2023–2027
STRATEGIC PLAN
ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Arts, Humanities
and Social Sciences

INTRODUCTION

I'm delighted to introduce the strategic plan of the **Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences** (AHSS).

Covering the years 2023 to 2027, the plan is firmly grounded in the faculty's mission statement – *Creating knowledge and a better world* – and helps shape our vision of what the faculty can become. The plan also reflects our strong commitment to embracing the ever-evolving and intense challenges that face the world today.

AHSS is a collective of the following eight units:

- Department of History
- Department of Politics and Public Administration
- Department of Sociology
- Irish World Academy of Music and Dance
- School of English, Irish, and Communication
- School of Law
- School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics
- University of Limerick Language Centre

The strength of AHSS lies in its diversity. The five central pillars of the UL@50 Strategic Plan – transforming education, research excellence, green internationalisation, engagements with city and region, and the operating model – have integrally informed the evolution and progression of our goals and objectives. As we look to the future, we will continue to engender AHSS graduates to think creatively, to articulate clearly and to communicate their values in multiple meaningful ways.

The core principles of equality, diversity, inclusion and interdisciplinarity will be further embedded to transform our research and teaching landscape and contribute meaningfully to the UN SDGs. Staff and students will be encouraged to realise their potential through initiatives that significantly enhance their working and studying environment. Furthermore, the plan commits us to community engagement and providing access to third level across a wide variety of pathways and entry routes.

All of this serves to create a campus collective that is **diverse, engaged, innovative and connected** to communities and institutions locally and globally.

This strategic plan has clear goals and targets to help us get to the next stage of our development. I am grateful to everyone who has put such hard work into shaping and informing this document.

Sandra Joyce

Dr Sandra Joyce
Executive Dean
Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Goal 1
TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

The Faculty of AHSS is committed to transforming education to ensure the range and quality of our programmes and modules continually improve, our cooperative education and study abroad partnerships grow and our recruiting pathways expand.

Our commitment to transforming education will be achieved through transforming learning, including developing flexible learning and embedding research-led, challenge-driven, experiential and collaborative learning modes and work-integrated learning and entrepreneurship in our programmes and modules. We will complement these approaches by leveraging technology to facilitate active, self-determined and personalised learning. We will also expand our range of micro-credentials and cumulative degrees and employ greater use of the recognition of prior learning to make our offerings more accessible and flexible.

To support UL's reputation as a research-led institution with global reach, we will embed local and global perspectives in our curriculum and maintain a global academic reputation that will allow us to attract and retain top instructors and researchers. We will incorporate content within our programmes to help meet national skills needs and establish innovative learning partnerships with industry and academic centres to ensure our students graduate with the skills they need to excel in a rapidly changing economy and society.

OUR AIMS | OBJECTIVES | MEASURES OF SUCCESS

OUR AIMS	OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
1.1 **Providing an excellent student experience**	• Diversify our student body through internationalisation, widening access and growing postgraduate education. • Rationalise our taught programmes to reduce complexity and create clearer structured pathways for students.	○ A reimagined postgraduate education plan prepared and implemented ○ More diverse student registrations ○ ISPhD programme expanded and ISPhD bridging programme developed
	• Facilitate and promote flexible learning through the design and delivery of bespoke professional development and lifewide learning programmes.	○ New professional diploma programmes developed through the UL@Work scheme
	• Enhance and tailor support for our diversifying student body	○ An increase in the number of students taking part in the Languages Outreach Programme ○ An increase in the percentage of AHSS students reporting having a positive experience at UL ○ A rise in the first-year retention rate

