

“Building Academic Community Partnerships”

The capacity for academic teaching and research initiatives to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable in society

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Role of the university in Irish society

“Universities are both apart from and a part of society. They are apart in the sense that they provide a critically important space for grasping the world as it is and – importantly – for re-imagining the world as it ought to be. But universities are also a part of our societies. What’s the point unless the accumulated knowledge, insight and vision are put at the service of the community? With the privilege to pursue knowledge comes the civic responsibility to engage and put that knowledge to work in the service of humanity”

- President Higgins

Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (2006)

- Community engagement describes the interaction with and collaboration between a University, its staff and students, with the wider community for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.
- The purpose is to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; contribute to the public good; and make available cultural, recreational and other assets and contribute to the regeneration of neighbourhoods and community wellbeing.

National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

Outlines three core roles of higher education –

1. Teaching and learning, research, and engagement.
2. Taking on civic responsibilities and cooperating with the needs of the community.
3. Requires higher education institutions to become more firmly embedded in the social and economic contexts of the communities they live in and serve.

Civic and Community Engagement in law

In law, this means

- ✓ Equipping our students with knowledge and critical capacities to engage with the need for law reform
- ✓ Improving the level of graduate awareness of their capacity to advance the legal system; as advocates, as lawyers, as support workers
- ✓ Researching for informed change, both with the community and for the community
- ✓ Influencing law and policy makers through evidence-based research
- ✓ Outreach to the community to provide information and resources, whilst listening and understanding their experiences as system users

Who is our Community?

- System users
- Lay litigants
- Legal Practitioners
- Members of the Judiciary
- Law makers
- Policy makers
- Service Providers
- Students
- General public

Understanding the experience of the user

- Impact of laws and processes on the user
- Importance of two-way learning from outreach activities
- Engaging with 'users' in the broadest sense
- Direct and indirect impact on the service user

Centre for Children's Rights and Family Law

- UCC School of Law established Centre for Children's Rights and Family Law in 2018
- Hosts one of the only specialist LLM degrees in this area of law in Ireland or the United Kingdom
- Hosts the **Child Law Clinic** and the **Family Law Clinic**, through which staff and postgraduate students support litigation and engage in outreach advocacy work

Aims of the Children's Rights and Family Law Clinics

- Improve the quality of the client's representation
- Promote evidence-based reform in all areas of children's rights and family law
- Support lawyers litigating children and family law issues
- Provide students with practical experience of child and family law and litigation
- Dissemination of information to the public
- Research support
- Outreach activities

Role of research in guiding Irish public policy

- Crucial role of academic researchers in helping society to “understand its past, analyse its present and weigh up its future”
- Pairing academic research with those responsible for policy making promises “the delivery of more open government, a more effective use of limited resources and better outcomes for society”

Duncan and Rouse (inquest.ie)

Family Law Clinic - “Domestic Violence Law and Processes: Effecting Change – Safeguarding Families”

- IRC Funded collaboration
- November 2015 conference to explore options for law reform in Ireland
- Cross jurisdictional contributions
- Academics, Probation Service, Support services
- Assess capacity to effect change in perpetrator behaviour

Law reform – Research support

NWCI – Proposed Courts Bill

- Should the general shift toward mediation be of concern in family law applications for Access, Custody and Maintenance where the history of Domestic Violence in the family can become invisible or secondary in the proceedings.
- Is the ‘one judge one family’ framework as adopted in Canada a viable option for court restructure?
- Given that the civil legal aid system is under considerable stress, should the State set up a family law Advisory and Support Service system to provide information and services to support families with parenting related issues including dealing with conflict, parenting plans, etc?

Family law information resource

www.familylawinformation.ie

- Supported by IRC seed funding
- Established and hosted by the Family law Clinic
- Includes student blogs on topical legal issues of social importance in national and international family law
- 2018-19 New online student recordings to enhance accessibility of information

Role of students – cultivating a culture of active engagement

- The work of the Clinics provides students with the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience of legal and advocacy work on a range of children's rights and family law issues.
- Students actively assist in the Clinic work by providing pro bono legal research services to the legal profession
- Students are involved in lobbying and advocacy activities on children's rights and family law issues.
- Allows students to develop important skills and knowledge as well as an awareness of their capacity to effect change whilst developing their knowledge of the relevant international mechanisms, legal standards and ethics.
- The involvement of students in this work contributes to the development of the next generation of children's rights and family law lawyers in Ireland.

Academic outreach activities – Intimate Partner Violence

- Hearing directly from the users about their experiences of the law and processes
- Capturing the impact of the laws in practice
- Impacting individual behaviour and effecting broader cultural change

Domestic and relationship violence

- 2015 conference to understand alternate regulatory approaches
- West Cork Women Against Violence outreach information session
- Tusla Cork City and County Needs Analysis Project
- Workshops with MOVE Cork
- CUH Biennial multi disciplinary conferences with front line health care staff
- Member of Expert Working Group on Sexual Harassment and Violence at 3rd level
- Roll out of UCC bystander intervention programme across third level in Ireland; second level TY pilot; community engagement
- Contribution to progressing SAVI II survey 2020

Research Partnership and Collaboration opportunities

Students - through funded scholarships (e.g. Irish Research Council)
- Law Clinic projects

Staff – through collaborative projects, both funded and unfunded

UCC Civic and Community Engagement Plan 2017-2022

- “Together With and For the Community”
- UCC as a public institution regards itself as uniquely positioned to address key societal challenges; to act as the *public square* for dialogue, discussion and solutions.
- It seeks to meet the challenge of engagement through co-creating socially relevant knowledge, doing so responsibly and with anticipation, while playing a proactive and committed role in our democracy.