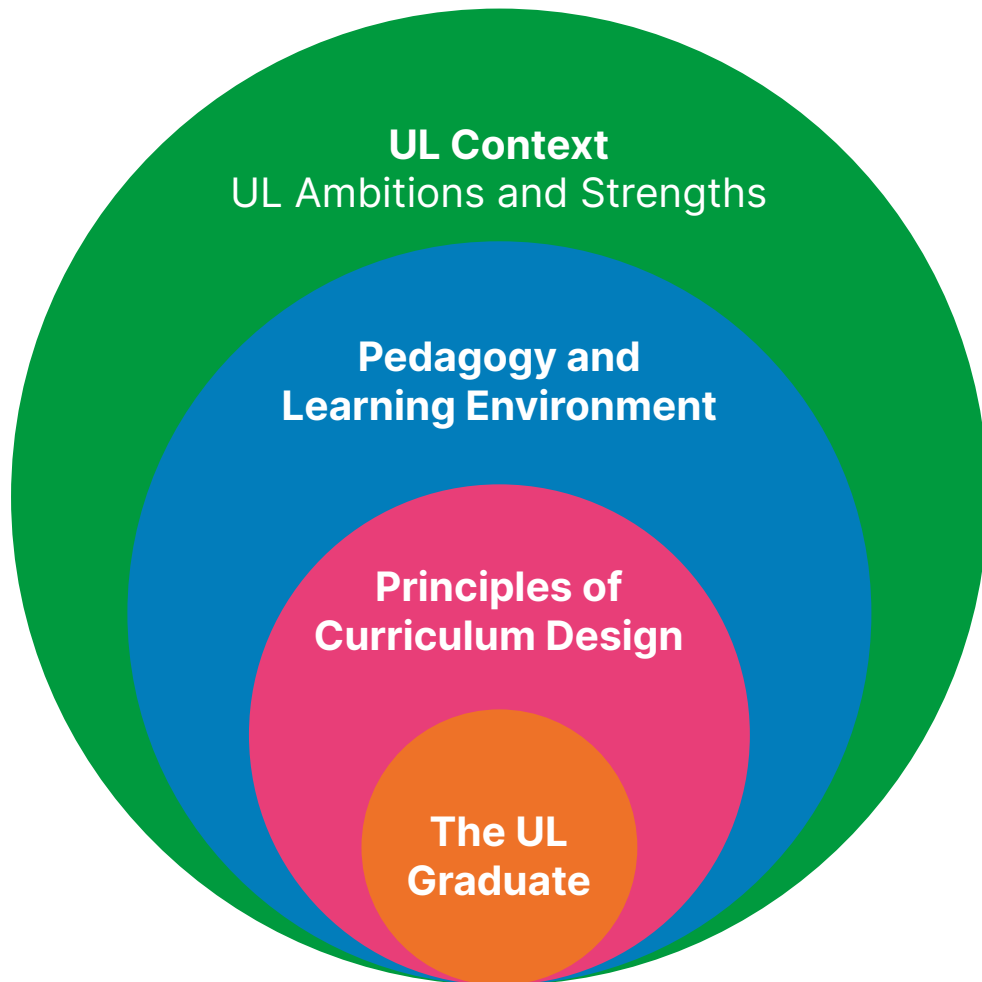# UL's Integrated Curriculum Development Framework

UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

UL's Integrated Curriculum Development Framework

The **curriculum** at UL is a programme-focused, holistic, coherent and intentional living framework to guide learning. It maps context, learning goals, content, assessment and pedagogy, and is based on national and international standards. It is dynamic, co-constructed, enacted, responsive and responsible.

