



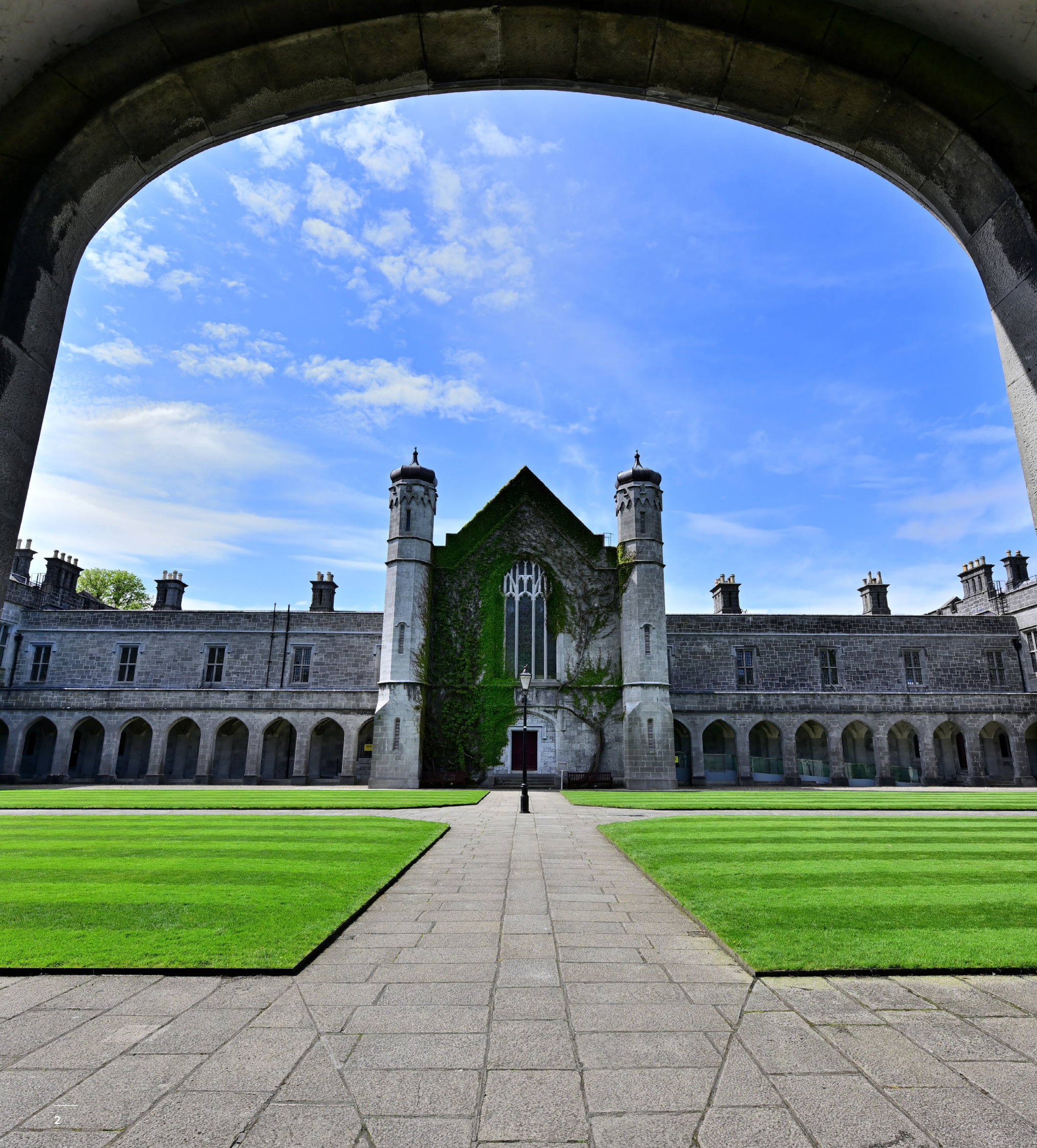
OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Sustainability Report

2025–2026

Leading the transition
to a sustainable future





Contents

Introduction	4
Sustainability Highlights (2025-2026)	6
Progress on the SDGs	10
SDG 1: End Poverty in all its forms everywhere	12
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	16
SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing	20
SDG 4: Quality Education	28
SDG 5: Gender Equality	32
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	38
SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	44
SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	48
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	54
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities	60
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	66
SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production	72
SDG13: Climate Action	78
SDG14: Life Below Water	84
SDG15: Life on Land	90
SDG16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	96
SDG17: Partnerships for the Goals	102



Reflecting on Progress, Looking Ahead

Welcome to the University of Galway Sustainability Report 2025–2026. As we mark the conclusion of the University's Sustainability Strategy 2021–2025, this report reflects a period of significant progress, where sustainability moved from strategy into action across education, research, operations and community engagement. The report presents some of our many activities and achievements aligned to each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. While it does not capture every initiative undertaken across the University, it presents a snapshot of initiatives from the reporting period May 2025 to April 2026. We extend our sincere thanks to all students, staff and community partners whose commitment and collective action have been central to this achievement.

This progress is reflected across how we learn, live and lead sustainability. During this period, the University launched its Strategic Plan 2025–2030, Of Galway, For the World, and agreed its third Sustainability Strategy 2026–2030, reinforcing sustainability as a core institutional priority. Significant advances were made in Education for Sustainable Development and sustainability-focused research, including the launch of the All-Ireland Peatlands Centre of Excellence, alongside continued progress in gender equality recognised through the Silver Athena Swan institutional award.

Across campus operations, the University achieved major reductions in emissions, with fossil fuel emissions reduced by 43.7% and energy efficiency improved by 52.9%, already exceeding the national 2030 target. Practical actions such as the elimination of single-use cups, the achievement of the NTA Smarter Travel Mark and the awarding of a third An Taisce Green Campus Flag reflect a strong commitment to creating a carbon-neutral, nature-positive and healthy campus.

The University also continues to demonstrate leadership at national and international level, retaining 1st place in Ireland in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, renewing its AASHE STARS Gold rating, and contributing to initiatives such as the Durham Declaration on Climate Change and Sustainability and the National SDG Ambassador Programme. Engagement initiatives including SDG Week, Climathon and the Community Climate Assembly highlight the importance of partnership and collective action, further reinforced through the celebration of 10 years of the Community and University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP).

Building on these strong foundations, we now look ahead to the next phase of our journey through the Sustainability Strategy 2026–2030, as we deepen our ambition to deliver a carbon-neutral, nature-positive and healthy university for the benefit of society and future generations.



University of Galway hosts
the ENLIGHT Sustainability
Staff Week 2026.

Credit: Aengus Mc Mahon



University of Galway

Sustainability Highlights (2025–2026)

LEADERSHIP

Strategic Plan

Launched *Of Galway, For the World* setting the University's roadmap to creating lasting positive impact for students, society and the world by 2030

No1

In Ireland

Ranked Ireland's leading university for sustainability in the *Times Higher Education Impact Rankings* for the fifth consecutive year.

3rd

Sustainability Strategy

Approved the University's third *Sustainability Strategy*, advancing a carbon-neutral, nature-positive and healthy university.

AASHE STARS

Renewed *Gold rating* for excellence in sustainability across teaching, research and operations.

NTA

Recognised nationally for *leadership* in sustainable and active travel.

RECOGNITION

3rd

Green Flag

Awarded *An Taisce Green Campus status* for the third time.

Athena Swan

Achieved the *Silver Athena Swan* Institutional Award for advancing gender equality.

IMPACT

52.3%

Emissions Reduction

Reduced fuel emissions by **43.7%** and energy efficiency improved by **52.9%** exceeding the national 2030 energy efficiency target.

Peatlands Centre

Launched the All-Ireland Peatlands Centre of Excellence for peatland research, restoration and climate action.

Declaration

Signed the Durham Declaration on Climate Change and Sustainability.

Single-use Cups

Eliminated single-use cups from campus catering, preventing hundreds of thousands of disposable cups annually.

Climate Action

Engaged staff, students and the wider community through SDG Week, Climathon and the Community Climate Assembly.

ENGAGEMENT

SDG Ambassador

Represented on the Government of Ireland's National SDG Ambassador Programme.

10 Years

CUSP

Celebrated a decade of the Community University Sustainability Partnership.

Progress on the SDGs



SDG 1

End Poverty in all its forms everywhere



University of Galway marks World Refugee Day with the opening of applications for its University of Sanctuary Scholarships. Pictured (back row, l-r): Sibusiso Vuyo Madzwila, Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland; Professor Peter McHugh, Interim President of University of Galway; Ali Mousa, Irish Council for Overseas Students scholar; Natalie Moran Ward, University of Sanctuary scholar; Aidan Harte, University of Sanctuary Officer; Dr Helen Maher, Vice-President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, University of Galway; and Leonard Snygans, University of Sanctuary scholar. Front row (l-r): Aoife Harte, UNHCR, and fourth-class pupils Paulie Whittington, Fiadh McEvoy, Chanel Mbeke and Noah Dam Cooney from Galway Educate Together National School. Credit: Aengus McMahon.

Key Facts

952

Students are supported through access and equity funding at University of Galway, including 153 recipients of the 1916 Bursary and 799 students supported through the Hear scheme and Access Fund.



University of Galway Students' Union donated €29,443 to charitable organisations in 2025.



Since 2019, University of Galway has supported 71 students from 24 countries through its Universities of Sanctuary scholarships, helping to remove barriers to higher education for those from refugee and migrant backgrounds.



99 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Universities of Sanctuary scholarships

The University of Galway offered 16 [Universities of Sanctuary Scholarships](#) for the academic year 25-26. Open to international protection applicants, refugees, Irish Travellers and vulnerable immigrant groups, the scholarships are available for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses across all four colleges. The scholarships include a full fee waiver, an annual stipend of €3,300, and ongoing support and academic mentoring. These scholarships form part of the university's University of Sanctuary designation which aims to broaden participation among under-represented groups and to challenge discrimination in education. Since 2019, the programme has supported 71 students from 24 countries, demonstrating sustained institutional commitment to widening participation. This initiative directly addresses financial and structural barriers to higher education, supporting students from vulnerable backgrounds to access and succeed in university, and contributing to long-term poverty reduction.

Free legal advice clinics

Law students at University of Galway contributed to SDG 1 by providing free legal information through academic programmes and student-led initiatives. Through academic and co-curricular learning, students supported individuals experiencing financial hardship by offering accessible and confidential legal information on issues including housing, employment rights and social welfare entitlements. This work is delivered through the [Disability Legal Information Clinic](#) and the student-run [Free Legal Advice Society](#). These clinics operate throughout the academic year and engage a wide number of service users, strengthening access to justice for vulnerable groups. Under the supervision of academic staff and legal practitioners, students develop practical legal skills while gaining a deeper understanding of the structural and legal dimensions of poverty and inequality. By strengthening access to justice and reducing barriers to essential legal information, this initiative enhanced student learning while contributing directly to poverty reduction, social inclusion, and rights protection in line with SDG 1.

UNI 4 U

Led by the Access Centre at University of Galway, [Uni4U](#) is an outreach initiative that supports progress towards SDG 1 by addressing educational disadvantage at an early stage. During the 2025-2026 reporting period, the programme engaged over 200 sixth-class pupils from five DEIS and Link primary schools across Galway City, including, Radharc na Mara, Scoil Bhríde, Scoil Chroí Íosa, Merlin Woods, and Mercy Primary School. Over six weeks, students visited the University campus weekly, taking part in interactive workshops delivered by university departments and partners, alongside sports and cultural activities. Each student was supported by a Uni4U mentor, helping to build confidence, aspiration, and a sense of belonging within a higher-education setting. Campus tours, shared activities, and lunch in the canteen provided experience of university life.



