is very enjoyable. We are all on similar paths for different reasons and we are from many different backgrounds. I would recommend anyone with a passion for any of the subjects offered on the ACE programme give it a go. It's designed for adults, with complicated lives and the support offered by the ACE staff together with state of the art technology is outstanding."*

## 4.2 Staff Experience

### Staff Profile

ACE has a core staff of 29 individuals. It also employs over 300 lecturers on a part-time occasional basis each year. The core staff is broadly divided into four teams, consisting of management, programme coordinators, administration, and finance. The management team consists of the Director, Assistant Director, Operations & Finance Manager, Centre Manager, and Adult & Community Education Officer. The Director leads ACE overall, while the Assistant Director leads the Programme Coordinators, the Adult & Community Education Officer leads the Programme Coordinators at outreach centres, the Operations & Finance Manager leads the Finance team, and the Centre Manager leads the Administrative team. A full analysis of the ACE staff profile including training and development, succession planning and staff communication is provided in Appendix B.1.

### ACE Staff Structure



### ACE Part-time Lecturer Approval Process

As ACE engages with a large number of part-time lecturers in the delivery of our programmes, we have put in place a part-time lecturer approval process to ensure the quality of delivery of our programmes is upheld to the highest standards. All lecturers teaching in excess of six hours per academic year must comply with this process. Applicants must complete a part-time lecturer application form (which can be viewed in Appendix E.5) highlighting their education qualifications, professional and teaching experience. References must also be included from senior academics either within UCC or in the institution attended by the applicant. All completed applications are then sent to the ACE Academic Standards Board (ASB) for consideration and approval. If the Board views the application favourably, candidates are held on our panel of part-time lecturers for a three year term and may be called upon if teaching opportunities arise. Once this term ends, candidates must re-apply to the panel. A database has been created and is managed in ACE to ensure these records are held in a central location.

### Staff Development Objectives

As a result of undertaking this quality review process, ACE has initiated a series of workshops and identified two courses that will be made available to staff in the coming months. The ideas for these initiatives emerged from our benchmarking visit to Maynooth University. Details of the workshops are as follows:

Monday, 15th April, 2019 - WORKSHOP 1: How do adults learn?

Monday, 27th May, 2019 - WORKSHOP 2: How do we support the emotional dimension of adult learning?

ACE staff will also be afforded the opportunity to undertake one of two Certificate Programmes delivered by the Department of Adult Continuing Education in Maynooth: The Certificate in Adult and Community Education or the Certificate in Adult Guidance, Theory and Practice.

Programme coordinators and part-time lecturers are eligible to apply for UCC's Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning and many have done so.

### Staff Communication

#### ACE-Core Meetings

ACE Core meetings are held monthly during the academic year. These are general staff meetings, which all core staff must attend. Meetings last for approximately 1 – 1.5 hours and are usually held in a classroom on campus. The purpose of these meetings is to share important information and update staff on policies, procedures, events, programmes and projects. The meetings are chaired by the ACE Director and staff members contribute by giving updates for their respective areas/projects, etc. The agenda for ACE Core meetings may change throughout the year, depending on the stage of the academic year. The ACE Manager draws up the agenda and circulates it before each meeting. The minute taking rotates among all staff members and are approved by the ACE Manger. The agendas and minutes for all ACE Core meetings are kept on the shared folder, accessible to staff. There are eight ACE Core Meetings a year, which take place on the first Tuesday of the month between 11.30am and 1.00pm on the following months: September to December, February to June. Sample ACE-Core Agendas are included in the Appendices (Appendix C.1)



## Team Meetings

As well as ACE Core Staff Meetings, staff have the opportunity to contribute to decision making through Team Meetings. The Management team hold weekly meetings where key decisions are made and staff concerns are raised. The Finance team also meet on a weekly basis to plan the week's work. The other teams are larger and meet less frequently. The administrative team meetings are event focused and so it meets around events, such as registration, conferring, examinations. This means that the frequency of these meetings may go from once every couple of months to once every week, depending on the time of year. The Programme Coordinators, the largest and most geographically disparate group, have been meeting on a quarterly or bi-annual basis, but as a result of the Lightning Sprint session for the Quality Review the frequency of these meetings is being re-examined.

## Staff Communications

ACE has an email list for all core staff in which all important email communications are regularly sent. Again one of the outcomes of the Lightning Sprint session is the development of a monthly staff newsletter which is going to be trialled using this email list.

