

WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

NUI Galway is for the public good.

NUI Galway belongs to the people. We are here to serve our students, our society and our planet through our transformative research and teaching, our distinctive student experience, and our engagement with society to deliver meaningful long-term societal change. We build international collaborations and partnerships that sustain our development and deliver impact at scale, by sharing knowledge and technologies and inspiring our students, staff and partners. We reach out to our hinterland and partners to welcome our communities to see our university as their university.

NUI Galway is a university for our time, dedicated to nurturing global citizens and addressing key questions facing our world.

We recognise how critical *this* moment is for our planet, and our students demand that we respond to the challenges through our research, teaching and impact. Our students and research communities are the critical thinkers, entrepreneurs, social activists and innovators of the future, tackling the global issues of our time.

NUI Galway is a globally distinctive educational institution.

We are a wellspring of creative energy and believe in the transformative power of knowledge and cultural participation for our diverse societies. We enable personal and collective creativity for the benefit of individual, societal and environmental wellbeing.

For the past 175 years, we have welcomed students, scholars, teachers, researchers and partners to our campus. Building on these foundations with confidence, we approach new challenges facing our community, nation, and the world with commitment, determination and optimism, as an outward-looking institution strengthened by a clear sense of place. This plan sets out our vision and priorities for 2020-2025.

In launching this plan we build on important achievements and the distinctiveness of our people, purpose and place.

[infographic indicating: growth in student numbers; internationalisation; research institutes, income, outputs and impact; community partnership and social contribution; possible opportunity to highlight success and profile in STEM, Arts, and Social Sciences]

As we embark on the next five years, we are determined to develop the knowledge and innovations necessary for the transformative changes our society needs. Our intention is to foster students and research to deliver impact in the world and for the world.

We have a depth and breadth of educational and research expertise across multiple fields, and positions of international leadership in health and wellbeing, sustainability, climate change, data science, humanities and social inclusion. These strengths embody a research-

led University committed to enabling our students to acquire the knowledge, experience and confidence they need to contribute to society.

Our physical location, spanning the Wild Atlantic Way, embeds our research and teaching within a unique and diverse landscape and creative region from the land to the sea, rural to urban, where culture and creativity are intertwined with science and technology in partnership with thriving industries and communities. The urban setting of NUI Galway is a global hub for the creative arts and high-tech industries, while supporting dynamic green and blue bio-economies in its rural and marine hinterlands. Our Gaeltacht centres serve communities seeking to live their lives and forge their future in the Irish language.

We attract and develop global talent that synergises with local innovators and culture to bring forward new thinking and creativity while strengthening our capabilities to deliver impacts both nationally and globally.

Our Values-led approach

Our strategic plan is built on a foundation of core values that define our purpose and priorities: **respect, excellence, openness and sustainability**, underpinned by our **distinctiveness**.

Together, our students, staff and other stakeholders have debated and defined these values, which will now guide us in everything we do. They will be the lived experience of our people and of those with whom we live, learn and partner with. Our students will graduate with the distinctive attributes associated with our values, which are hallmarks of good citizenship, independent critical thinking, and capacity for positive contributions to both society and economy.

We intend that these values will reinforce each other and to strengthen our potential to achieve ambitious goals. Over the duration of this strategic plan, each year will be dedicated to one of these values so that we highlight the distinctive and valuable contribution of the particular value to our mission:

- **2020:** Year of Sustainability
- **2021:** Year of Respect
- **2022:** Year of ...
- **2023:** Year of ...
- **2024:** Year of ...

In our plan below, we have described our University's commitments to our diverse communities under each value, and highlighted flagship goals that will provide focus and direction for our activities over the next five years. The next stage of the strategic plan will be the further development of operational plans by each College, School and Unit that supports the fulfilment of our commitments across our University mission and the achievement of these flagship goals.

The *Meitheal*¹ model

In achieving our goals, we will use a *meitheal* approach to partnership – engaging directly with our distinct communities as a means of enhancing trust and co-operation in decision-making in our University:

- Our **meitheal scoláirí** with the Students’ Union will focus on student engagement and the student voice
- Our **meitheal foirne** with staff and their representatives will focus on staff engagement
- Our **meitheal pobail** will facilitate relations and new partnerships in our community and region

Distinctive NUI Galway

Galway city and the West of Ireland are exceptional places to study, live and work. The unique environment, culture, vibrancy and creativity of our city and region set us apart internationally. Our location within a global hub for culture, technology and innovation will be key to our future success.

Our actions will reflect our commitment to building on our distinct strengths.

Our University is embedded in a region that spans from Clare to Donegal, encompassing a unique mix of landscapes, culture and industry. We are committed to serving the west of Ireland and its communities through our regional campuses, Gaeltacht centres, medical academies, and research facilities that are embedded in the environment.