By building confidence and aspiration among under-represented communities, Uni4U helps to address educational disadvantage and reduce long-term poverty risk, supporting equitable access to higher education in line with SDG 1.

Research Spotlight

Social protection systems and poverty support

Researchers from the Center for International Development Innovation (CIDI), Ryan Institute and the School of Geography, Archaeology and Irish Studies published a [peer-reviewed article](#) in the *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy* that advances how social protection systems can better reach vulnerable populations, a core dimension of SDG 1. The research proposes a novel framework that integrates informal social protection systems (ISPs) such as community support networks, with formal welfare systems to better serve people in poverty. Their conceptual framework uses design thinking and community development principles to optimise interactions between different actors, emphasising empathy, equality, and social justice in policy design. This research highlights the importance of collaborative approaches that respect community knowledge and solidarity while strengthening formal safety nets, offering insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to close gaps in poverty support systems.

Newspaper framing of food poverty and public discourse

University of Galway academics have contributed to understanding how societal narratives shape responses to poverty. A [2025 study](#) looked at how news outlets across the island of Ireland report on food poverty and food insecurity. It found that while many articles acknowledge issues such as low incomes, limits in social welfare and rising living costs, the solutions suggested are often short-term or charitable rather than long-term policy change. This research is intricately linked to SDG 1, as the way poverty is discussed shapes public attitudes and political responses. By highlighting these patterns, the study helps inform more effective advocacy and communication that supports solutions tackling the root causes of poverty.

Community Engagement

Raise and Give week

Raise and Give Week (RAG Week) 2025 and 2026 provided a significant student-led contribution to addressing poverty and social inequality, in line with SDG 1. Organised by the Students' Union, RAG Week supported Galway Rape Crisis Centre and Galway Autism Partnership, with GOAL included as a beneficiary charity in 2026. The [2025 programme](#) featured a diverse range of student-led fundraising activities, including a 5 km RAG Run, fire walk, head shave events, charity auctions and social events, [raising €29,443 for charity](#). Building on this, [RAG Week 2026](#) continued to deliver a strong programme of fundraising and awareness-raising initiatives, including the RAG Run, a 24-hour radio-thon on Flirt FM, a fire walk and a series of charity events held across campus. This reflects a sustained culture of student-led fundraising and social responsibility, contributing directly to supporting individuals and communities experiencing vulnerability. Students also supported fundraising throughout the year through initiatives such as a Christmas raffle, quiz nights and the annual Take Me Out fundraiser.

Hygiene Hub

The University of Galway Students' Union continued its partnership with Hygiene Hub to address hygiene poverty, supporting SDG 1. A permanent [Hygiene Hub donation point](#) was maintained in the Students' Union offices, enabling students and staff to donate essential hygiene, personal care and household cleaning products. Donations were distributed through Hygiene Hub's community partners, including COPE Galway, Galway Simon Community, Galway Traveller Movement and St Vincent de Paul and the Students' Union collected nearly 200 kg of donations. Students' Union President Maisie Hall highlighted the importance of tackling hygiene poverty and supporting access to necessities. By mobilising the student community through donation drives and awareness campaigns, this initiative helped alleviate the immediate impacts of poverty while also raising awareness of hidden forms of deprivation such as hygiene poverty.



SDG 2

Zero Hunger

2 ZERO HUNGER

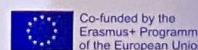


ENLIGHT

European University



www.enlight-eu.org



Adam Mullins, representing the SPÉIR SU Pantry project at Students' Union, University of Galway, receiving the ENLIGHT Sustainability Impact Award 2025

Key Facts



SPÉIR Students' Union Pantry redistributed surplus food to students, directly addressing food insecurity while reducing food waste, and won the ENLIGHT Sustainability Impact Award 2025.



Professor Charles Spillane, a University of Galway academic and internationally recognised plant scientist, has been appointed Chief Scientist of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.



Student-led organic garden and campus herb garden initiatives connect the campus community with sustainable food production.



248 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

SPÉIR Students' Union Pantry

During the 2025-2026 reporting period, University of Galway's SPÉIR Students' Union Pantry project provided a highly visible, practical SDG 2 intervention on campus, reducing food waste while improving access to food for students experiencing cost-of-living pressures.

The initiative was student-led and volunteer-powered, collecting surplus food and redistributing it to students in a way that prioritises dignity, inclusion, and accessibility. Operating on a weekly basis, the SPÉIR Students' Union Pantry redistributed significant volumes of surplus food to students, with almost €500,000 worth of food distributed in one year. Demand for the service was extremely high, with well over 100 students attending individual collection slots and hundreds of students each week unable to access the service due to limited supply, highlighting the scale of student food insecurity and the importance of this initiative. This initiative achieved a significant impact milestone, winning the top prize at the ENLIGHT Sustainability Awards 2025, strengthening the University's evidence base for recognised practice and peer-validated impact. This initiative demonstrated how surplus food redistribution can simultaneously address food insecurity and reduce waste, providing a practical, scalable model for more sustainable and equitable food systems in line with SDG 2.

Opening of new student focused organic garden

Launched in April 2025, the student Organic Garden provides a shared learning space for sustainable food production. The initiative supports ongoing student engagement across disciplines and contributes to experiential learning in sustainable food systems, biodiversity and climate awareness. Designed as an accessible outdoor learning environment, the garden supports students in developing practical skills in organic growing, composting and seasonal food production, while also fostering awareness of how food systems link to sustainability, wellbeing and community resilience. Open to students from all disciplines and levels of experience, the garden promotes peer learning, collaboration and hands-on engagement beyond the formal curriculum. By enabling students to actively participate in food production and understand the environmental and social dimensions of food systems, the Organic Garden strengthens food literacy and supports more sustainable and resilient approaches to food in line with SDG 2.

Research Spotlight

Climate targets, methane, and global hunger risk

University of Galway published research contributes directly to SDG 2 through a global hunger and food security lens. The University-led study examined Ireland's proposed climate targets and warned that elements of current policy risk "locking in global hunger" by prioritising protections for methane emission privileges that could constrain development pathways for poorer nations. This research is a strong SDG 2 example as it demonstrates that hunger and food insecurity are shaped not only by food production, but by climate policy choices, governance, and international equity. By linking climate mitigation strategies to their potential impacts on vulnerable populations, the study highlights how decisions taken in high-income countries can influence global food security and resilience. The findings provide important evidence for policymakers, supporting more equitable climate and food system policies that avoid unintended negative impacts on global hunger and development.

University of Galway academic appointed FAO Chief Scientist

Professor Charles Spillane, a University of Galway academic and internationally recognised plant scientist, was appointed Chief Scientist of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The appointment marked the first time an Irish scientist has held this senior leadership role since the FAO's establishment in 1945. As Chief Scientist, Professor Spillane joined the organisation's core leadership team, providing strategic scientific direction to support global efforts to address hunger, strengthen food security, and advance sustainable and climate-resilient agrifood systems. This appointment reflects the global impact of University of Galway research and its contribution to advancing SDG 2 through leadership in international food systems policy and science.

This initiative demonstrated how surplus food redistribution can simultaneously address food insecurity and reduce waste, providing a practical, scalable model for more sustainable and equitable food systems.

Community Engagement

Policy brief on food sharing initiatives

The 'Food Sharing Initiatives (FSIs): A Strategic Opportunity for Galway' (policy brief) produced by researchers at the Ryan Institute provides evidence-based insights into how community food sharing initiatives contribute to more inclusive and resilient local food systems. The brief identifies 58 food sharing initiatives across Galway, including community gardens, surplus food redistribution schemes, socially oriented farms, and collective civic cooking and eating initiatives. This provides a strong evidence base for local food system resilience and highlights the scale of community-led responses to food insecurity. Using a food system inclusion framework, the research examines how FSIs support access to food, participation, equity, empowerment, and community resilience across urban and rural contexts. The findings highlight that while these initiatives play a vital role in improving access to affordable food and strengthening social cohesion, they remain largely invisible within formal policy and planning frameworks. The brief provides a clear pathway for policy action, demonstrating how community-led food initiatives can be better supported to strengthen food security and reduce inequality at local level in line with SDG 2.

Food-systems engagement

University of Galway contributed to SDG 2 by communicating research on sustainable food systems and climate-resilient agriculture through an accessible feature published on Cois Coiribe. The article explores innovative methane mitigation strategies for ruminants, highlighting how scientific research can reduce agricultural emissions while supporting productive and resilient food systems. By translating complex research into clear, accessible language, the feature helps inform farmers, policymakers and the wider public about practical solutions for more sustainable food production. This demonstrates the University's commitment to sharing research beyond academia and supporting informed decision-making on the future of sustainable agri-food systems.



Professor Charles Spillane, Established Professor of Plant Science in the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences and the Ryan Institute at University of Galway, who has been appointed Chief Scientist of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



SDG 3

Good Health and Wellbeing



University of Galway President, Professor David Burn, with final-year medicine student Dearbhla Creaven and Isla, Eva, and Sadie from Claregalway National School, Co. Galway, enjoying a fun-filled day at the University of Galway's Teddy Bear Hospital. Credit: Aengus McMahon

Key Facts



University of Galway appointed the first Head of its new School of Pharmacy and Medical Sciences, and secured planning approval for a new state-of-the-art School of Medicine building, strengthening capacity for healthcare education and research.



University of Galway maintains the KeepWell Mark from IBEC, recognising sustained institutional commitment to workplace wellbeing across leadership, mental health and inclusive practice.



University of Galway awarded Gold Medals for Civic Engagement to medical graduates Dylan O'Halloran and Faith Ugiagbe, recognising their outstanding leadership in areas including global health, humanitarian advocacy, mentoring and community engagement.



3634 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Embedding student wellbeing in campus life

University of Galway continued to strengthen student wellbeing as a core part of the learning experience through a range of accessible and practical supports delivered during the 2025–2026 reporting period. A rolling programme of initiatives supports students to manage wellbeing alongside academic demands. These include Calm Zones and quiet study spaces during exam periods, Brew Break wellbeing coffee mornings, yoga sessions, and life skills workshops focused on mental health awareness and resilience. Students had access to targeted training such as safeTALK suicide alertness workshops, helping to build awareness, confidence and peer support capacity across the student body. These supports were reinforced through structured life skills programmes and Students' Union initiatives delivered during the 2025–2026 reporting period, including dedicated safeTALK training and Mental Health Week activities. Alongside these practical supports, the University strengthened student learning in health and wellbeing through flexible and accredited micro-credentials delivered during the 2025–2026 reporting period. These programmes support students and early career professionals to develop practical skills. A key example is the Mental Health Promotion micro credential, delivered at NFQ Level 9 through blended learning. This programme supports learners to understand and promote positive mental health, while also addressing areas such as sexual health and substance misuse prevention. In addition, students are supported through access to campus health and counselling services, alongside initiatives that promote physical wellbeing, including opportunities for active participation in sport and recreation. Together, these initiatives demonstrate a whole campus approach to wellbeing, supporting large numbers of students annually and ensuring that mental health, prevention and early intervention are embedded within the student experience in line with SDG 3.

Building student capacity in health and wellbeing

The Promoting Health in the Workplace micro credential supports students to apply wellbeing principles in real-world settings. It focuses on practical strategies that improve health in organisations, recognising the strong link between work environments and overall wellbeing. The Promoting Healthy Behaviours micro credential focusses on the areas of nutrition, physical activity, smoking, sexual health and substance use. These programmes strengthen health literacy and equip students with the knowledge and skills to promote healthier behaviours within communities and workplaces, extending the impact of SDG 3 beyond the campus environment.