## Co-ordinator Days

These days are held approximately every six months to ensure a regular meeting of co-ordinators including outreach co-ordinators. The themes of the sessions vary. For example, in June 2018, ACE hosted a co-ordinator day based on the Principles of EcCoWell:

- Ec = Ecology & Economy
- Co = Community & Culture
- Well = Well-being & Lifelong Learning

*EcCoWell is an integrated approach to deliver better quality of life to citizens in a sustainable way. EcCoWell promotes integrating strategies to maximise the positive impacts on the health and educational opportunities of all citizens as well as developing the environmental and economic sustainability of the city, resulting in greater equality, social inclusion and ultimately quality of life (<http://eccowellcork.com/>)*

The concept has been developed by Peter Kearns and PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE). PASCAL emerged from work carried out in the area of lifelong learning by the OECD. This session was facilitated by the Learning City Co-ordinator, Denis Barrett, using an Open Space Technology as a way of generating new ideas among ACE Co-ordinators. Four key themes emerged among co-ordinators as their shared vision of the co-ordinator role as follows:

### A COLLABORATIVE MINDSET

As co-ordinators, we add value, connect and bring new perspectives. We collaborate with industry, with community. We network.

### EMPOWERMENT

One of the most fundamental aspects of programmes is that they empower individuals in multiple ways.

### DIVERSITY

As co-ordinators, we are aware of the diversity of our students, of the diversity of their needs both inside and outside of the classroom as well as on online forums.

### RESPONSIVE

We are responsive to community needs, to business needs, to the needs of our learners.

## Part 5: Self-Evaluation Process

### Self-Evaluation Process

ACE undertook its self-evaluation by first and foremost establishing a dedicated committee and identifying one individual who would drive the process over the review period. The Coordinating Committee comprised the following individuals:

Dr Seamus Ó Tuama, Director of ACE

Lyndsey El Amoud, Assistant Director (Programmes)

Mary O'Grady, PA to the Director

Dr Griffin Murray, Centre Manager

Colette O'Sullivan, Finance & Operations Manager

Sinead O'Neill, Adult and Community Education Officer

Dr Ciara Staunton, Senior Coordinator

In order to disseminate and keep all ACE staff abreast of the Quality Review Process and its evolution over the year, it was included as an Agenda Item on our monthly Staff Meetings. Sample ACE-Core Agendas are included in the Appendices (Appendix C.1)

## Benchmarking

ACE undertook benchmarking with two organisations, one international and one national: Oxford University, Oxford, UK in September 2018 and Maynooth University, Ireland, in November 2018. ACE engaged in this process to establish and learn from the practices of both institutions; identify areas of strength; share good practice; generate new ideas, methods and practices, with the key aim of the continuous improvement of core ACE business, as well as the advancement of our academic mission. The criteria for benchmarking were identified in advance of each visit and developed into appropriate schedules (contained in Appendix H). The purpose of each visit was to reflect on and enhance ACE's academic standards; quality of student learning experience; continued relevance of programmes to internal and external needs; alignment with national and international expectations; as well as sharing good practice and innovation.

The key learnings and main outcomes of our benchmarking activities are considered here. Full details of each trip are provided in the Appendices (Appendix H).



*Kellogg College, Oxford University*

The Department for Continuing Education at Oxford has been offering part-time adult education courses for 140 years with an average of 14,000 students per year. The Department boasts an enviable physical space at Rewley House in the town of Oxford with its own library as well as conferencing and dining facilities. Their programme offerings include weekly classes of 5, 10 or 20 weeks (held in Oxford and other nearby towns); online courses; day schools; summer schools; Continuing Professional Development including bespoke training for businesses; undergraduate certificates, diplomas and advanced diplomas; postgraduate certificates, Masters and DPhils.

The schedule for our visit included a number of presentations by key staff including Prof. Jonathan Michie (Head of Department), Prof. Angus Hawkins (Director of Public and International Programmes), Dr. Adrian Stokes (Director of Continuing Professional Development), and Sean Faughnan (Director of Technology Assisted Lifelong Learning).

Overall, the visit was a very rewarding and mutually beneficial experience. As a committee, we came away from the trip invigorated by how much of our own work at ACE could be considered to be on a par with Oxford's. For example, the Director of the Department Prof. Jonathan Michie referred to the 'intellectual incubation' role for continuing education in terms of the development of new subject areas and interdisciplinary offerings. This has always been part of the ACE mission too. Just as Oxford leads the way in the development of new subject areas, so too has ACE.