UL Context
UL Ambitions and Strengths

Pedagogy and Learning Environment

Principles of Curriculum Design

The UL Graduate

The Purpose

The purpose of UL's Integrated Curriculum Development Framework is to:

1. Establish a shared understanding of the curriculum, which reflects the institutional strategy, including the learning, teaching and assessment strategy;

2. Provide guidance for programme developers on planning, designing, assessing and evaluating programmes;

3. Align and connect with processes for programme design, approval and review to support the creation of a coherent curriculum and to ensure consistent programme development across the institution;

4. Provide a foundation for a positive and coherent student experience and involvement in the curriculum; and

5. Articulate the distinctiveness of the University's graduates and the distinctiveness of a UL education.

UL Context
UL Ambitions and Strengths

» **Ambitions**

Growing our academic reputation

Educating outstanding graduates and active citizens

Actively engaging with our city and our region

Embracing and promoting an open and welcoming campus for all

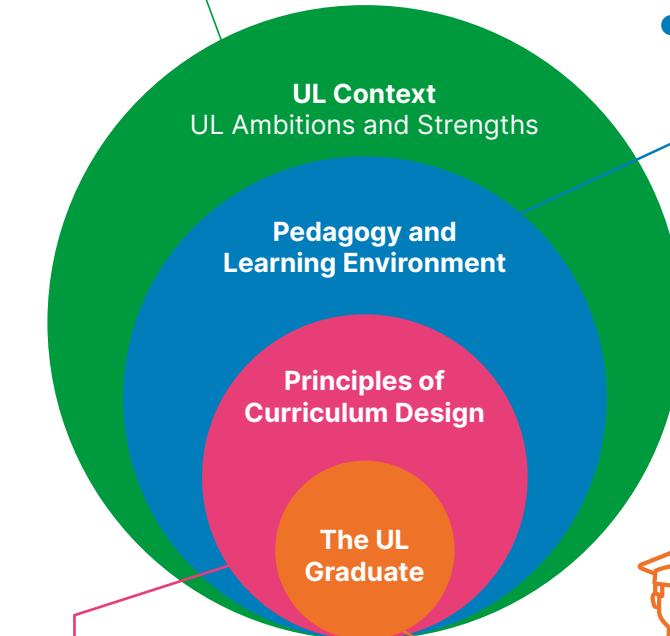Continually challenging our ambitions

» **Build on existing strengths**

Research and educational excellence

Enriching/supportive student experience

Innovative pedagogy and experiential learning

Internationalisation

Work-integrated Learning

Building graduate capital

Community of scholars

Unique commitment to learning and teaching

Principles of Curriculum Design

The Principles of Curriculum design are founded on academic excellence and integrity:

Programme-focused

Co-constructed

Connected and coherent

Dynamic and innovative (Future thinking)

Inclusive

Responsive

Responsible

Scholarly

Discipline-based

Professionally contextualised

Pedagogy and Learning Environment

The Pedagogy and Learning Environment foster a transformative learning experience.

Student-centred

Flexible

Inclusive

Active

Transformative

Enacted / Applied

Multidisciplinary

International

Technology-enhanced

Research-informed

The UL Graduate

The UL Graduate is an active and globally engaged citizen:

Agile

Articulate

Courageous

Curious

Responsible

UL Context
UL Ambitions and Strengths

Pedagogy and Learning Environment

Principles of Curriculum Design

The UL Graduate

UL's Integrated Curriculum Development Framework (ICDF) Implementation Plan

To ensure that the proposed principles of the Integrated Curriculum Development Framework are implemented across the institution in a coherent manner that supports consistent programme development, the implementation plan for the ICDF focuses on connecting and integrating the Framework with processes for programme design, approval and review.

Table 1 identifies the three main processes to which the ICDF aligns, namely, programme design, approval and review, and identifies the curriculum development activities associated with each stage of the process, naming those leading the curriculum development activities at each stage of the process and outlining the required resources.

Key aspects of the proposed implementation plan

The ICDF:

1. Aligns the curriculum development process[1] with the academic programme design, approval and review processes to ensure that the appropriate academic standards are identified and maintained at all stages of development;

2. Aligns the curriculum development process with quality assurance processes to ensure quality assurance, quality enhancement and a culture of quality across the institution;

3. Integrates an iterative engagement-design process and enables structures to allow programme teams to work together in curriculum development and to incorporate key stakeholders in the co-creation of the curriculum, including, for example, students, faculty, employers, employability advisers, professional bodies, alumni, etc., adopting a co-constructed approach and ensuring that the curriculum is informed at a fundamental level by the student voice;

4. Aligns with the UL Strategy on Transforming Education and developing outstanding active and engaged citizens;

5. Proposes a central point or 'clearing house' for all curriculum development activity, potentially, a 'Curriculum Development Hub'. (The Hub will provide resources and professional development to support CDs and programme development teams throughout the curriculum development process.)