Building the future healthcare workforce

University of Galway strengthened student learning and capacity in healthcare through the introduction of a new Master of Pharmacy programme, launched by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, James Lawless, T.D. With an initial intake of 45 students and planned growth to 75 places annually, the programme significantly increases capacity to train future healthcare professionals. The programme is a five-year integrated degree that combines scientific knowledge, clinical training and professional practice. Students gain early exposure to real-world healthcare settings through structured placements and experiential learning. Importantly, the programme responds directly to national healthcare workforce needs, improving access to pharmacy education in the West of Ireland and enabling more equitable access to healthcare careers. By expanding training capacity and strengthening clinical education pathways, the University is contributing to improved patient care and long-term health system resilience in line with SDG 3.

Supporting the next generation of diabetes researchers

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, scholarships including the Novo Nordisk Ireland award and the Menarini scholarship supported postgraduate students undertaking advanced research in diabetes care. These awards provide financial support and enable students to develop expertise in clinical research, data analytics and evidence-based healthcare. Delivered through collaboration with the Diabetes Collaborative Clinical Trials Network, students gain access to real-world research environments and interdisciplinary expertise. This investment in early career researchers strengthens capacity to address chronic disease, supporting improved prevention, diagnosis and management of diabetes and contributing to better long-term health outcomes.

Advancing health education infrastructure for better health outcomes

The recent granting of planning approval for a new School of Medicine building represents a significant investment in health education and research capacity. The facility will provide state-of-the-art teaching and research spaces designed to support modern, interdisciplinary medical education, when the building opens after the reporting period. The development responds to increasing demand for healthcare professionals and supports expansion of programmes such as MPharm and Graduate Entry Medicine. By enhancing training capacity, enabling innovative teaching and supporting collaboration with healthcare partners, this investment will contribute directly to improved health outcomes and stronger healthcare systems at regional and national level.

Research Spotlight

Advancing innovative and inclusive healthcare through EU-funded research

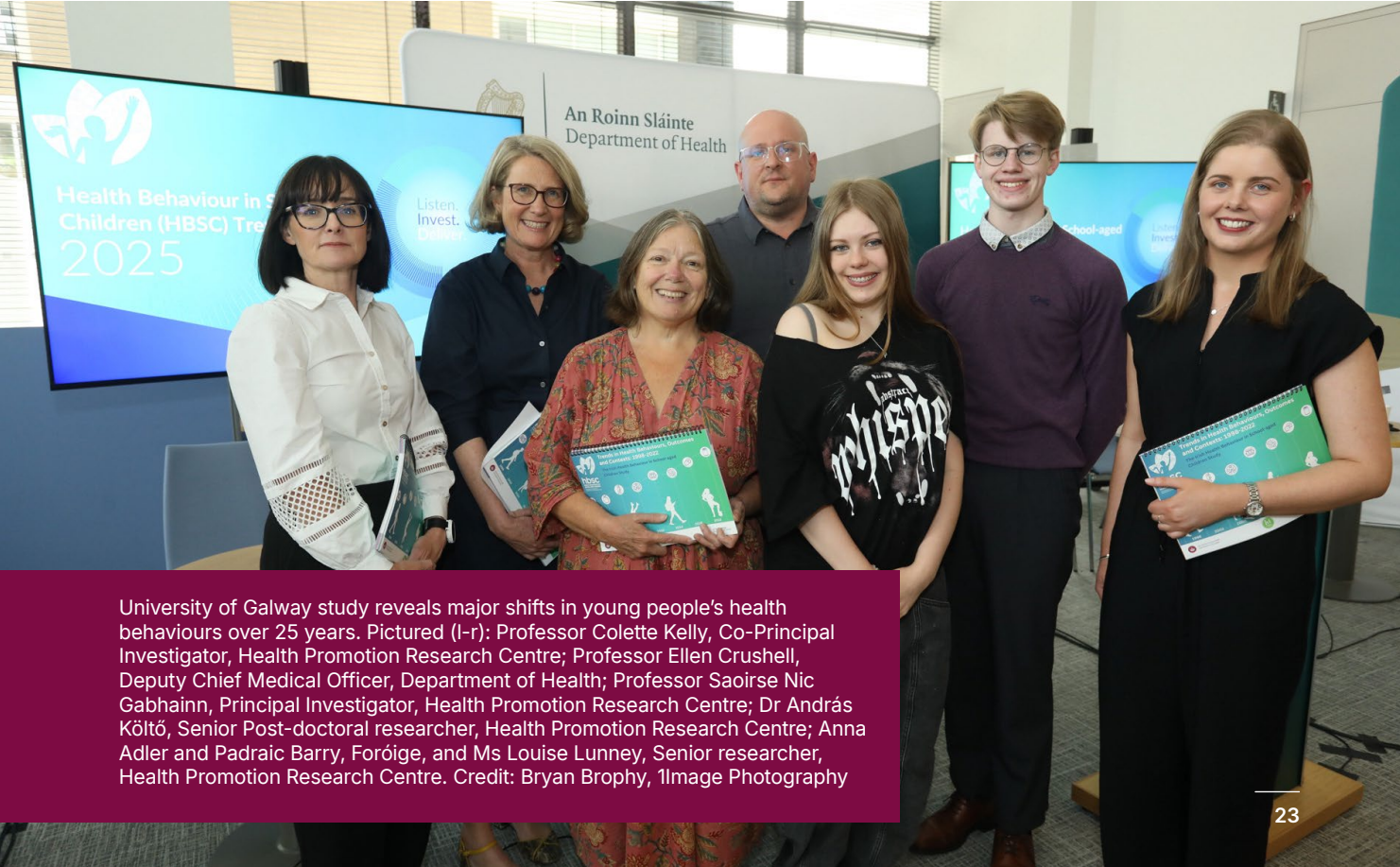
University of Galway is leading three major EU-funded projects supported by the European Commission under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Network. These projects focus on safer treatments, improved medical devices and more inclusive clinical trials. One project develops targeted drug delivery for brain diseases using advanced 3D models. A second focuses on stronger and longer-lasting materials for medical devices. A third addresses equity in clinical trials by improving inclusion of underrepresented groups. Together, these projects advance more effective, inclusive and ethical healthcare systems while training the next generation of researchers, demonstrating strong alignment with SDG 3 through improved patient outcomes and equitable access to care.

Advancing global health research through strategic international partnerships

University of Galway strengthened its global health research profile through new partnerships with Hebei Medical University and Xiangya School of Medicine, Central South University. These collaborations enhance research capacity in areas such as stem cell research and support the development of future healthcare researchers through joint PhD training and knowledge exchange. By combining international expertise, the partnerships contribute to advancing medical innovation and improving health outcomes globally in line with SDG 3.

Advancing health innovation through the ARC Hub for health tech

University of Galway strengthened its contribution to improving health and wellbeing through the launch of a new €34 million research led HealthTech hub, a major initiative focused on translating research into real-world healthcare solutions. Hosted by the University in partnership with Atlantic Technological University and RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences, the ARC Hub for HealthTech brings together researchers, clinicians, industry and enterprise to accelerate the development of patient-focused technologies. The hub focuses on addressing key health challenges, particularly in the area of chronic disease management, through the development of innovative solutions such as smart implants, advanced wearable devices, novel sensors and artificial intelligence-driven models. These technologies aim to improve patient outcomes by supporting earlier diagnosis, more effective monitoring and better management of long-term conditions. By accelerating the translation of research into practice, the hub strengthens patient care, supports earlier diagnosis and improves long-term disease management.



University of Galway study reveals major shifts in young people's health behaviours over 25 years. Pictured (l-r): Professor Colette Kelly, Co-Principal Investigator, Health Promotion Research Centre; Professor Ellen Crushell, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health; Professor Saoirse Nic Gabhainn, Principal Investigator, Health Promotion Research Centre; Dr András Költő, Senior Post-doctoral researcher, Health Promotion Research Centre; Anna Adler and Pádraic Barry, Foróige, and Ms Louise Lunney, Senior researcher, Health Promotion Research Centre. Credit: Bryan Brophy, 1Image Photography

Community Engagement

Tracking long-term trends in young people's health behaviours

University of Galway is strengthening community engagement in health through its leadership of the Health Behaviour in School Aged Children study, with [new findings highlighted in 2025](#). This long-standing study is carried out on a repeated basis, allowing researchers to track changes over time and build comprehensive evidence-based on the health and wellbeing of children and adolescents in Ireland. Coordinated nationally by University of Galway, the research involves ongoing collaboration with schools, students and policymakers. The latest findings, drawn from the [Health Behaviour in School Aged Children Trends Report 1998 to 2022](#), highlight both progress and ongoing challenges. There have been notable reductions in smoking and alcohol use among young people. However, the research also points to increasing concerns around mental health, particularly among girls, alongside declining physical activity levels and increased screen time. The findings also highlight inequalities in health linked to social and economic factors. By informing national policy and public health strategies, this work supports targeted interventions and contributes directly to improved population health outcomes in line with SDG 3.

SDG 3

Advancing health research and innovation for improved patient outcomes.

Advancing cancer care and patient outcomes through research partnerships

[Research led by University of Galway](#) in partnership with National Breast Cancer Research Institute (NBCRI) makes a significant contribution to improving health outcomes through innovative, patient-focused research. The collaboration includes a €700,000 investment from NBCRI, matched by national research funding under Precision Oncology Ireland, supporting the development of next-generation cancer care and strengthening national research capacity. The programme focuses on advancing personalised approaches to breast cancer treatment. Key areas include the development of RNA-based therapies for advanced disease, the identification of biomarkers to better predict patient response to treatment, and research into factors affecting patient wellbeing during chemotherapy, including treatment toxicity, anxiety and the role of exercise. These approaches aim to ensure patients receive more targeted, effective care while minimising unnecessary side effects. The partnership brings together academic researchers, clinicians and wider collaborators, linking laboratory-based discovery with real-world clinical application. This work supports more targeted and effective treatment pathways and contributes to more personalised and equitable healthcare systems.

Advancing health research and innovation for improved patient outcomes

In a single month, University of Galway shared three significant examples of SDG 3-related research, highlighting the breadth and impact of its health research activity. A world-first [breakthrough in bowel cancer immunotherapy](#) identified how tumours suppress the immune system and demonstrated how this process can be reversed, opening new pathways for more effective treatments. In parallel, an [international study](#) led by the University found that early menopause is associated with an increased risk of dementia, while hormone replacement therapy may reduce this risk. The findings provide important insights into women's health and support earlier, more personalised interventions to improve long-term outcomes. Further demonstrating impact, a [consortium led by a University spin-out](#) secured €2.1 million to develop an innovative wearable technology for stroke rehabilitation. The device will support home-based recovery and provide clinicians with real-time patient data, improving patient monitoring and quality of life. These examples demonstrate a strong pipeline from research discovery to real-world healthcare application, highlighting the University's contribution to disease prevention, treatment innovation and improved quality of life.

Co-producing health research with communities

University of Galway strengthened community engagement in health through its leadership in Public and Patient Involvement (PPI), highlighted by the [2025 National PPI Festival](#) and the [PPI Ignite Network](#). The festival brought together researchers, patients, community organisations and the public to promote research that is carried out with and for society. A key area of focus of the 2025 festival was the social health of people living with young onset dementia, exploring lived experiences and identifying ways to support inclusion, connection and quality of life. This work reflects a growing emphasis on understanding health beyond clinical outcomes, recognising the importance of social wellbeing and participation. By embedding participation and inclusion, the University supports more equitable and people centred healthcare systems.