Luíonn todhchaí na Gaeilge lenár luachanna agus beidh straitéis don Ghaeilge i gcroílár shaol agus structúir ár nOllscoile.

Our community has coalesced around research institutes, which provide a platform for collaboration across disciplines. We value place-based research, learning from and involving the communities of which we are a part. Our students will benefit directly from this focus through newly developed curricula that are research-led, drawing on the interdisciplinary strengths of our major research institutes.

In particular, we will build from our values to sharpen the focus of our teaching and research on the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals² (SDGs) as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. We will harness our distinctive strengths, establish global partnerships, and empower our communities to make their own unique contribution to the challenges facing our world.

¹ The Irish word *meitheal* describes the tradition of rural communities coming together to help each other gather the harvest. Here, we use it as shorthand for a spirit of cooperation, empathy and inclusiveness.

² The SDGs are a list of 17 Goals that were identified by the United Nations to help focus global attention on addressing the world’s most pressing challenges. Together, they act as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.

With our partners locally, nationally and worldwide we will advance our research and innovation efforts on:

- **Enriching creativity and culture** – with particular focus/strengths in:
- **Improving health and wellbeing** – with particular focus/strengths in:
- **Realising potential through data, technology and innovation** – with particular focus/strengths in:
- **Strengthening policy and society** – with particular focus/strengths in:
- **Sustaining our planet and future** – with particular focus/strengths in:

Flagship Goals for 2025

- Review and renew our research institutes to ensure their continued impact
- Graduate schools in our distinctive research priority areas aligning our postgraduate programme development and the work of our interdisciplinary research institutes
- Place-based learning embedded in our curriculum through opportunities for work placement, community-based and/or service learning
- The development of a landmark cultural and performance space as our contribution to Galway as a City of Culture
- An ambitious and future-focused strategy for the Irish language with Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge and Scoil na Gaeilge at its heart

Respectful NUI Galway

Our success depends on creating a shared environment where we respect and value each other. We know that excellence is only achieved by working and learning collaboratively to get the best from each other. The most successful partnerships are founded in respect, and this ethos will underpin our engagement in our city, region and the world. NUI Galway will be an exemplar of impactful partnership, as prioritised by the United Nations' 'Partnerships for the Goals'.

We will champion a culture of respect and partnership across our communities, where we recognise the individuality of our people's journeys and the positive role we can have in sustaining our communities.

Our actions will reflect our commitment to engaging respectfully with our diverse communities.

We will embed a culture of empathy and respect in our University, including within our student experience. Our focus will be on supporting students in their studies, progression and wellbeing by being part of a community where they are encouraged to define success holistically and inspired to achieve it. Building on the success of pilot projects in our student support services, we will mainstream academic peer support and programmes for mental, physical and social health and wellbeing.

Our people are our greatest resource. Employment at NUI Galway will be fair, equitable and inclusive. The University is committed to the practice of maintaining and promoting decent, high standards of employment and fairness at work: the aim of this policy will be to optimise secure direct employment on high quality terms, consistent with public policy, allied to transparent and equitable access to career development, progression and promotion. The University further commits to family-friendly work practices in a manner that is mindful and accommodating in the service of a healthy work/life balance. Everyone working on NUI Galway campuses can expect to be valued and treated with the highest standards of dignity and respect.

By being a respectful University our contribution will be valued by our communities, as a good neighbour and a proactive partner for the benefit of society. Recognising the unique and influential role our University plays in our region's society and economy, we will work with businesses, organisations and networks across the west of Ireland to ensure that our University is positively serving our region.

Flagship Goals for 2025

- Development and implementation of a Respect Charter, making Respectful NUI Galway real
- Assimilation and integration of our 'Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty' across all of the University's functions and relationships
- Training in empathy, compassion and understanding for staff and students
- A 'One Stop' Student Centre that will centralise student support services in one hub and facilitate our students' journey in their learning and development
- Successfully roll out the new Student Digital Pathways project across our systems to meet student needs and future-proof our University
- Develop and implement a social responsibility programme and annual statement
- Achievement of the KeepWell Mark

Excellent NUI Galway

NUI Galway is a globally focused research-intensive university, internationally renowned for the quality and impact of our teaching, research and innovation. Our people are leaders, innovators and critical thinkers who share a passion to understand, educate and improve the world. We continue to strive for excellence, underpinned by integrity and professionalism. Through the excellent teaching, research and services they experience here, our students will be equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to be the next generation of changemakers.

We will be recognised internationally for the quality of our teaching and research, and the measurable impact it has on our students and society.

Our actions will reflect our commitment to drive and support excellence across our University mission.