6. Assumes that sufficient resource will be allocated to support the rollout of UL's ICDF given the complexity associated with coherent curriculum development.

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[1] "Curriculum development encompasses how a curriculum is planned, implemented, and evaluated" (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1998, p.17).

UL's Integrated Curriculum Development Framework

Timeline	Curriculum Development Activities	Alignment	Leadership	Resourcing
12-18 months prior 9-18 months prior	Scoping and appraisal Programme Design » Educational Philosophy » Curriculum Model » Programme Aims » Programme Structure » Programme L, T & A Strategy » Constructive Alignment » Module Design » Learning Environment	**Programme Creation: Design Phase I** (pre-approval)	Faculty (CDs and programme teams) supported by CTL in conjunction with Faculty Curriculum Development Leads, and Faculty Learning Technologists, and in consultation with key stakeholders in the co-creation of the curriculum, including, students, faculty, employers, employability advisers, professional bodies, alumni	Faculty Curriculum Development Leads (5: AHSS, EHS, KBS, S&E, Interfaculty/Professional Programmes) Curriculum Development Hub Allocation of dedicated time for CDs to work with programme teams
9-18 months prior	Programme Approval	**Programme Approval**	Academic Programme Review Commitee	
6 months prior	Curriculum Development » Programme teams work together to develop the learning activities (including learning pathways, assessment materials, etc.) for each module.	**Programme Implementation: Design Phase II** (post-approval)	Faculty supported by CTL in conjunction with Faculty Curriculum Development Leads and Faculty Learning Technologists.	Rollout of ABC Learning Design workshops (CTL, Faculty Curriculum Development Leads, Learning Technologists) Development of templates and exemplars
Programme commencement	Rollout	**Programme Delivery**	Faculty and programme teams	
Ongoing	Evaluation (programme review, re-design and re-validation)	**Programme Review**	Faculty supported by Quality Support Unit in conjunction with Faculty Curriculum Development Leads and other key stakeholders	Faculty Curriculum Development Leads (5: AHSS, EHS, KBS, S&E, Interfaculty/Professional Programmes) Curriculum Development Hub Allocation of dedicated time for CDs to work with programme teams

Table 1

Benefits of the ICDF for UL:

The ICDF builds on the institution's existing strengths and defines a shared understanding of the curriculum, which aligns to the institutional vision and strategic goals of the University.

It provides a vision for an educational philosophy at UL and supports programme teams to create and sustain a collective curriculum philosophy, which fosters consistency in the design and delivery of programmes (O'Neill, 2015).

It cultivates curriculum coherence and supports curriculum creators to organise the curriculum. Curriculum design is a complex process, with potential for "fragmentation and disjointed thinking" (O'Neill et al., 2014: 268). Considered curriculum planning is extremely important, particularly when working within modular systems in order to ensure coherence, sequencing and relevance of a programme of study and its teaching, learning and assessment activities (O'Neill et al., 2014: 269).

The ICDF promotes careful learning design and development. Careful learning design has a strong influence on academic retention, leaner satisfaction and student engagement (Rienties and Toetenel, 2016).

The ICDF bring togethers key policy drivers such as embedding graduate attributes, promoting employability and developing inclusive curricula which will enhance the student experience.

Benefits of the ICDF for faculty:

The ICDF provides support and guidance on designing, implementing and reviewing new and existing programmes in the pre- and post-approval stages

It engages faculty in efficient processes for creating, planning and implementing programme

It optimises resources of the curriculum development team to seamlessly create and review programmes

The ICDF supports faculty to design high quality learning experiences for students and foster a student-centred learning environment

It supports the development of new curricula that are research-led and foster challenge-driven, experiential and collaborative learning modes

What the ICDF can and cannot do:

The existence of an over-arching institutional framework serves to guide programme teams in curriculum design and development, focusing on a more consistent and coordinated approach to learning and teaching guided by an agreed set of principles which establish the vision of our graduates and describe the learning and teaching environment.