Health professional taster day inspiring future healthcare pathways

University of Galway's [Health Professional Taster Day](#) is a structured outreach initiative that supports improved health and wellbeing through education, awareness and future workforce development. The event provides Transition Year students with an engaging introduction to careers in healthcare. Students participate in interactive sessions that demonstrate how healthcare professionals work together to deliver safe and patient centred care, helping to build early understanding of health systems and roles. The initiative places a strong emphasis on inclusion and access. Schools are invited through an allocation approach that supports participation from a wide range of backgrounds, including students who may not traditionally consider pathways into healthcare. This contributes to broadening access to health education and supports the development of a more diverse and representative healthcare workforce, which is an important factor in achieving equitable health outcomes. By opening campus spaces and learning environments to young people, the University strengthens community connection and promotes health literacy from an early age. The programme encourages informed career choices while also building confidence and aspiration among participants. Through sustained delivery during the 2025–2026 reporting period, the Health Professional Taster Day demonstrates a clear commitment to advancing health, wellbeing and inclusive engagement in line with SDG 3.

Teddy Bear Hospital initiative promoting early health awareness

University of Galway marked 21 years of its student-led [Teddy Bear Hospital initiative](#), a flagship community engagement event that promotes health awareness and wellbeing among young children. Organised by the Sláinte Society, the 2026 event welcomed more than 1200 primary school pupils to campus, each bringing a teddy bear for diagnosis and treatment in a simulated healthcare environment. This represents large scale community engagement and early health education. Around 200 student volunteers from medicine, healthcare and science disciplines acted as “teddy doctors”, guiding children through consultations, x rays and treatment pathways in a fun and supportive setting. The initiative plays a meaningful role in reducing fear and anxiety associated with healthcare settings by familiarising children with medical environments through play-based learning. By creating a positive and accessible introduction to hospitals and healthcare professionals, the programme supports early health literacy and encourages positive attitudes towards seeking care. This long running outreach initiative also provides valuable experiential learning for students, strengthening communication skills and fostering a strong sense of civic responsibility.

Advancing clinical trials through collaboration and innovation

University of Galway strengthened its global health research through the success of its Institute for Clinical Trials, which received the [2025 Collaboration in Medtech Award](#) at the Irish Medtech Awards. The award recognises the Institute's leadership in advancing early-stage medical technology through strong clinical partnerships and innovative approaches to trial delivery. A key driver of this success is the Hypercare initiative. This national pilot programme supports companies in navigating complex clinical trial approval processes, from ethics and regulatory submissions to patient enrolment. By providing structured guidance and clinical expertise, the initiative enables faster and more efficient progression of new medical technologies from development to real-world application. Through initiatives such as Hypercare, the Institute improves clinical trial delivery and supports patient access to innovative treatments.





SDG 4 Quality Education

4
QUALITY
EDUCATION



President Michael D. Higgins unveils a portrait by Colin Davidson at a special event to mark his donation of his Presidential Archive to University of Galway.

Key Facts

NO 1

University of Galway was ranked number 1 in Ireland for sustainable development for the fifth consecutive year and placed among the top universities in Europe in the 2025 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings.



Students can earn a Sustainability Champion Digital Badge, through the University Skills Passport, recognising verified engagement in sustainability leadership, action and reflection.



Former President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins donated his presidential archive and personal book collection to University of Galway.



317 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Transforming education through philanthropy and learning infrastructure

A [significant philanthropic gift](#) announced during the 2025–2026 reporting period to support the new Library and Learning Commons at University of Galway represents a transformative investment in inclusive and accessible learning infrastructure. The donation, made by alumni Irial and Deirdre Finan, will support the development of a landmark facility designed to enhance access to knowledge, preserve cultural collections and create a dynamic environment for learning and discovery. In recognition of their contribution, the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room within the building will bear the Finan name. The Library and Learning Commons will provide modern, flexible and technology-enabled spaces that support a wide range of learning approaches. Planned facilities include individual and group study areas, digital learning environments and a Learning Success Hub, enabling students to engage in independent study, collaboration and skills development. The design places a strong emphasis on accessibility and inclusion, ensuring that all learners can benefit from high quality resources and support. This development strengthens the University's capacity to deliver student centred, research informed education in a rapidly evolving landscape and aligns with SDG 4 by advancing inclusive and equitable quality education.

Embedding sustainability across the curriculum through teaching excellence

University of Galway is strengthening the quality and relevance of education through the work of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching ([CELT](#)), which plays a central role in embedding sustainability across teaching and learning. During the 2025–2026 reporting period, CELT advanced Education for Sustainable Development through its dedicated module, *Embedding Sustainability in the Curriculum*, delivered as both a micro-credential and within accredited programmes such as the PgCert, Diploma and MA in Academic Practice. This initiative supports academic staff across all disciplines to integrate sustainability principles, competencies and pedagogical approaches into their teaching, with practical examples including redesigning modules to incorporate climate literacy, ethical decision making and systems thinking. Delivered through workshops, applied learning and interdisciplinary collaboration, the module enables staff to translate sustainability into discipline specific contexts, from healthcare and business to engineering and the arts. Participation across multiple colleges, supported by collaboration with the Sustainability Office, Students' Union and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Office, ensures a whole-institution approach. An emerging community of practice and ongoing CELT seminar series further support innovation and shared learning. This work is building educator capacity at scale and ensuring that students graduate with the knowledge, skills and values needed to contribute to a sustainable future, aligning strongly with SDG 4.

Launch of cybersecurity education programme

University of Galway strengthened inclusive and future focused education through a [new Cybersecurity for Managers executive education programme](#). Launched by Minister Lawless, the programme was developed with EY. It is designed to support professionals without a technical background and equips them with essential skills to navigate an increasingly complex digital environment. Participants gain practical knowledge in areas such as cyber risk, governance and data protection. This initiative highlights the value of collaboration between higher education and industry, supporting lifelong learning and workforce readiness in a rapidly evolving digital economy.

Teacher education partnership strengthening regional access and quality

The [renewal of the teacher education partnership](#) during the 2025–2026 reporting period between University of Galway and Atlantic Technological University represents a significant contribution to advancing high quality and inclusive education. Formalised through a new Memorandum of Understanding, the partnership reaffirms both institutions' commitment to the Western Institute of Studies in Education as a Centre of Excellence for Initial Teacher Education in the West and North West of Ireland. Through this collaboration, the universities jointly support the development and delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education programmes, including Bachelor of Education and Professional Master of Education degrees, collectively serving approximately 1,200 students. The partnership builds on a long-standing relationship and enables a coordinated approach to curriculum development, research and educational innovation, ensuring that teacher education remains responsive to evolving societal and regional needs. Aligned with national and European priorities to address regional inequalities, the initiative strengthens access to teacher education and supports the development of a highly skilled workforce. By enhancing both access and quality, this partnership contributes to more equitable education systems and aligns strongly with SDG 4.

ALTITUDE Charter embedding inclusive education through universal design

University of Galway strengthened its commitment to inclusive and equitable education through the [adoption of the ALTITUDE Charter](#), a national framework designed to embed universal design across tertiary education. This initiative promotes a systemic approach to inclusion by ensuring that learning, teaching, assessment and campus environments are accessible to all students, regardless of background or ability. By adopting the Charter, the University is building on its existing Universal Design and Accessibility Policy, placing student voice and lived experience at the centre of efforts to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. The Charter encourages institutions to integrate inclusive practices across all aspects of university life, including physical and digital environments, student supports and academic delivery, ensuring that barriers to participation are reduced at source rather than addressed retrospectively. By embedding universal design as a core principle, the University is reducing barriers to participation and enhancing the quality and inclusivity of education for all learners, aligning strongly with SDG 4.

Expanding access to education through scholarships and student support

University of Galway is strengthening access to inclusive and high-quality education through a diverse range of scholarships and bursaries that support students from a wide variety of backgrounds and pathways into higher education. During the 2025–2026 reporting period, several targeted scholarships have been awarded across disciplines, reflecting a strong commitment to equity, talent development and student success. These include industry-partnered scholarships such as those developed with [Davy](#), which support students in finance and provide hands-on-learning through the Student Managed Fund, as well as the [Novo Nordisk Ireland scholarship](#), which supports postgraduate research in diabetes and advances clinical education. Additional awards such as the [Maeve Creaven scholarship](#) in engineering and digital health further demonstrate a focus on supporting students in priority and emerging fields. Alongside these, [GAA bursaries](#) play an important role in supporting student athletes, enabling them to balance academic study with sporting commitments while reducing financial pressures. These supports remove financial barriers, provide mentorship and enable participation in higher education, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable learning environment in line with SDG 4.

Research Spotlight

Advancing inclusive education through empathy and social learning research

University of Galway is advancing SDG 4 through research in empathy-based education. Researchers at the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, in collaboration with the School of Education and Foróige, expanded the [Activating Social Empathy programme into Transition Year classrooms](#) nationwide. This initiative is grounded in longitudinal research on social and emotional learning and provides an evidence-based framework for teaching empathy, inclusion and social awareness. The programme includes structured lesson plans, real-world case studies and evaluation tools that support both teaching delivery and research impact. It has been endorsed by national education bodies including the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, reflecting its alignment with curriculum reform and student wellbeing priorities. Ongoing research is examining how participation influences student attitudes, communication skills and capacity for civic engagement. By translating research into classroom practice and evaluating its impact, this work contributes to more inclusive and values-based education systems.

Advancing digital education through artificial intelligence and coding skills

A [pilot initiative](#) launched by University of Galway is making an important contribution to SDG 4 by enhancing access to high-quality, future-focused education in primary schools. Led by the University's School of Education and supported by Google.org, the programme began at Trinity Primary School in Tuam, Co. Galway, with plans to expand to up to 80 schools and reach approximately 2,000 pupils over two years. The initiative focuses on equipping both students and teachers with foundational skills in coding and artificial intelligence (AI), addressing a recognised gap in computing education at primary level. Pupils engage in practical, creative learning activities such as programming robots and using AI tools, while teachers receive targeted training and resources to integrate these skills across the curriculum. Importantly, the programme has a strong inclusion focus, working with DEIS and rural schools to ensure equitable access to digital learning opportunities. By supporting teacher capacity and embedding digital skills in everyday learning, the initiative promotes long-term educational impact and helps prepare students for an increasingly technology-driven society. The initiative is being evaluated to assess impact on student learning and teacher capacity. This work demonstrates the University of Galway's commitment to SDG 4 by advancing inclusive, equitable and quality education, strengthening digital literacy, and building capacity among both learners and educators for the future.



Community Engagement

Strengthening education through participatory research and public engagement

University of Galway is advancing education through research that integrates Public and Patient Involvement, ensuring that learning is informed by lived experience. The University hosted a [national PPI Festival](#) which highlighted how participatory research approaches enhance both research and education, particularly in health and social care disciplines. Researchers collaborate with patients, community organisations and service users to co design research and inform curriculum development. This ensures that teaching reflects real-world challenges and diverse perspectives, improving the relevance and impact of education. The festival showcased multiple projects where co-produced research has influenced teaching content, assessment design and student learning experiences. By ensuring that learning is informed by lived experience, this approach improves the relevance and inclusivity of education and strengthens connections between universities and society.