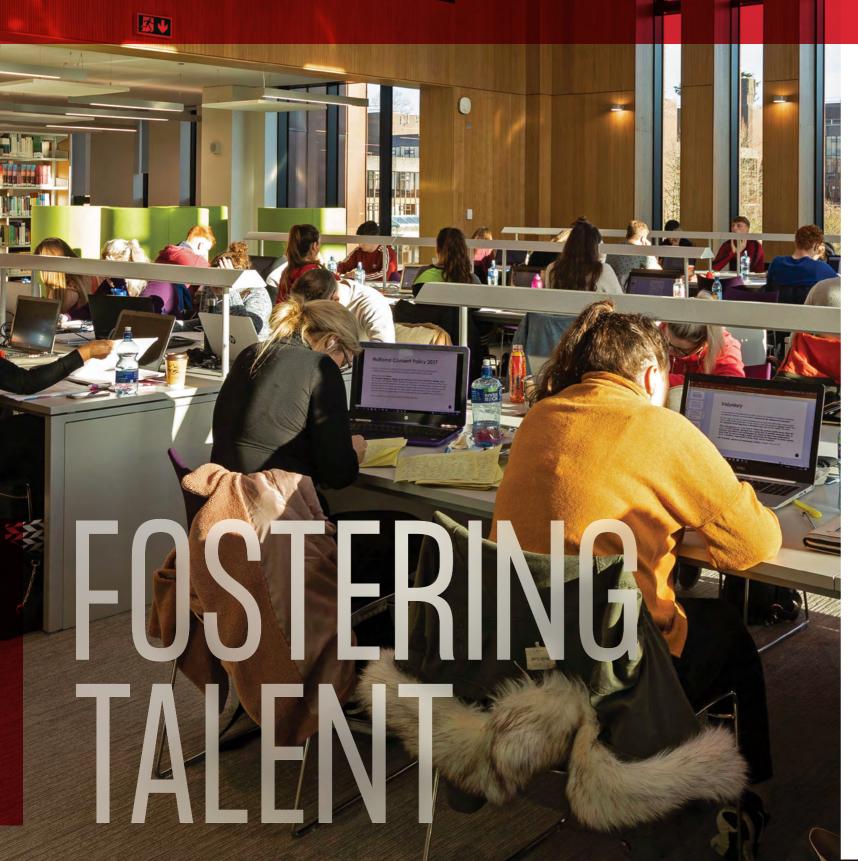| OUR AIMS	OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
1.2 **Transforming learning**	• Develop flexible learning spaces in support of student-centred, technology-enhanced and enabled learning approaches. • Embed active and personalised learning through educational technology provision and the development of pedagogies for hybrid and online programmes of study. • Develop our progression and awards strategy, provide flexibility for all students and facilitate lifelong learning by advancing the establishment of micro-credentials and cumulative degrees and the recognition of prior experience and prior learning.	○ An increase in the proportion of flexible, part-time, blended and distance learning enrolments to all registrations (i.e. percentage) ○ An increase in the number of online or blended modules on offer ○ A Summer Institute CPD offering in EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) developed and offered to overseas teachers and academics ○ A CPD micro-credential module developed for Irish language officers/teachers/project leaders ○ An increase in the number of students enrolled on micro-credential modules ○ AHSS established as a leader within UL and across Ireland for incorporating the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and inclusive internationalisation into its teaching and curriculum development
	• Adopt a curriculum development framework that embeds research-led, challenge-driven, experiential and collaborative learning modes and fosters cross-disciplinary sharing and exchange.	○ Cross-faculty undergraduate and/or postgraduate programmes developed
	• Embed self-determined learning and entrepreneurship in all postgraduate programmes, with a focus on curiosity, the imagination and the leveraging of networks and resources. • Provide work-integrated learning in relevant academic programmes in collaboration with our industry, community and government partners.	○ An increase in the percentage of postgraduate taught programmes being career-oriented and offering work-integrated learning in the curriculum
1.3 **Supporting UL to be a research-led university with global reach**	• Address national skills needs.	○ A transferrable skills unit established ○ An increase in the number of students completing modern languages modules as part of their studies ○ An increase in the number of students and staff taking part in Irish Language programmes ○ Bespoke micro-credential modules developed for industry and the public sector
	• Bring together and embed local and global perspectives in the curriculum. • Develop an academic reputation and international visibility that help to attract and retain talent in the region and recruit students from around the world. • Develop innovative learning partnerships with other academic centres and industries so that our graduates can excel in the context of rapidly changing needs. • Embed an ethos and culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in our students and staff.	○ An increase in the number of modules co-created in partnership with organisations outside the university ○ An increase in the number of domestic and global internships on postgraduate taught programmes ○ Strategic enterprise links established with industry partners (private and career-development-oriented programmes)