While the introduction of the ICDF is a new initiative at UL, it is guided by the University's strategic visions and will serve to support programme teams to achieve the ambitions set out in the strategy and not burden them with additional requests for the curriculum.

The curriculum framework provides a high-level institutional model. It is not intended, however, to inhibit creativity or academic freedom but rather to support programme teams in the design process.

It is not intended to replace any existing structures which exist but rather to support programme teams where gaps were identified in the curriculum design and development process.

Programme teams will continue to design and deliver their programmes within pre-existing expectations set out by APRC and informed by national framework documents such as **QQI Award Standards** for HE or guidelines set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies

The UL Graduate

In order to achieve UL's ambition of educating outstanding graduates that are active and globally engaged, intended learning outcomes which align with the ICDF must be specified at programme level. Equally, learning environments which enable the achievement of the intended outcomes must be outlined at programme level. Programme teams then work together to ensure that these Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) are enabled across the curriculum. For example,
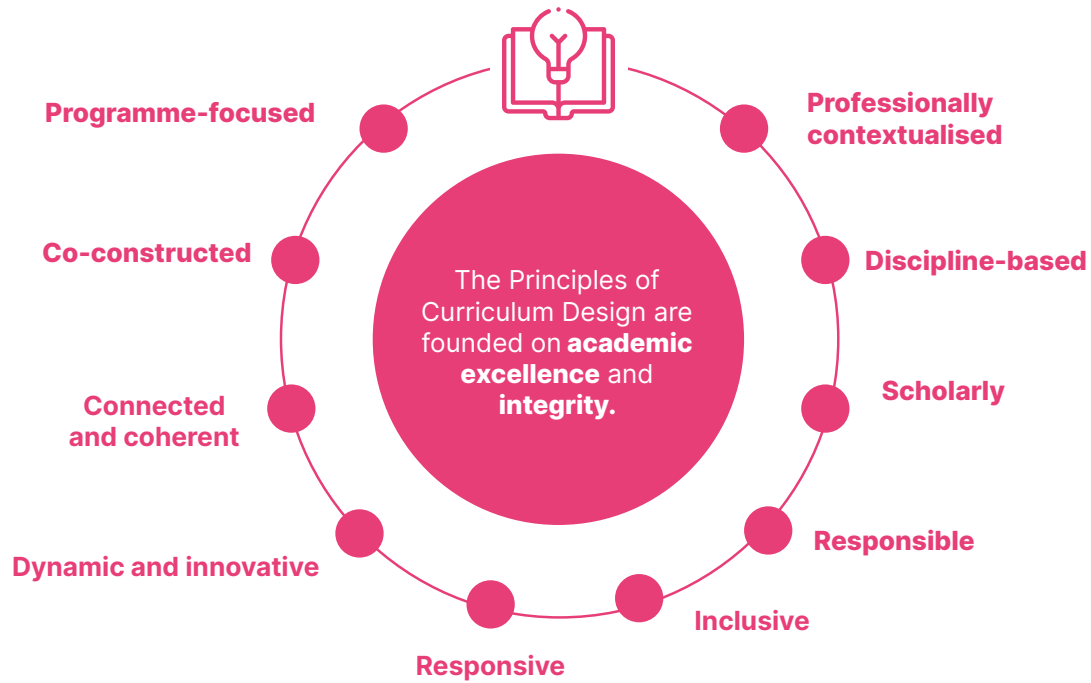
- Learning outcomes which align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be present in the PLOs, as well as opportunities for EDI-related initiatives and social good/justice.

- Opportunities for internationalisation should be incorporated for all students, including those who study at home, through Internationalisation at Home (IaH) initiatives such as engagement in Virtual Exchange projects to resolve shared problems. [3]

- Opportunities for students to work within and across disciplines in innovative and creative ways should be incorporated into the curriculum, and action verbs ensuring creativity and higher-order thinking skills should be mapped across the programme learning outcomes.

- Embedding a tool for portfolio development into the VLE that travels with the student throughout their programme and beyond will encourage a reflective, self-determined, self-motivated approach to current and future learning, allowing students to develop and grow a mindset for continuous personal and professional development.