The Curlew Awards for Excellence in Education for Sustainable Development

The [Curlew Awards](#) for Excellence in Education for Sustainable Development recognise and celebrate higher education staff who demonstrate outstanding commitment to embedding sustainability in teaching and learning. Delivered through a partnership between the Mary Robinson Centre, Atlantic Technological University, and the University of Galway, the awards highlight educators who inspire students, enrich curricula, and foster global responsibility. Recipients receive seed funding to advance their practice and are honoured at the Mary Robinson Climate and Nature Conference. The initiative aims to build a community of educators driving transformative, sustainability-focused education and contributing to climate justice through impactful learning.

Youth Academy programme

University of Galway's Youth Academy is a flagship outreach initiative that continues to strengthen inclusive and high-quality education by introducing young learners to university level learning from an early age. During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the [programme expanded](#) its offering through a new suite of innovative courses, with more than twenty immersive subjects including science, engineering, coding, languages and the arts, designed to spark curiosity and support academic development beyond the school curriculum. Delivered by university lecturers and researchers, the courses provide hands on, interactive learning experiences that allow students to explore new disciplines while building confidence and aspiration. The programme has engaged over 8000 young people and their families, demonstrating strong and sustained regional impact. By providing early access to higher education experiences and supporting participation through scholarships, the initiative contributes to lifelong learning and widening access in line with SDG 4.

University of Galway was announced as the lead academic partner of the Galway Science & Technology Festival. Pictured (l-r): Professor Walter Gear, Professor Mark Healy and Dr Ann Ryan, University of Galway; Paul Mee, Galway Science & Technology Festival; Professor Peter McHugh, Interim President, University of Galway; and Anne Murray, Galway Science & Technology Festival. Front row (l-r): Éabha Kelly and Emily O'Sullivan, Scoil Fhursa, Galway, and Liam Knight, Naionra Iognáid, Galway.

Strategy on widening participation advancing equitable access to higher education

University of Galway strengthened its commitment to inclusive and equitable education with the [launch](#) of its Widening Participation Strategy 2025 to 2028, marking a significant step in ensuring that higher education is accessible to all learners regardless of background. The strategy sets out a clear whole of institution approach to increasing participation among underrepresented socio-economic and minority groups, aligning closely with national policy priorities and the National Access Plan. It focuses on removing barriers to entry and success in higher education while fostering a diverse and representative student body that reflects wider society. Central to the strategy is strengthened engagement with schools, further education providers, community organisations and employers, supporting long-term change in perceptions and access pathways into higher education. The initiative also emphasises collaboration across the University and the development of evidence-based approaches through research and data collection on participation and outcomes. Building on the work of the Access Centre, which has supported thousands of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, the strategy reinforces targeted supports and a strong culture of belonging across campus. By addressing barriers and supporting equitable pathways into higher education, the University is contributing to systemic change in access to education.



placing student voice and lived experience at the centre of efforts to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Public engagement through open days, research, and best practices

Open Days held in [2025](#) and [2026](#) provide large-scale opportunities for prospective students, families and the public to engage with teaching, research and campus life. The Open Days [include](#) taster lectures, lab demonstrations and interactive exhibitions, where attendees gain insights into a wide range of disciplines including sustainability, climate science and health. These events demystify higher education, support informed decision making and promote lifelong learning by making university knowledge accessible to diverse audiences. University of Galway plays a leading role in [the Galway Science and Technology Festival](#) as [lead academic partner](#), hosting interactive exhibitions, workshops and live demonstrations on campus. The festival brings together researchers, students and industry to engage thousands of school students and members of the public in hands-on science experiences, helping to make complex research accessible and inspiring interest in science, health and innovation. Its annual [Engineering Our Future Family Fun Day](#), as part of Engineers Week, offers interactive activities, demonstrations and workshops that engage families and young people with engineering and sustainability in a fun and accessible way. The initiative opens the campus to families, children and the wider community for a free day of learning and discovery, designed to make engineering engaging, relevant and accessible to all ages. The campus itself is used as a living lab where researchers and staff demonstrate sustainability initiatives such as [energy efficiency](#), [biodiversity projects](#) and [sustainable transport solutions](#). Public tours and [trails](#) allow visitors to see applied research in action and understand how theory translates into practice. Researchers from the Ryan Institute regularly deliver public [events](#) and demonstrations linked to climate, marine and environmental research.

ReelLIFE SCIENCE programme

University of Galway's ReelLIFE SCIENCE programme demonstrates strong community engagement in support of SDG 4 by connecting schools, youth groups and the wider public with science through creative learning. [Celebrated at the 2025 awards](#), the initiative engaged more than 1,800 young people from 86 schools and youth organisations across Ireland, who produced over 200 short science films on topics ranging from artificial intelligence to marine science. Delivered as part of Science Week 2025 and the Galway Science and Technology Festival, the programme encourages participants to explore scientific concepts while developing communication, creativity and digital skills. By inviting young people to create content for public audiences, ReelLIFE SCIENCE makes science accessible beyond the classroom and fosters early interest in STEM among diverse communities. The initiative also strengthens collaboration between the University, educators and community organisations, highlighting the role of higher education in supporting lifelong learning and widening participation in science across society.



SDG 5 Gender Equality



Staff and students gather in the Quadrangle at University of Galway to celebrate the Athena Swan successes including the Silver accreditation and the five Schools which received Silver and Bronze awards. Credit: Mike Shaughnessy.

Key Facts



University of Galway achieved a Silver Athena Swan institutional award marking significant, sustained progress in gender equality.



A total of 14 Schools hold Athena Swan awards, demonstrating a strong, university-wide commitment to embedding gender equality through structured action plans.



University of Galway has significantly increased female representation in senior academic leadership, 47% of Senior Lecturers are women (up from 31% in 2017); 30% of Professors are women (up from 13% in 2017) and 50% of Deans are women (up from 14% in 2017).



196 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

CreateHER programme expanding opportunities for women entrepreneurs

During the 2025–2026 reporting year, University of Galway continued to advance gender equality in innovation and entrepreneurship through the expansion of the CreateHER programme, developed through the University's IdeasLab. The programme addresses the underrepresentation of women in entrepreneurship and leadership within start-up ecosystems by supporting female students to develop the skills, confidence and networks required to bring innovative ideas to market. CreateHER provides a structured environment where female students from across disciplines explore entrepreneurship through mentorship, innovation workshops and networking opportunities. Participants engage with experienced female founders, industry leaders and enterprise experts, gaining practical insights into developing business ideas, accessing funding and navigating innovation pathways. Through this approach, students build entrepreneurial capability and confidence to pursue leadership roles in emerging sectors. The programme achieved national recognition through €420,400 in funding from the Higher Education Authority, supporting its expansion across Ireland. By strengthening networks, increasing visibility and creating supportive pathways for women innovators, CreateHER contributes to SDG 5 by addressing structural barriers to women's participation in entrepreneurship and leadership.



Active* Consent programme strengthening campus safety and equality

The Active*Consent programme at the University of Galway is a nationally recognised consent education initiative that promotes respectful relationships, sexual health and the prevention of sexual violence through workshops, research and awareness campaigns for students and staff. It provides evidence-based training, including orientation workshops and online learning, to build consent literacy and equip students with the knowledge and skills to understand consent, communicate clearly and intervene safely in situations involving harassment or sexual violence. During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the programme delivered a wide range of consent education and awareness initiatives across campus. These included orientation-related activities for incoming students, campus engagement events, and digital awareness campaigns encouraging discussion around consent, bystander intervention and respectful relationships. Student engagement is further strengthened through the Active* Champions initiative, a network of student peer educators who lead initiatives on preventing sexual violence and harassment, promoting consent, supporting sexual health and wellbeing, and developing active bystander skills, see 25-26 Active*Champions here. In October 2025, the programme launched the national Start Here campaign, designed to equip young people with the knowledge and confidence to respond appropriately when a friend discloses sexual violence or harassment. Developed in partnership with Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn (AMLE), Galway Rape Crisis Centre and Education and Training Boards Ireland, the campaign highlighted research showing that many students first disclose experiences of sexual misconduct to friends, underscoring the importance of peer support and awareness. The initiative forms part of the University's wider commitment to preventing sexual violence and harassment in higher education. University of Galway's leadership in this area has received national recognition, and Higher Education Authority performance funding, supporting the development and dissemination of consent education across the sector. Through continued collaboration with partner institutions, the programme contributes to national progress on gender equality and safer learning environments in line with SDG 5.

National campaign for #16 Days of Activism. Pictured (l-r): Niamh Kavanagh, Sexual Violence and Harassment Programme Manager and Rebecca Connolly, Sexual Violence and Harassment Programme Coordinator, University of Galway. Credit: Aengus McMahon

Research Spotlight

Gender-based online abuse research influencing national policy debate

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, researchers at University of Galway's Centre for Global Women's Studies examined emerging forms of digitally enabled gender-based abuse. A Research Ireland-funded two-year project is investigating the experiences of female academics in Ireland, addressing a significant gap in national research. While international studies show that women in public-facing roles are particularly vulnerable to online harassment, and Irish research has highlighted similar patterns among politicians and journalists, the experiences of women academics have received limited attention. This project represents the first comprehensive study of gender-based online abuse affecting women in academia in Ireland. The research explores how activities such as public engagement, research dissemination and social media use can expose women scholars to targeted harassment and reputational attacks. It also examines how structural inequalities in higher education, including underrepresentation in senior roles and precarious employment, may intensify these risks. By generating evidence-based insights and policy recommendations, the project supports the development of safer digital environments and more effective institutional responses. Through this work, University of Galway contributes to SDG 5 by addressing emerging forms of gender-based violence and informing national policy debate.

Impactful research examining women's experiences in the workplace

University of Galway is advancing gender equality through impactful research examining women's experiences in the workplace, with a particular focus on menopause and organisational culture. A 2025 study shows male managers ill-equipped to support women in menopause in the workplace and highlights critical gaps in awareness and support among male colleagues and managers. Conducted in partnership with University College Cork, the research surveyed more than 1,600 employees across public sector organisations in Ireland. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of male managers feel ill-equipped to support women experiencing menopause, with many lacking knowledge, confidence, and awareness on the issue. The study also found that workplace structures and cultures often fail to create safe environments for open discussion, with very few women feeling comfortable raising menopause-related concerns with managers. Importantly, the research identifies menopause as not only a health issue but a broader organisational and gender equality issue, impacting employee wellbeing, retention, and career progression. Recommendations include targeted training for managers, improved workplace policies, and embedding menopause within wider wellbeing and equality frameworks. This research contributes to SDG 5 by addressing systemic gender inequalities in the workplace, promoting inclusive leadership, and supporting the retention and progression of women across all stages of their careers.

Research on migrant women and gender-based violence

Research impact continued during the 2025–2026 reporting period through publications and knowledge exchange emerging from the Gender-based Violence and Migration in Ireland (GBV-MIG Ireland) project at University of Galway. The research examines how migrant women experience and respond to gender-based violence, with a focus on the structural barriers they face when seeking protection, support services and justice in Ireland. Conducted as part of a wider international study, the project draws on interviews with migrant women, policy analysis and engagement with advocacy organisations to explore how factors such as immigration status, access to services and social exclusion can increase vulnerability to violence. The research brings together academics, community organisations and migrant women's groups to highlight lived experiences that are often overlooked in national policy discussions. Recent outputs, including publications and storytelling initiatives developed with partner organisations, continue to contribute to public dialogue and policy development on violence against migrant women. By examining the intersection of gender inequality, migration status and access to rights, this work supports more inclusive policy responses and improved support systems. This research aligns strongly with SDG 5 by addressing violence against women and contributing to more equitable and responsive support frameworks.