We will deliver an excellent student-centred teaching and learning experience, with research-led teaching at its core, which develops their critical thinking, leadership and professionalism. The quality of our curricula will be recognised through student demand and the employment of our graduates nationally and internationally.

We will provide programmes of development, including mentoring, coaching and training, and enhance our physical and virtual environment in order to empower our people to fulfil their potential. We are committed to respecting and recognising excellence and supporting ambition in a positive working environment that attracts, develops, retains and supports the highest quality of staff.

We will support our staff and students to translate their research into impactful solutions for the future to support a culture of innovation.

Flagship Goals for 2025

- Increased reinvestment in our research to further enhance our international reputation and reach
- Strategic partnerships with universities and research institutions in the top 100 in the world, with a focus on research collaborations and staff/student exchange for global impact
- Membership of prestigious global strategic alliances that reflect our ambition
- Learning Commons established to encourage and support new forms of student engagement in learning
- Student Success Strategy to support and enhance student transition, progression and achievement of students

Open NUI Galway

Our University is a proactive collaborator and an ally for good both locally and globally. We believe that openness, diversity and inclusion lead to innovation, engagement and creativity. Different outlooks and experiences have a positive impact on our university. We champion education as a force for positive change and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. We are committed to social inclusion and providing a welcoming environment where everyone has a sense of belonging and can thrive.

Our actions will reflect our commitment to accessibility, inclusivity and engaging openly with the world.

We will champion an inclusive culture that proactively seeks to identify and remove barriers to equality. We will enable an environment where all students and staff are supported to achieve their potential regardless of their background. We will increase the diversity of leadership and university structures to represent the increasingly diverse make-up of the NUI Galway community. Our research will inform attitudes and policy about diversity, with an emphasis on improving understanding and awareness of disadvantage and discrimination where it occurs.

We will create greater opportunities for our students and staff to broaden their horizons and gain diverse experience through study abroad programmes, placements, service learning, and teaching and research collaborations.

We will strive to make a positive impact on society through partnering with other universities, organisations and communities, locally and internationally, to enable the creation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and technologies for the good of society. We will champion greater access to our research, facilities and data through a focus on Open Science, Open Access, and community and alumni engagement.

Flagship Goals for 2025

- A student-centred and community led capital development programme, to enhance access and engagement with our campus and facilities
- Adopt the principles of universal design in our learning and working environment
- University of Sanctuary designation with focused supports for marginalised communities to access higher education
- Building on our Athena SWAN status, apply for institutional silver level accreditation
- Significantly narrow the gender pay gap over the life of the plan
- A clear strategy for internationalisation and international collaboration that will maximise the global impact and reach of the University

Sustainable NUI Galway

The future of humanity on our planet is threatened by unsustainable interactions between our societies and our environment. We will provide leadership to inform the transition to a sustainable future through our teaching, research, actions and impacts. We will sustainably manage our University's campus and all our external affairs and become a role model for our positive impact on the environment.

Through our teaching and research activities we will develop the next generation of students, researchers and innovators for tackling society's evolving sustainable development challenges.

Our actions will reflect our commitment to lead the transition to a sustainable future.

We will set ourselves ambitious goals in eliminating our negative impact on the environment. Working together with local, regional, national and global partners, we will develop the solutions, innovations and impact pathways necessary for transitions to a more sustainable future.

We will be world-renowned for our teaching and research activities that develop our graduates as future sustainability leaders in Ireland and globally. We will focus our research expertise and infrastructure on the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals with measurable ambitions for research income, outputs and impacts. Sustainability will be embedded across the academic curriculum and student experience.

Our University's sustainability planning will encompass environmental, social and financial sustainability, guided by our core values.

Flagship Goals for a Sustainable Future

- In 2020, we will commit to and sign the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Accord
- Reflecting the urgency of climate action, 2020 will be our Year of Sustainability where we will implement policies significantly reducing the environmental footprint of our campus and university activities, including:
 - becoming a zero one-off plastics campus in 2020
 - implementing a travel and consumables policy cognisant of the climate emergency in 2020
 - all of our laboratories being Green Lab certified by 2025
 - a carbon-neutral circular-economy university by 2030

Building for the Future

Recognising that our campus must evolve to meet the ambitions of our strategy and the needs of our communities, the University will embark on a range of capital development projects that support our values over the lifetime of this plan:

- New Learning Commons (Library redevelopment)
- New buildings and public spaces on Nuns' Island that connect our campus with the heart of the city
- Additional on-campus accommodation that enables students to engage more fully in the university experience
- A flagship visitor centre that opens our campus to the world
- Better physical access to our buildings for all
- Devise a sports campus for the future
- Expanded Galway to Connemara Greenway with greater connections for cyclists and pedestrians between our campus and city