Agile
open minded, independent, adaptive, flexible, responsive in actions

Responsible
personally, socially, professionally, sustainably and ethically responsible

The UL Graduate is an **active and globally engaged citizen.**

Articulate
strong inter- and intra-personal skills, empathetic, collaborative

Curious
problem-solver, critical, knowledgeable, inquisitive, imaginative

Courageous
tenacious, resilient, robust, transformative, enterprising, innovative

[3] See Vamos: Virtual Exchange To Tackle Wicked Problems: Latin American And European Collaboration on Education For Sustainable Development: https://vamos-erasmus.eu
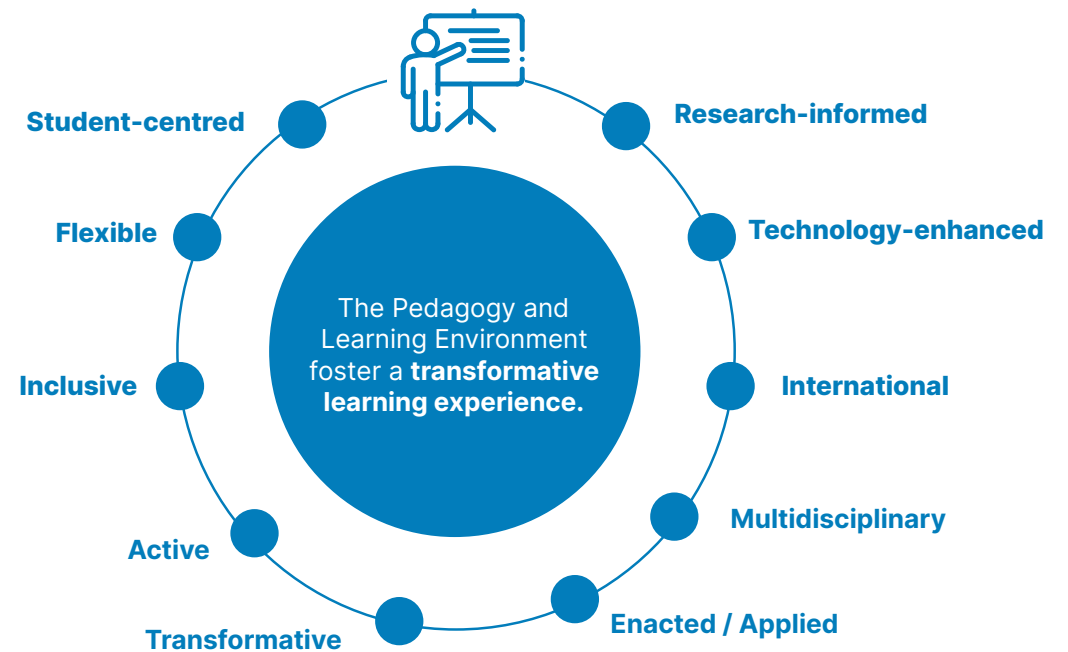
Suggestions for developing the graduate attributes:

1. Build in processes to facilitate multidisciplinarity in the curriculum, including multi/inter/cross and/or transdisciplinary programme development and/or consolidating/extending current 'Broadening Modules', which bring together students from different disciplines to work, for example, on specific 'wicked problems' (a complex social or cultural problem that is challenging and difficult to resolve) and/or themes such as climate change. This will require some instrumental changes to SI, timetabling etc. (link in with Academic Model Advisory Group). Such 'elective' modules provide a way to embed transferrable skills and the graduate attributes across the curriculum. Indeed, flexible systems are required to ensure that the graduate attributes are delivered upon in a serious manner.

2. A consideration of capstone experiences in all Faculties as the glue to bind the prior learning of students, by providing opportunities for students to bring their learning together in creative ways to explore real-world problems.