Biolnnovate highlights importance of women-led, needs-driven innovation

University of Galway's Biolnnovate programme highlights the importance of women led, needs driven innovation in healthcare through an initiative focused on advancing gender equality in research and innovation. The programme, which brings together clinicians, engineers and entrepreneurs, emphasises identifying unmet clinical needs and translating them into impactful healthcare solutions. A key focus is addressing the underrepresentation of women in innovation leadership and the historic gap in research and development relating to women's health. By supporting and showcasing women innovators, the initiative promotes more inclusive research processes and ensures that health technologies better reflect the needs of diverse populations. Biolnnovate's approach highlights how inclusive innovation can lead to more effective and equitable healthcare outcomes, particularly in areas that have traditionally been overlooked. Through training, mentorship and visibility, the programme supports the development of female leaders in health innovation while contributing to a broader culture of equality within the research ecosystem. This work demonstrates how University of Galway is embedding gender equality within its research activity, while also driving innovation that responds to societal and healthcare challenges.



Advancing inclusive health research through sex and gender equity

University of Galway is advancing health research through a major international study that is reshaping [how sex and gender are considered in medical science](#). Led by researchers at the University's Centre for Pain Research, the PAINDIFF network brings together 32 experts from 22 institutions across eight countries to address long-standing gaps in how sex and gender are included in study design, data analysis and reporting. The research responds to growing evidence that males and females can experience diseases differently and may respond differently to treatments. Historically, medical research often did not account for these differences, which has limited the accuracy and effectiveness of findings. The PAINDIFF team has developed a clear roadmap with 13 recommendations to guide researchers, funders and policymakers in improving how sex and gender are integrated across all stages of research. These recommendations include ensuring balanced participation, analysing data by sex, and more accurately capturing gender identity in clinical studies. The aim is to improve the quality, consistency and real-world relevance of medical research outcomes. This work demonstrates University of Galway's leadership in advancing inclusive and evidence-based health research. aligned with SDG 5 through advancing sex and gender equity in research.

Community Engagement

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign

University of Galway participated in the international [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign](#), joining 15 higher-education institutions across Ireland in a coordinated national initiative to raise awareness of violence against women and girls. The campaign ran from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day) and forms part of a global movement supported by the United Nations to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence. The campaign highlighted the growing issue of digital violence against women and girls, emphasising the importance of online safety and respect in achieving gender equality. Through awareness activities, communications and engagement across campus, the University encouraged students and staff to participate in dialogue and collective action to address gender-based violence. University leadership reaffirmed the institution's commitment to fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive environment, building on ongoing work through its Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention and Response programme. Participation in the campaign demonstrates how the University connects local action with global advocacy to challenge violence against women and promote a culture of dignity and accountability. This initiative contributes directly to SDG 5 by promoting awareness, prevention and solidarity with survivors.

Women in STEM outreach inspiring the next generation

University of Galway also continued to promote gender equality in science and technology through its [Women in STEM](#) outreach initiatives during the 2025–2026 reporting period. The programme works with schools and community partners to encourage girls and young women to consider careers in science, engineering, technology and mathematics. Outreach activities include school visits, mentoring programmes, events highlighting female role models in STEM and opportunities for students to engage with researchers and industry professionals. Institutional supports include targeted scholarships such as the [Maeve Creaven Memorial Scholarship](#) for female engineering students. In parallel, student-led initiatives such as the [WiSTEM Society](#) provide mentoring, networking and industry engagement opportunities for women studying STEM disciplines. The University's wider commitment to gender equality in science is also reflected in the continued implementation of [Athena Swan initiatives](#) across STEM schools and research institutes. The work of female researchers at the University gained national recognition when Dr Tanya Mulcahy, Director of Health Innovation Hub Ireland, was [shortlisted for the Business Post's Women in STEM Awards](#). By encouraging girls and young women to pursue STEM pathways, University of Galway is helping to build a more inclusive future workforce and innovation ecosystem.

Building safer communities through sexual violence awareness and peer support

University of Galway is strengthening community engagement for gender equality through national initiatives that address sexual violence awareness, prevention, and peer support. The [National campaign](#) launched to help young people support friends who [disclose sexual violence](#) demonstrates how the University is working collaboratively with partners to create safer and more informed communities. Led by the University's Active* Consent programme in partnership with Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn, Galway Rape Crisis Centre and Education and Training Boards Ireland, the 'Start Here' campaign engages directly with young people across Ireland through accessible, practical resources. These include guidance on how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence, signposting to support services, and a dedicated eLearning module designed for use in educational and community settings. The campaign recognises the vital role of peer networks, as many individuals first disclose experiences of sexual violence to friends rather than formal services. This work is complemented by the University's institutional response framework, including the [Speak Out](#) anonymous reporting tool and a [trained network of First Points of Contact](#) who provide confidential, first line support and guidance to students and staff. These structures ensure that awareness raising initiatives are supported by clear, accessible pathways to reporting and support. By strengthening peer support, promoting awareness and embedding accessible reporting and support systems, the initiative contributes to safer communities and supports efforts to address gender-based violence in line with SDG 5.

Gráinne Kelehan, Education and Training Manager with Galway Rape Crisis Centre, Professor Pádraig MacNeela, Head of University of Galway's School of Psychology and Active* Consent Programme Lead, Amelia Lown, Vice President for the Border, Midlands & Western Region, Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn, and Sinéad Morgan, Director of Further Education and Training, Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board. Credit: Aengus McMahon



Aurora Women's Leadership Programme

University of Galway continued to support gender equality in leadership through participation in the [Aurora Women's Leadership Programme](#). Aurora is a national leadership development initiative designed to support women in higher education to realise their leadership potential and progress to senior roles. Through a structured programme of workshops, mentoring and peer networking, participants develop skills in leadership, strategic influence and career progression. The programme also fosters cross institutional collaboration, enabling participants to build networks beyond their own organisation. Aurora forms part of the University's wider Athena Swan and gender equality commitments, supporting the development of a strong pipeline of female academic and professional leaders. By investing in leadership development, the University is addressing structural barriers to women's progression and strengthening the pipeline of future female leaders in higher education, in line with the ambitions of SDG 5.



Many students first disclose experiences of sexual misconduct to friends.



SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation



University of Galway, lead academic partner in the EU funded WATERWAY project

Key Facts



Over 30 drinking water fountains across campus support sustainable water consumption and reduce reliance on single-use plastics.

TOP 75

University of Galway is ranked top 75 in the world for SDG 6 in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025, following its first submission in this category.



University of Galway partners with Galway City Council on the EU-funded WATERWAY project, integrating clean water management, renewable energy and community engagement through the sustainable revitalisation of Galway's canal network.



443 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Water-focused modules and programmes

University of Galway continued to embed SDG 6 across a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, providing students with both theoretical knowledge and applied skills in water management, quality and protection. At postgraduate level, the [MSc Marine and Freshwater Resources: Management](#) offers a comprehensive, systems-based understanding of water from catchment to coast, including water quality, contaminants and ecosystem health. A key feature of this programme is its compulsory [Water Framework Directive module](#), which equips students with practical knowledge of EU water policy, ecological status assessment and sustainable water governance. Complementing this, the [MSc Sustainable Environments](#) includes a specialised [Water Quality module](#) focusing on pollution processes, modelling and catchment-scale management. In engineering education, the [ME Civil Engineering](#) programme provides advanced training through modules such as hydrology, hydraulic modelling and sustainable environmental systems, preparing graduates to design and manage water infrastructure. This is reinforced at undergraduate level, where Civil Engineering programmes emphasise clean water provision and wastewater treatment. Broader environmental degrees, including Environmental Science and Earth and Ocean Sciences, further support SDG 6 by exploring water systems, environmental regulation and sustainable resource management. Together, these programmes demonstrate a strong interdisciplinary approach to water education, equipping students with the knowledge and skills to address real-world water challenges.

Water and campus practice

University of Galway continues to strengthen good practice in water stewardship across the campus, supporting student learning through both infrastructure and behaviour change initiatives aligned with SDG 6. The University invested in water efficiency measures, including the installation of efficient fixtures and fittings designed to reduce water consumption across campus buildings. These operational improvements are complemented by a well-established network of indoor and outdoor drinking water fountains, encouraging students to refill reusable bottles and reduce reliance on single-use plastics. Water awareness was also embedded within campus initiatives such as the Green Labs Programme, which promotes resource efficiency in laboratory environments, including the responsible use and management of water in research and teaching activities. Through these initiatives, students are encouraged to integrate responsible water use into both academic work and daily campus life.

Water-saving pledge project

The Ireland Water Savers project, funded through Construct Innovate by the Department of Housing, was a collaborative initiative led by the University of Galway in partnership with Uisce Éireann and the Irish Green Building Council to explore how data-driven insights and community engagement can reduce domestic water consumption. The project combined anonymised smart metering data with behavioural interventions such as household pledges, educational tools, and targeted communications. A pilot study involving anonymised data from over 6,000 households, and direct engagement with 100 consenting participants demonstrated that simple, no-cost actions can achieve measurable reductions in water use when supported by clear information and consistent messaging. Participating households recorded typical savings of 5–10% (approximately 15–30 litres per day), highlighting the impact of improved awareness and small behavioural changes. The project also revealed low public awareness of water consumption in the home, reinforcing the importance of education in driving sustainable practices. By integrating data analytics with community-based approaches, Water Savers provides a scalable model to support national water conservation efforts, strengthen infrastructure resilience, and enable sustainable housing growth. [Click here](#) to play the quick Water Savers quiz.

The findings highlight the importance of ecosystem condition in influencing water quality outcomes

Credit: Grace Martin



Research Spotlight

EPA-Funded research on water quality and environmental protection

University of Galway secured [significant funding](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support a range of research projects addressing pressing environmental and climate challenges, including aspects of water quality and environmental protection. The University achieved one of the highest levels of success nationally under this competitive funding call, reinforcing its leadership in environmental research. The EPA-funded projects focus on strengthening environmental monitoring, generating high-quality scientific data and supporting evidence-based policy to protect Ireland's natural resources. For example, the College of Science and Engineering leads the [Seasonal WAC Low-Flow statistics for Assimilative Capacity Assessments project](#), which is developing a better way to measure how river levels change between wetter winters and drier summers in Ireland as the climate changes. The project's aim is to help the EPA set fair but protective pollution limits for wastewater discharges; protecting rivers during dry summer periods while making smarter use of higher river flows in winter.

Catchment and water quality research

University of Galway contributed to [advancing understanding](#) of water quality through research examining the relationship between peatland condition and dissolved organic carbon in freshwater systems. This work explores how the degradation of peatlands can lead to increased levels of organic carbon in rivers and streams, with implications for drinking water treatment, ecosystem health and water management. By analysing catchment-scale processes, the research highlights the importance of land use and ecosystem condition in influencing water quality outcomes. The study is relevant to SDG 6, supporting efforts to improve water quality by identifying environmental pressures and informing nature-based solutions such as peatland restoration. The findings highlight the importance of ecosystem condition in maintaining water quality and support the development of nature-based approaches to catchment management.