Goal 2
RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

The Faculty of AHSS is defined by its impactful and creative responses to global challenges.

Recognising and celebrating the diversity and breadth of our research activities and outputs, we will dynamically grow our internal research infrastructure and support schemes, focusing investment on initiatives that simultaneously help researchers to reach their individual potential and yield productive interventions into key research areas, including select United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs). We will diversify our research funding income, support our researchers through all stages of the application process and commit to the strategic pursuit of national and international research funding, with a particular concentration on EU grant schemes.

International, frequently interdisciplinary, collaborations and partnerships are key to research activities across AHSS. We will continue to marry research excellence with green internationalisation to amplify existing research networks and establish new ones. We will further enhance our international reputation through greater uptake of Erasmus+ mobility opportunities and the introduction of a visiting international researcher programme. Moreover, reflecting our dedication to research-led teaching, we will expand our postgraduate research offerings in conversation with the Doctoral College while building on the success of flagship programmes such as the International Structured PhD (ISPhD) programme.

FOSTERING TALENT

OUR AIMS	OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
2.1 **Broadening our research programmes**	● Focus investment on key research priorities, including SDGs. ● Diversify research funding income.	○ Mapping of AHSS research against UN SDGs completed ○ Regular financial supports introduced for staff applying for major European and non-Exchequer funding ○ An increase in the number of funding applications and a rise in their success rates
2.2 **Building partnerships and collaborations**	● Extend our national and international reach. ● Attract more international experts and visiting scholars to UL.	○ A rise in international collaboration rates ○ Greater uptake by staff of Erasmus+ mobility funding ○ A virtual visiting researcher fellowship scheme introduced
2.3 **Pursuing research with impact**	● Grow flagship postgraduate research programmes.	○ ISPhD programme expanded to key markets ○ A rise in PhD completion rates ○ Greater recognition and tracking of diverse research activities and outputs
2.4 **Implementing research support infrastructure**	● Invest strategically to expand research support infrastructure. ● Foster talent and a high-performance research culture.	○ More staff participating in the AHSS Mentoring Scheme ○ Greater uptake of PhD supervisor training and CPD events ○ The granting of sabbatical and special research leave across the faculty is more transparent and consistent ○ Disciplinary norms and arts practice outputs documents embedded in UL systems

Goal 3
GREEN INTERNATIONALISATION

The Faculty of AHSS is committed to advancing internationalisation by further diversifying our international student and staff cohorts; expanding our global reputation and reach; reducing our global footprint; and fostering a critical, international mindset and culture that is underpinned by equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

As a faculty, it is our mission to offer a rich and sustainable international experience to all our students by embedding global perspectives in the curriculum across the various academic disciplines. We are also committed to promoting both in-person and virtual Erasmus mobility for students and staff and to maintaining UL's position as Ireland's leading university for Erasmus mobility. This reaffirms our commitment to promoting European and global citizenship and underscores our support for the ideals reflected in the UN SDGs.

It is also our ambition to play a leading role in promoting inclusive internationalisation at home by developing and implementing training and supports that will ensure that each and every one of our students and staff feels welcome and can thrive socially, culturally and academically. In so doing, we recognise the rich linguistic and cultural diversity that our international students, staff and visitors bring to our campus community and the exciting opportunities that this offers for developing interculturally oriented teaching and learning across our faculty. In these ways, AHSS can help to drive the advancement of UL as a truly inclusive and forward-looking global university for the twenty-first century.