It was also valuable to identify new opportunities for us to expand and diversify what we do in ACE so that we can reach even more sections of the community we serve.



*Benchmarking Exercise Oxford*

## Key Learnings for ACE from the benchmarking exercise with the Department of Adult Continuing Education at Oxford

The quality review committee identified four key learnings from the visit to Oxford as highlighted in the diagram.



### Key Action: Development of Online Programmes

A full business plan has now been developed with the view of creating six online programmes over a five year period. After the trip to Oxford, further investigations took place with the School of Nursing & Midwifery in UCC in addition to Auburn University, Alabama, US who have significantly increased their online offerings in the last five years. Both are considered leaders in the field of the online delivery of programmes.

This model presented below is based on the Oxford model. At the beginning of 2019/20 ACE will begin developing the content development process for two online programmes. In the latter half of 2019/20 ACE will engage with an instructional designer who will begin the process of putting the content online. ACE expect to have two programmes online in 2020/21 generating fee income of €114,000 and two further programmes in the pipeline. By 2021/22 ACE will have four online programmes generating fee income of €228,000 and two more programmes in the pipeline. By 2022/23 ACE will have six programmes fully online, generating non exchequer fee income of €342,000 per annum.

As can be seen in the Table below, by the third year (2021/22) this project will be generating a surplus for the university, and a significant non exchequer revenue stream by 2022/23.

Plan: Development on Online Programmes				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Costs	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Content Development	60,000	60,000	60,000	
Instructional Designer costs (G5)	24,499	50,945	52,932	54,403
<b>Costs</b>	<b>84,499</b>	<b>110,945</b>	<b>112,932</b>	<b>54,403</b>
<b>Income</b>				
No. of Programmes		2	4	6
Students		60	120	180
<b>Fee Income</b>		<b>114,000</b>	<b>228,000</b>	<b>342,000</b>
<b>Cumulative Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>-84,499</b>	<b>-81,444</b>	<b>33,624</b>	<b>321,221</b>
Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>ACE Fee Income</b>	<b>3,572,000</b>	<b>3,686,000</b>	<b>3,800,000</b>	<b>3,914,000</b>

Increasing ACE's online offerings will greatly improve adult learners' ability to access a part-time university education that still incorporates an adult education ethos.

## Maynooth University

Established in 1975, Maynooth University's Department of Adult and Community Education is the only specialist academic department for the education of adults in Ireland. It is at the forefront of development in adult educational practices, teaching and learning, research, and policy formation. Courses offered in the Department of Adult and Community Education foster dialogue and discussion with the aim of enabling participants to critically reflect on their role in civil society. Like ACE, Maynooth offers certificates, diplomas, degrees, higher diplomas, masters and doctorates.

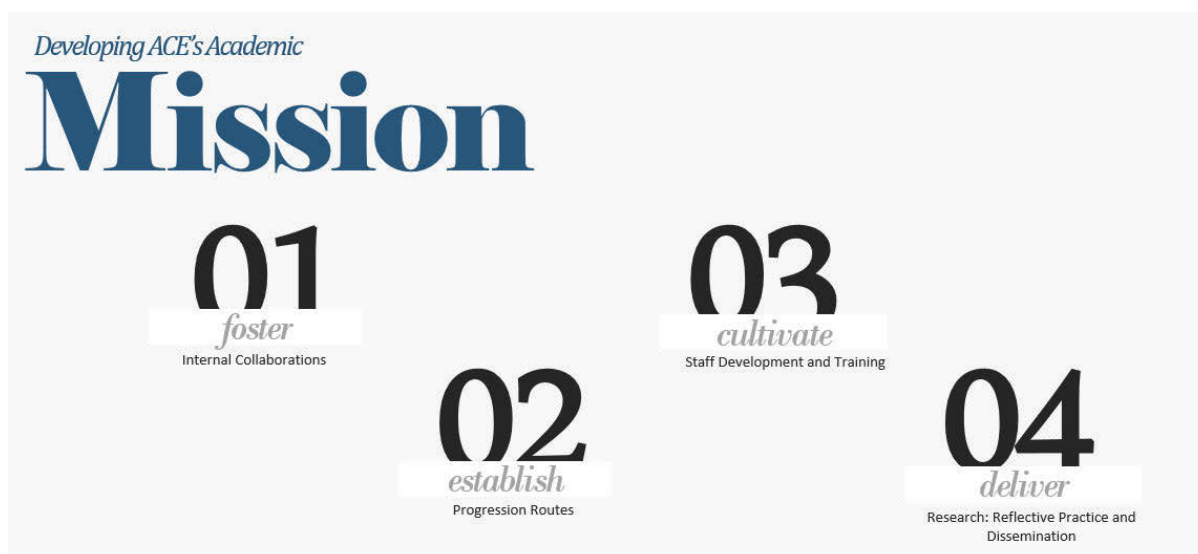
In order to strengthen the discipline of lifelong learning and adult education in Ireland, ACE at UCC needs to further carve out our academic mission and emulate the model in Maynooth University. Therefore the purpose of our visit to Maynooth was to identify how this might be achieved. Again the committee met with key staff members including the Head of Department, Dr. Mary Ryan, Josephine Finn, Dr. David McCormack, Dr Bernie Grummel, Dr Bríd Connolly, Dr Derek Barter, Kay Loughlin, Rose Gallagher, Gareth Burns and Katriona O'Sullivan.