Advancing sustainable wastewater treatment through nature-based solutions

University of Galway is contributing to more sustainable water management through a [Nature Based Solutions Research and Innovation Programme](#), delivered in partnership with Uisce Éireann and supported by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities Water Services Innovation Fund. The project explores the use of nature-based approaches, including integrated constructed wetlands, reed beds and soil systems, as alternatives to conventional wastewater treatment. These solutions can deliver multiple benefits, including improved water quality, reduced energy use, enhanced biodiversity and climate resilience. A key focus of the research is to generate evidence to support new regulatory and licensing approaches, as current emission limit frameworks can restrict wider adoption of these systems. By advancing knowledge, piloting innovative treatment methods and informing policy development, the programme aims to support more sustainable, cost effective and nature-based wastewater infrastructure in Ireland, with completion expected in 2026.

Community Engagement

Sustainability Engagement Fund – Spotlight on SDG 6

The University of Galway [Sustainability Engagement Fund](#) played a central role in advancing SDG 6 through a range of student and community-led initiatives focused on water sustainability. The Fund, which explicitly supported projects aligned with SDG 6 and SDG 14, enabled students and staff to collaborate with community groups, schools and local organisations to deliver workshops, outreach activities and awareness campaigns on responsible water use and conservation. As part of the launch of the Fund, the Sustainability Office hosted a webinar entitled 'Sustainable management of water, aquatic ecosystems and marine resources'. Funded projects demonstrated innovative and participatory approaches to water-related challenges, including multimedia storytelling on community-led water solutions, the 'Hidden Depths' workshops engaging schools and active retirement groups, a Galway coast and River Corrib exploration project, and the development of an educational boardgame promoting conscious water use in laboratory settings. These initiatives were showcased during SDG Week 2025 through a dedicated 'Water and Sustainability Exhibition', highlighting the impact of collaborative, community-engaged approaches to protecting and managing water resources.



Water as a core theme in a community climate assembly

As part of the [2025 Community Climate Assembly](#) University of Galway facilitated dedicated discussions on water as a critical component of local climate action and sustainability. The Assembly brought together community representatives, researchers, policymakers and civil society organisations to explore practical responses to climate challenges across themes including water, biodiversity, mobility and food systems. A focused session on water highlighted the importance of protecting freshwater resources, improving water quality and strengthening community stewardship of local catchments. [Contributions](#) from regional stakeholders, including community groups and organisations such as Corrib Beo and the Carra Mask Corrib Water Protection Group, emphasised the value of local knowledge and collective action. The water session also identified Lough Corrib as a critical shared resource, with participants highlighting the need for coordinated action to address pressures on water quality and to safeguard the lake for future generations. This engagement aligns with SDG 6 by promoting awareness, participation and collaborative action to protect water resources and water-related ecosystems. See further detail in SDG 13: Community Climate Assembly.

WATERWAY project

The [WATERWAY project](#), led by Galway City Council in partnership with University of Galway, represents a major collaborative initiative linking water sustainability, community engagement and climate action. Funded through the European Regional Development Fund under the European Urban Initiative, the project will revitalise Galway’s historic canal network by installing small-scale hydropower systems that generate renewable energy while protecting local water systems. A central feature of the project is its strong community engagement model. Through a dedicated living lab approach, the University contributes to the development of education programmes, training modules and public workshops focused on water systems, renewable energy and sustainability. These activities create opportunities for schools, students and local communities to actively engage with water infrastructure and climate solutions in a real-world setting. The project also enhances environmental awareness by demonstrating how urban waterways can be managed sustainably, improving water quality, supporting biodiversity and contributing to climate resilience. Running from 2025 to 2029, WATERWAY highlights the University’s role in place-based partnerships that connect research, education and community action, delivering tangible local impact in clean water management and climate resilience.



Photo by Prof. Chaosheng Zhang



SDG 7

Affordable and
Clean Energy



Photo by Prof. Chaosheng Zhang

Key Facts



University of Galway
launched a new MSc in
Wind Energy Engineering.



In the SEAI Sustainable Energy Awards
2025, University of Galway won the
Research Award for the Recode project.



University of Galway successfully
retained ISO 50001:2018 Energy
Management System certification.



University of Galway improved energy
efficiency by 52.9% against the baseline



494 Publications (*Scopus
Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

New MSc in Wind Energy Engineering

An MSc in Wind Energy Engineering was introduced in 2025/26. This intensive 90-ECTS programme prepares engineering graduates and professionals to become wind energy specialists. Through advanced study of wind energy systems, technologies, and management, plus a 30-ECTS thesis project, students gain the skills to lead innovation, design, and deployment in the rapidly growing wind energy industry. Meanwhile, Energy Systems Engineering (Bachelor and Master) at University of Galway equips students to lead the transition to a sustainable, secure, and resilient energy future. Students learn to design zero-carbon energy systems, develop renewable fuels, and create energy-efficient solutions that make a real difference.

Galway Energy Summit 2026

The Galway Energy Summit was held on 4 March 2026 on campus. This was a student-led event, organised by Anna Connors, Pawel Gorski and their colleagues in the University of Galway Energy Society. Speakers included: Declan Meally (SEAI), David Sutton (Bord na Móna), Meadhbh Connolly (ESB), Eamonn O'Reilly (IAE), James Glynn (ESMA), Pauline O'Reilly (Irish District Energy Association), Muireann Lynch (ESRI), Gary Bennan (Gkinetic), Avril Ni Shearcaigh (Aran Islands Energy Co-op), David McAuley (Bitpower), Sophia Brady (Astatine), Prof. Rory Monaghan (University of Galway). The summit also included a careers and information fair.

Dr Noreen Brennan receiving the Research Award for the Recode project at the 2025 Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Sustainable Energy Awards.

Research Spotlight

Excellence in Energy Research Award

In the SEAI Sustainable Energy Awards 2025, University of Galway won the Research Award for the Recode project, led by Postdoctoral Researcher Dr. Noreen Brennan. University of Galway, lead academic partner in the EU funded WATERWAY project. Recode addresses one of the most urgent and overlooked challenges in Ireland's energy transition, how to meaningfully engage communities in renewable energy development. By combining policy analysis with real-world stakeholder engagement, Recode has delivered original, actionable recommendations that address policy, financial and social barriers to community participation. The Recode project is carried out in partnership with SharedTurbine, an Irish SME.

Energy from seaweed

In April 2026, University of Galway and Nua Mara hosted a stakeholder event bringing together researchers, industry, policymakers and investors to explore the future of Ireland's seaweed sector. A particular highlight was the focus on the ALgas project, an exciting new University of Galway and Gas Networks Ireland initiative funded by Research Ireland, developing innovative uses of seaweed as a source of biomethane, a strong example of how marine resources can contribute to Ireland's energy transition. 'ALgas: Innovative macroalgal biorefining and social licensing for new biomethane production for Ireland' is led by a multidisciplinary research team at the University of Galway.

Energy research presented at Ocean Sciences Meeting 2026

The Ryan Institute brought a delegation to the Ocean Sciences Meeting 2026 in Glasgow to showcase some of University of Galway cutting-edge marine, environment and energy research. Presentations included:

- Modelling and resource characterization of Irish offshore wave energy using high-resolution WAVEWATCH III
- Temporal and Spatial Trends in Ocean Colour in Irish Waters (2004–2024)
- Characterizing an algal-rich eddy within the Labrador Sea by autonomous profiling, shipborne sampling, and spaceborne remote sensing

Recognition for Prof. Henry Curran's research

In November 2025, Professor Henry Curran and Professor Ines Thiele were once again named in the prestigious Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers 2025 list. Professor Henry Curran, listed in the Engineering category, is Director of the Combustion Chemistry Centre at the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, College of Science and Engineering and of the Energy Research Centre in the Ryan Institute at University of Galway. His research looks at the study of the chemistry of how fuels burn in combustors to increase efficiency and reduce emissions for a cleaner world. This marks Professor Curran's 11th year being named a Clarivate Highly Cited Researcher.

Community Engagement

SEAI Public Sector Energy Conference 2025

The SEAI Public Sector Energy Conference 2025 held at University of Galway on 15 May 2025. It is a great honour that the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) chose to host this conference at University of Galway, the first time that the conference has been held outside of Dublin. The theme of the conference was sustainable buildings and transport for the public sector and there were breakout sessions for the health sector, OPW / central government, local authorities, commercial semi-states, third level education, government agencies in owned buildings, and government agencies in leased buildings.

ISO 50001:2018 Energy Management System certification

University of Galway successfully retained ISO 50001:2018 Energy Management System certification following a surveillance audit in October 2025. The independent audit found no non-conformances or opportunities for improvement. The auditor confirmed that our Energy Management System is fully operational, well managed, and demonstrates continual improvement. The auditor commended the strong leadership commitment to energy efficiency, the quality of our documentation, and the effectiveness of our internal audit and management review processes. The auditor also highlighted the excellent teamwork within Buildings & Estates and the integrated approach between maintenance, management of the systems that monitor and control building performance (BMS), and project delivery as key strengths supporting our ongoing energy performance improvements. This achievement reflects the dedication and professionalism of the Energy Team and the wider University community in advancing our sustainability objectives.

Energy efficiency improvement

University of Galway has continued to reduce energy consumption and improve our energy efficiency as measured by our energy performance indicator (EnPI). We have already achieved our 2030 target of a 50% improvement in energy efficiency (an EnPI below 50). The EnPI baseline for 2006–2008 is set at 100. In 2025, our EnPI was 47.1, i.e. a 52.9% improvement in energy efficiency.

University of Galway student-led
Galway Energy Summit 2026.



BREEAM certification for Dunlin Village Student Residences

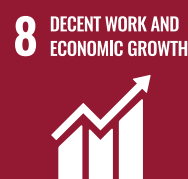
Dunlin Village Student Residences was officially certified under the BREEAM sustainability standard in 2025. This is a significant achievement for the University and a testament to our commitment to building a climate-conscious future. The project was led by the Buildings & Estates Team and Atalia Student Residences. Over a 7-year period, they guided the project under the University's Sustainability pillar ensuring that sustainability goals were embedded in every stage, from design and statutory approvals to construction and operations. BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) is the world's first building certification system, developed over 30 years ago by BRE. Today, it is an internationally recognised standard of sustainability, quality, and value. It offers a comprehensive framework to address key challenges in the built environment ranging from net zero carbon goals to health, wellbeing, and social impact underpinned by scientific research and rigorous assessment.

Recent and ongoing energy projects

The University of Galway Buildings & Estates Team maintains a Register of Opportunities to increase energy efficiency on campus. The most significant recent projects include the Medium Voltage MV electricity distribution system upgrade project (installation and commissioning of new cabling systems and new ESB substation), the continued roll out of energy efficient boiler house upgrades, the ongoing replacement of fluorescent light fittings (with LED equivalents) and upgrades to the Building Management System with resulting improvements to air treatment controls and efficiencies. Additionally, the Buildings and Estates Team continues to roll out photovoltaic electricity generation projects, and we are headed towards 1 MW of solar PV installed on campus.



SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth



AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 2025

Breda Kenna, Work Based Learning Manager, Career Development Centre and Marie Laffey, Head of the Career Development Centre, University of Galway.



Key Facts



The Career Development Centre received international recognition as the AGCAS Employability Team of the Year 2025, reflecting excellence in supporting student career success and graduate employability.

680

680 students completed the University of Galway Employability Award in 2025, recognising structured engagement in career development and skills building.



University of Galway awarded the 2025 Séamus McDermott Entrepreneurial Scholarship to student entrepreneur Fionn Ó Conaill, recognising his work on an agriculture-based innovation and supporting enterprise development and future job creation.