OUR AIMS | OBJECTIVES | MEASURES OF SUCCESS

3.1
Advancing internationalisation and enhancing our global reputation and reach

- Increase and diversify our international student intake, particularly onto our postgraduate taught and PhD programmes.
- Attract international academic leaders to enhance our research capabilities, broaden our knowledge and experiential horizons and enrich the student experience.

- Processes in place for the ongoing monitoring of international student enrolments onto our programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD levels, including government-funded academics entering the ISPhD programme from different target markets.
- An increase in the percentage of staff with international origins and in the number of overseas co-supervisors, external examiners and visiting scholars
- More international academics attracted onto our flagship ISPhD programme.
- An increase in the number of international conferences held in UL

3.2
Offering all students and staff a rich and sustainable international education experience

- Promote a European and global identity and mindset by developing and systematically rolling out intercultural workshops for students delivered by means of virtual exchange with a focus on European and global societal challenges.
- Expand in-person Erasmus mobility for students and staff and promote virtual exchange mobility to offer greater flexibility and a carbon-neutral option.

- Intercultural training and virtual exchange workshops in place
- An increase in the number of students and staff availing of Erasmus mobility and virtual exchange mobility
- An increase in the number of students and staff availing of language opportunities

3.3
Leading in the promotion of inclusive internationalisation at home

- Expand the range of English language and intercultural support modules offered to international students, staff and visiting scholars
- Develop and implement a CPD course with a digital badge for academics and support staff in inclusive pedagogy

- An increase in the number of international UL academics and staff taking modules on intercultural skills for the workplace
- An increase in the number of academics, support staff and students taking academic English language support modules
- More specialised academic English supports for international academics, support staff and students across all levels in AHSS and UL
- Online CPD training course and digital badge award in inclusive internationalisation developed for academics and support staff

Goal 4
CITY AND REGION

In this strategy, we will build on our strong record of community engagement to strengthen our role as a contributor to cultural life in the city and region and to maximise opportunities for diverse communities to engage in our teaching and research offerings.

We recognise the importance of engaging with stakeholders in the community and will capitalise on the UL City Centre Campus to foster and maintain collaboration with the community and industry partners. We will also formalise our approach to community engagement and encourage and support staff and students to engage more with community partners.

The Faculty of AHSS places a strong focus on EDI and commits to embedding EDI and social justice across our teaching and research activities and internationalisation goals. EDI underpins our approach to Goal 4 and influences how we engage with the local, regional and national communities.

We are committed to widening student participation and will increase enrolment and participation by students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds as identified under the National Access Plan 2022–2028, including mature students and students entering from the further education sector. We will also increase enrolment and participation by students with a disability. We will widen access to educational programmes more generally by diversifying our offerings to facilitate engaged, accessible and lifelong learning. For example, through micro-credential programmes, we will support local, regional and national employers and societal stakeholders to upskill in key areas.

OUR AIMS	OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
4.1 **Fostering social, cultural and economic development**	● Strengthen our role as a contributor to and influencer of cultural life in the city and region and as a catalyst of transformation by providing education and training, performance facilities, talent and expertise.	○ An increase in the number of outreach/community engagement activities with community partners
	● Work with Mary Immaculate College and the Technological University of the Shannon to develop Limerick city as a hub for third-level education and engage with other education agencies in shaping Limerick as a UNESCO Learning City.	○ More use made of the UL City Centre Campus for workshops and seminars
		○ Use of the City Centre Campus provides better access to programmes, particularly access initiatives such as RPL, and better access to English language programmes for international students
	● Inform and influence regional and national discussions through the contributions and expertise of our staff and students, particularly in relation to implementing the National Development Plan.	○ An increase in the quantity and diversity of micro-credentials offered by the faculty, with clearly established pathways linking them to traditional degree programmes
	● Collaborate with industry in relation to developing a dual education and research model.	
4.2 **Supporting community engagement**	● Further enhance community engagement and access programmes so that we can foster engaged, accessible and lifelong learning and innovation.	○ Greater enrolment and participation by students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students, students entering from the further education sector and students with a disability
	● Strengthen the civil and civic mission of the university by continuing to support local communities through initiatives by students and staff and through community-engaged learning and research initiatives.	○ Community engagement embedded as core within AHSS
		○ Mutually beneficial partnerships developed with local and national communities through annual initiatives by students and staff and through community-engaged learning and research initiatives