Principles of Curriculum Design

The Principles of Curriculum Design are founded on **academic excellence** and **integrity.**

- Programme-focused
- Professionally contextualised
- Co-constructed
- Discipline-based
- Connected and coherent
- Scholarly
- Dynamic and innovative
- Responsible
- Responsive
- Inclusive

Design of the Learning Environment

The Pedagogy and Learning Environment foster a **transformative learning experience.**

- Student-centred
- Research-informed
- Flexible
- Technology-enhanced
- Inclusive
- International
- Active
- Multidisciplinary
- Transformative
- Enacted / Applied

Principles of Curriculum Design and Design of the Learning Environment

√. To inspire creativity in curriculum development and embed good practice in programme design, a curriculum design team will be put in place to support course directors and programme teams to work together in the curriculum design, approval and review processes. Faculty Curriculum Development Leads and CTL will work with programme teams to offer specialist expertise in curriculum design and development. This work will be supported by Faculty Learning Technologists. A programme-focused and co-constructed approach will be facilitated throughout to ensure a connected and coherent design process which involves key stakeholders.

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√. The curriculum will be informed and developed with rigorous adherence to the principles of ethics, academic integrity, diversity and inclusion. To this end, it is suggested that the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), namely, multiple means of engagement, representation and action/expression be embedded across the curriculum. In addition to the adoption of UDL design principles, resources on *Decolonising the curriculum* would support faculty in providing a more inclusive learning environment, which values diversity.

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√. Explicit integration of societal issues and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into curricula, e.g., how climate literacy/justice might be embedded across the curriculum as a whole. Other social justice issues need to be considered, such as decolonising the curriculum or at least providing a forum or approach for faculty to explore this further in their own disciplines.

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√. The curriculum will continue to build on the University's academic excellence in fostering an active, student-centred learning environment, building upon and developing practical, challenge-driven and enquiry/problem-based learning modes, which stimulate active, experiential and applied learning.

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√. Innovative approaches to learning and teaching will be designed to enhance the research-teaching nexus, incorporating, for example, opportunities to expand the research-teaching nexus, moving beyond the uni-directional vision of research-led teaching and embracing the multi-directional opportunities presented by exploring the research-teaching nexus.

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a. Promotion of research-tutored, research-based, research-orientated and research-led curricula (Healey and Jenkins, 2009) as a principle within the framework will ensure a scholarly and discipline-based approach to curriculum design.

· ·

b. Incorporation of the concept of 'teaching-led research' in curriculum development rather than a sole reliance on 'research-led teaching' approaches (Charles et al., 2018) will promote scholarly teaching and ensure that curricula and pedagogy are informed by important scholarship in learning and teaching.

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√. Embedding blended and online pedagogies in a systemic and sustainable way that is guided by pedagogical best practice is important at the early design phases. ABC Learning Design is particularly appropriate when moving to blended and online delivery modes.

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√. A rational approach to student advancement through the curriculum will be adopted, enabling student choice, while balancing a coherent learning experience, harmonising the credit system etc. (The ICDF must be aligned with the work of the Academic Model Advisory Group.)H.A suite of templates and toolkits to provide consistency in implementation will be available to all those who engage in curriculum development through the Curriculum Development Hub.

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Principles of Curriculum Design and Design of the Learning Environment (cont.)

√. Course design intensive workshops which support faculty to work in programme teams on the design and development of new and existing curricula will be put in place.

   a. Workshops which facilitate programme teams to work together on curriculum design in consultation with key stakeholders will be important.

   b. Workshops and clinics on the design of programme and module learning outcomes will be extended to programme teams and incorporate consultation with key stakeholders.

   c. Course design intensives such as ABC Learning Design are currently being piloted across the University with a view to adapting this course design approach to the needs of UL's ICDF. ABC Learning Design is a high-energy, hands-on curriculum development workshop in which programme teams work together to create a visual 'storyboard' of the type and sequence of learning activities required to meet the module or programme learning outcomes (**https://abc-ld.org**).

   d. Provision of VLE module templates and workshops on planning for the choice of technological tools with consideration for usability and functionality, pedagogical alignment, support, licensing, copyright, and data protection will ensure a 'pedagogy-first' approach.

   e. Workshops on multiple disciplinarity in the curriculum will support faculty in embedding inter/multi/cross and/or transdisciplinarity in the curriculum.