*Benchmarking Visit Maynooth*

Through sharing examples of good practice, we identified that in ACE we have a strong pedagogical approach and we push teaching methodologies into practice. We are a resource to the University and we are a resource to the Community. However, we need to find ways of documenting and disseminating this practice in order to better promote our scholarship.

### Key Learnings from Maynooth



### Four Key Priorities

1. Foster internal collaborations in UCC – ACE would like to build on our synergy with the School of Applied Social Studies which would help ACE to confer its academic status within UCC.
2. Establish new and further expand existing progression routes from ACE programmes into mainstream UCC courses.
3. Cultivate staff development and training.
4. Deliver research by strengthening our portfolio of research initiatives and dissemination of our practice.

### Key Action Taken: Staff Development and Training

Two training workshops for ACE staff have been planned with colleagues from Maynooth University's Department of Adult and Community Education. The first full-day workshop will be delivered on April 15th 2019 and will focus on the theme of how adults learn. The workshop aims to give ACE staff an understanding of the core principles of adult education and an introduction to some of the key theories underpinning it. It is anticipated that this workshop will be particularly useful for programme coordinators, but it will be open to all staff.

The second full-day workshop will be delivered on May 27<sup>th</sup> 2019. It will focus on how frontline staff can support the emotional dimension of adult learning. This workshop will address how ACE staff might offer guidance to potential adult learners when they first make contact with ACE and express an interest in returning to education, as well as offering insight into how staff can deal with a difficult conversation. This workshop will be particularly suitable for front-line staff, but will be offered to all.

Once these workshops have been completed, staff will also have the opportunity to complete one of the following Certificate programmes offered by Maynooth University:

**Certificate in Adult and Community Education**

**Certificate in Adult Guidance, Theory and Practice**

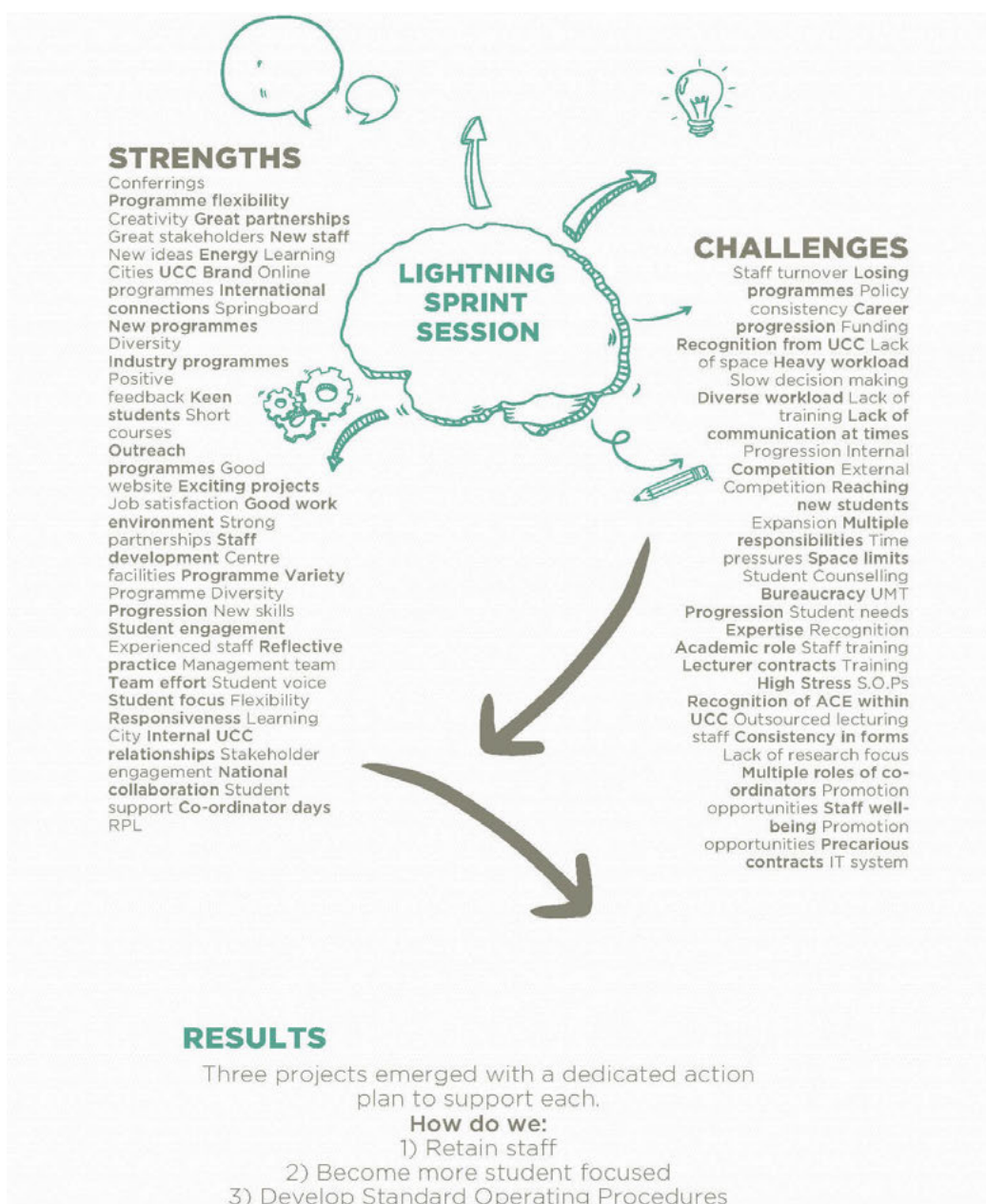
## Lightning Decision Making Session

As an alternative to the traditional SWOT Analysis, ACE engaged in a Lightning Decision Making Session which is based on design thinking methodology. The benefits of incorporating design thinking techniques include the ability to solve problems in a more creative way; arrive at decisions quickly and easily; involve all staff actively in the process and avoid unstructured discussions. Staff took part in this session on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019 in the Glucksman Gallery, UCC campus. The session was facilitated by an experienced external facilitator. The full report is available in the Appendices (Appendix G).



*ACE Staff Lightning Decision Session*

As a result of this session, the three identified projects now have an action plan associated with them and from heretofore will be incorporated into the monthly ACE Core Agenda in order to maintain momentum around them. We aim to deliver some results in each identified area by the end of 2019.



## Part 6: Conclusions

The QR Committee that was established to engage with this quality review process endeavoured to be well-coordinated. Preparation was done on a project management basis and became an established agenda item in both the weekly ACE management meetings and the monthly ACE Core meetings. The document was produced in accordance with the UCC guidelines for both academic and administrative units. Given the hybrid nature of ACE work, it would have been an injustice to complete this exercise based either set of guidelines in isolation and hence a combined Table of Contents was developed. The committee conducted a benchmarking analysis with two Universities; one national and one international as per QPU recommendations. However, we adopted an alternative approach to the traditional SWOT analysis by engaging instead in a Lightning Decision Making Session with an external facilitator. Findings from these exercises as well as from our co-ordinator days and regular ACE core meetings are integrated in the SER and contribute to our overall self-evaluation and recommendations.

The findings, goals and recommendations we make in this report, outlined in Part 1, are offered to strengthen ACE's mission and to enhance our engagement with academic departments across the University and improved operational capacity.

It is our intention that the SER might assist the Panel in gaining a valuable understanding of the extent of ACE's diversification and growth, as well as a preliminary sense of the significant challenges we face for our future sustainability. The findings, goals and recommendations we make in this report, outlined in Part 1, are offered to strengthen ACE's mission and to enhance our engagement with academic departments across the University, in addition to improving our operational capacity. This will help to support the significant potential for ACE to continue to contribute to the delivery of the university's mission, as well as to make a real impact in the lives of adult learners in our community.

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