Goal 5
OPERATING MODEL

The Faculty of AHSS is committed to both recognising and resourcing activities that support our strategic ambition. We believe in the need to continually improve our structures, systems and processes to align with best practice.

Our people are one of our greatest resources, and we are particularly committed to empowering and supporting our diverse group of staff and students. AHSS has shown leadership in this area, and we will continue to build on our successes through our strategic plan.

The principles of EDI underpin our operating model and have been to the forefront of our work in recent years. Our focus now is on embedding and enhancing our work in this area and on identifying the impact of EDI in the faculty.

AHSS secured a Bronze Athena Swan award in 2020 and is committed to renewing the award at Silver level in 2024. Accordingly, we have integrated a number of Athena Swan commitments into Goal 5 to ensure synergy between the initiatives. Priority 5.1 of the AHSS strategy, Excellence in Governance, integrates the AHSS Athena Swan principles for websites, events and committees into the strategy to ensure transparency and accountability in organisational structures, systems and processes.

Annual attitudinal surveys (conducted through the AHSS Athena Swan EDI Committee) further enhance confidence in systems by providing an ongoing feedback mechanism to track successes and problems. The AHSS strategy also builds on the Athena Swan commitment to promoting gender equality by striving to increase the number of female professorships and to continually monitoring promotion and appointment data to ensure that all staff are supported in their career development.

The AHSS strategy supports staff to realise their potential and to further embed the faculty's commitment to EDI through CPD in the area of universal design for learning and inclusive pedagogies and a CPD offering in EDI. Staff will be further supported through a formal faculty mentoring scheme. The strategy recognises the importance of celebrating staff achievements and commits to doing so through newsletters, the EDI Bulletin and the Dean's weekly update to staff. In addition, a staff recognition award will be put in place to acknowledge significant achievements.

OUR AIMS	OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
5.1 Contributing to excellent governance	○ Foster transparency and accountability as key values of the faculty at all levels. ○ Continually improve organisational structures, systems and processes that support our strategic ambitions and align with best practice.	○ Quality review recommendations implemented ○ Athena Swan Bronze award recommendations implemented at all levels ○ Processes in place for ongoing monitoring and improvement of our performance
5.2 Empowering our people	○ Further enhance EDI, including Athena Swan accreditation, our Gender Equality Action Plan and our Equality and Human Rights Strategy.	○ Athena Swan Silver Award achieved ○ An increase in the number of female professorships
	○ Support staff to realise their professional potential.	○ More staff participating in the AHSS Mentoring Scheme ○ Leadership Development Programme established ○ 100% PDRS completion rate achieved
5.3 Celebrating achievement	○ Recognise group and individual performance and achievements. ○ Develop and embed effective internal communications.	○ High levels of staff satisfaction indicated in annual attitudinal survey ○ Staff recognition award established ○ Funding awards introduced for EDI and international engagement activities ○ Regular AHSS newsletters, EDI bulletins and the Dean's weekly updates are effective and enhance the transparency of the faculty's operations in line with other strategic priorities

A DIVERSE, ENGAGED, INNOVATIVE & CONNECTED STUDENT CAMPUS

CREATING KNOWLEDGE AND A BETTER WORLD

UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Arts, Humanities
and Social Sciences

Design by CopperReed.com

www.ul.ie/**artsoc**