√. The design process needs to incorporate an important emphasis on constructive alignment of the learning, teaching and assessment strategy with consideration given to this alignment at the programme design and approval stages:

   a. Writing learning outcomes (LOs): close attention to be paid to writing LOs at programme level, with particular attention to the alignment of LOs with the learning, teaching and assessment strategy for the programme. (Engage with CTL at the stakeholder engagement phase.)

   b. National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), professional apprenticeship standards: Ensure LOs are appropriate to their NFQ level. (Engage with Quality at the stakeholder engagement phase.)

   c. Module design: programmatic approach to alignment of module LOs with the PLOs to ensure sequencing in the curriculum and avoid fragmentation.

   d. Assessment: Embed a diversity of assessment and a programmatic approach to assessment across curricula (including self- and peer-assessment as powerful opportunities for 'learning as'), as well as assessment literacy (for staff and students), as appropriate.

√. Future thinking: AI and analytics. Possibility for students to map out an individualised path in their learning. Using data to enhance student learning. Ultimately, we could have a personalised curriculum.

Professional Development for Faculty on the ICDF and its Implementation

1.
Support and mentor faculty in curriculum design and development.

2.
Provide resources which support faculty to work in programme teams on the design and development of new and existing curricula.

3.
Create and develop structures that allow programme teams to work together on curriculum design and development.

4.
Establish communities of practice around curriculum development.

5.
Build in opportunities for capacity building and recognition of faculty input and expertise in developing curricula that align with UL's ICDF:

a. alignment with strategy for professional development of teaching staff (based on National Forum Professional Development Framework);

b. consideration of institutional recognition of input in curriculum development.

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O'Neill, G. (2015) *Curriculum Design in Higher Education: Theory to Practice*. Dublin: UCD Teaching & Learning. **https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/handle/10197/7137**

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Ornstein, A.C. and Hunkins, F.P. (2017) *Curriculum Foundations, Principles and Issues*. (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education Inc.

Rienties, Bart and Toetenel, Lisette (2016). The impact of learning design on student behaviour, satisfaction and performance: a cross-institutional comparison across 151 modules. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 60 pp. 333–341. **https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.02.074**

Faculty Curriculum Development Lead

Responsibilities:

Provide high quality support and guidance to faculties and their partners on all matters relating to curriculum development, approval and review.

Support programme development teams on the implementation of the Integrated Curriculum Development Framework and work closely with colleagues in the faculties to ensure that curriculum development and approval are aligned with the institution's approach.

Facilitate professional development activities in curriculum design and development for faculty in support of consistent and coherent design approaches that promote academic excellence and foster best practice.

Facilitate the sharing of good practice and innovation in curriculum development within and across disciplines and disseminate best practice in curriculum design nationally and internationally.

Plan and encourage the development of innovative and engaging programmes of study.

Demonstrate a commitment to academic quality and integrity.

Collaboration with all FCDLs in exploration of opportunities for improvement and innovation.

Working Group membership

Chair	**Sean Arkins** Dean, Science and Engineering
CTL Curriculum Development Lead	**Íde O'Sullivan** Centre for Transformative Learning
Academic representative AHSS	**Elaine Vaughan**
Academic representative EHS	**Ann MacPhail**
Academic representative KBS	**Jean McCarthy**
Academic representative S&E	**Teresa Curtin**
Graduate and Professional Studies	**Fergal G. O'Brien**
CECD representative	**Treasa Landers** Co-op Manager

CTL Educational Develop
    Student Engagement Lead
    Technology Enhanced Learning Lead
    Transformative Pedagogies Lead
	
	Sarah Gibbons / Claire Halpin
	Angelica Risquez
	Michael Wride

Quality Support Unit	**Sinead O'Sullivan**
Academic Registry	**Rabiya Ali**
VPA Office	**Ross Anderson** Associate Vice President Academic,
UL Student Life (Student Partner)	**Alison Fitzgerald / Alice Hynes** Student Life VP Academic Officer
Postgraduate Students' Union	**Andrea La Touche / Rania Shadeed** Postgraduate Students' Union President
Entrepreneurship	**Briga Hynes** KBS
Futures and Foresight Lead	**Andrea Deverell**