302 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Career Development Centre

University of Galway's Career Development Centre achieved significant international recognition when it was named Employability Team of the Year at the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) Awards for Excellence. Judges highlighted the Centre's inspiring contribution to employability and its ability to transform student outcomes in a way that reflects the core purpose of the sector. The scale of engagement is substantial, with the Centre supporting over 19,000 students and 5,500 graduates annually across all disciplines. A comprehensive range of services is delivered, including one to one career guidance, employer engagement events, skills workshops and access to employment opportunities. The Careers Connect platform plays a central role, enabling students to access vacancies, register for events, book appointments and connect directly with employers. The Centre also secured recognition at national level through the AHECS Employability Awards 2025, reinforcing its leadership in supporting student and graduate employability.

Embedding employability through the Employability Award

University of Galway is strengthening student readiness for employment through its structured Employability Award, which continued to see strong participation during the 2025–2026 reporting period. The programme provides students with a clear and supported pathway to develop key skills and gain practical experience aligned with labour market expectations. In 2025, 680 students completed the award, with over 1,200 students engaging in programme activities and more than 850 participating in employer led skills sessions, demonstrating significant scale and impact. The Employability Award requires students to complete a series of career focused activities, including skills workshops, employer engagement, CV development, interview preparation and a minimum of 40 hours of work experience. This ensures that students graduate with both recognised competencies and applied experience, while also supporting their ability to articulate skills effectively to employers. Delivered through the Career Development Centre, the programme aligns closely with employer needs and supports transition into employment. The programme ensures students graduate with both recognised competencies and applied experience, strengthening their transition into employment.

Strengthening graduate employability through global industry partnership and career pathways

University of Galway enhanced student learning and employability through global industry partnerships that connect academic study with real-world experience. The University of Galway was announced as EY Luxembourg's first higher education partner in the UK and Ireland, marking a significant collaboration to strengthen career-ready education. Through this partnership, students in the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics gain access to a range of practice-based learning opportunities, including guest lectures from industry experts, mentorship from EY Luxembourg professionals, and participation in an international summer school focused on alternative investments. The initiative also provides structured pathways to work placements and graduate opportunities, ensuring students can apply their academic knowledge in professional settings. More than 550 undergraduate students benefit annually from enhanced curriculum delivery through embedded industry engagement. This collaboration reflects a long-standing relationship between the University and EY Luxembourg, now formalised to deepen its impact on student development. By integrating global expertise, experiential learning, and direct employer engagement into teaching, the initiative supports high quality, relevant education. It ensures graduates are equipped with the skills, confidence and international perspective required to succeed in a rapidly evolving global workforce, aligning strongly with the ambitions of SDG 8.

Research Spotlight

Understanding working conditions in Ireland's hospitality sector

Research led by University of Galway provides detailed evidence base on employment conditions within Ireland's hospitality sector, a significant contributor to national employment and economic activity. The 2025 study presents the most comprehensive independent survey of hospitality workers undertaken in Ireland, drawing on responses from 736 participants across the sector. The research captures a wide range of employment experiences, including pay, contracts, working conditions, opportunities for development, and perceptions of treatment at work. A high proportion of respondents report that they care about being productive in their roles and feel confident in their skills, while many also indicate that they continue to learn and develop over time. However, the research also identifies substantial pressures. Many workers report feeling emotionally drained by their work, and significant levels of bullying and harassment are reported as either experienced or witnessed. The study also points to ongoing challenges related to retention, career progression, and working conditions. By applying a Fair Work framework, the research provides clear evidence to support improvements in job quality and fair working conditions in line with SDG 8.

Supporting inclusive workplaces through research on menopause and employment

Research at University of Galway is contributing to improved workplace practices by examining the impact of menopause on employment experiences and organisational culture (see further details in SDG 5: Impactful research examining women's experiences in the workplace).

Recognising the economic value of volunteering through research

Research at University of Galway is contributing to a growing evidence base on the economic and societal value of volunteering, supporting a broader understanding of work, participation and inclusive economic activity. Researchers at the University secured national funding to examine how volunteering contributes to economic and social systems, with a focus on measuring its value and impact across communities. The research explores how voluntary activity intersects with labour market participation, skills development and pathways to employment. By examining the contribution of volunteers across different sectors, the study highlights how volunteering can support the development of transferable skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership. These skills can enhance employability and support access to the labour market, particularly for individuals who may face barriers to formal employment. Importantly, the research also considers how volunteering can be better recognised within policy and economic frameworks. By providing a clearer understanding of its value, this work supports more inclusive approaches to economic development. It contributes to SDG 8 by broadening the definition of work and recognising the role of volunteering in supporting sustainable and inclusive economic participation.

These skills can enhance employability and support access to the labour market, particularly for individuals who may face barriers to formal employment.



The Employability Award recognises students who develop career-ready skills through work experience, volunteering, leadership and extracurricular activities, helping to prepare them for success in an evolving world of work.



Community Engagement

Supporting Staff Wellbeing and Decent Work

University of Galway promotes positive working conditions and staff wellbeing through a comprehensive suite of human resources policies, programmes and supports. During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the University continued to implement its hybrid working policy, enabling flexible work arrangements and promoting work-life balance, alongside guidance to support safe and healthy remote working environments. Staff wellbeing is further supported through the University's Employee Wellbeing Programme, accredited under the IBEC KeepWell Mark, a national standard for workplace wellbeing covering areas such as leadership, mental health, inclusion and work-life balance. This is complemented by a structured Learning and Development programme, which during 2025–2026 delivered a wide range of staff training opportunities, including centralised induction sessions held regularly throughout the year and a programme of workshops covering areas such as disability awareness, data protection, digital skills and career development. The University continues to implement its HR Excellence in Research Action Plan 2024–2027, supporting fair recruitment, career development and positive working conditions for research staff. In 2025, the University also demonstrated leadership in workplace wellbeing innovation through the launch of a spin-out company developing an AI-powered employee wellbeing platform, designed to support early identification of stress and enhance organisational wellbeing.

Supporting workforce development through micro-credentials programme

University of Galway is strengthening community engagement and workforce development through its micro-credentials programme, which continued to expand during the 2025–2026 reporting period, in response to evolving labour market needs. Recent course offerings include Future of Artificial Intelligence and Introduction to Artificial Intelligence, alongside programmes such as Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Programming Sensors and Actuators, and Promoting Health in the Workplace. These courses reflect a strong focus on digital capability, enterprise development and workplace wellbeing. By linking education with industry and enterprise, the micro-credentials programme supports workforce adaptability and economic resilience. This initiative contributes to SDG 8 by promoting inclusive access to skills, strengthening employability and supporting participation in a changing and increasingly knowledge-based economy.

Building Ireland's Life Sciences economy through strategic partnerships

University of Galway contributed to national economic development through its role in convening partners to strengthen Ireland's life sciences sector. The University hosted a major symposium on delivering Ireland's National Life Sciences Strategy in partnership with Medtronic. The event brought together stakeholders from government, industry, healthcare, patient advocacy and academia to support collaboration and inform future policy development for the sector. The symposium focused on strengthening Ireland's competitiveness through research, innovation, talent development and enterprise growth. The life sciences sector is a significant contributor to the Irish economy, supporting over 100,000 jobs and generating substantial export value. By bringing together key actors across the ecosystem, the University played an important role in facilitating dialogue, knowledge exchange and coordinated action. This initiative builds on the University's ongoing collaboration with Medtronic through its Signature Innovation Partnership, which connects academic research with industry expertise to support advances in healthcare and workforce development. Through this outward-facing engagement, University of Galway is supporting innovation capacity, skills development and sectoral growth. This work contributes to SDG 8 by strengthening partnerships that support employment, enterprise and long-term economic resilience at regional and national level.

Strengthening employment pathways through employer engagement and recruitment

University of Galway is strengthening connections between education and the labour market through a comprehensive programme of employer engagement activities delivered during the 2025–2026 reporting period. The University hosts a series of large-scale careers fairs, upskilling events, sector specific recruitment events and employer networking opportunities that bring together students, graduates and a wide range of national and international employers. These include the Graduate Jobs Fair, Intern and Graduate Jobs Fair alongside sector focused initiatives such as the STEM Careers Fair and the Business, Finance and Law Fair, as well as the Working Abroad Fair which supports access to international employment opportunities. Employers from key sectors including technology, finance, healthcare, engineering and public service participate in these events, offering insights into skills requirements, recruitment processes and career pathways. These engagements are supported by the Career Development Centre and integrated with the Careers Connect platform, enabling ongoing interaction between students and employers. This contributes to SDG 8 by strengthening pathways to employment, supporting job access and enhancing collaboration between higher education and the labour market.



Aidan Corless, Chairperson, The Liffey Trust; Sean Allen, University of Galway student and 2025 Séamus McDermott Entrepreneurial Scholar; and Dr Natalie Walsh, IdeasLab, University of Galway. Credit: Andrew Downes, Xposure.

SDG 9

Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Participants, mentors and organisers at the Innovate4Sustainability Hackathon, Portershed, November 2025.

Key Facts



University of Galway contributed to the discovery of a likely new planet in formation using advanced international telescope infrastructure, showcasing cutting-edge scientific innovation and global research collaboration.



University of Galway was named European champion for student services for a flagship digitalisation project, improving the secure recognition of academic credentials and supporting student mobility.



University of Galway will operate Ireland's national supercomputer CASPIr, providing advanced high-performance computing infrastructure to drive innovation in AI, climate, health and data intensive research across Ireland and Europe.



689 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Advancing innovation and enterprise through the Start100 programme

University of Galway strengthened innovation capacity through its [IdeasLab Start100 programme](#), a flagship initiative supporting student-led enterprise development. Now in its fourth year, the intensive six-week incubator provides a structured pathway for students to develop and test early-stage ideas across areas including health, artificial intelligence, digital technologies and creative sectors. The programme combines expert led workshops, mentorship and practical application, guiding participants through key stages such as idea development, customer discovery, market validation and pitching. Start100 is delivered within the University's innovation infrastructure and connects participants with the wider enterprise ecosystem. Students engage with key enterprise supports including Enterprise Ireland, WestBIC and the Local Enterprise Office, alongside regional innovation hubs and industry mentors. These connections provide access to expertise, networks and potential pathways for further development. The programme supports students from all disciplines, including those without prior business experience, enabling inclusive participation in innovation. By fostering creativity, problem-solving and enterprise development, Start100 contributes to SDG 9 by strengthening innovation systems, supporting entrepreneurship and enhancing the capacity of higher education to drive technological and economic advancement.

BiInnovate Ireland: developing healthcare innovation capability

University of Galway is advancing innovation capacity through the [BiInnovate Ireland](#) programme, which continued to deliver a leading model of healthcare innovation training during the 2025–2026 reporting period. This intensive ten-month programme brings together participants from diverse disciplines to identify unmet clinical needs and develop solutions in medical technology and digital health. The programme follows a structured needs-led approach, including clinical immersion, concept development and early-stage commercialisation planning. Participants work closely with clinicians, patients and industry partners, ensuring that solutions are grounded in real healthcare challenges. Based within Galway's established medtech cluster, the programme provides access to industry expertise, networks and infrastructure that support innovation development. In 2026, programme activity [highlighted](#) the contribution of alumni and the continued emergence of new ventures, demonstrating sustained impact within the sector. BiInnovate has supported the development of multiple start-ups and healthcare innovations, contributing to Ireland's position as a global leader in medical technology. By building skills in innovation, design and enterprise within a real-world context, the programme strengthens the capacity of graduates to contribute to technology development and industry advancement. This initiative contributes to SDG 9 by supporting innovation systems, fostering industry collaboration and strengthening applied research and development capability.



IdeasLab: advancing innovation skills through challenge-based learning

The University of Galway's [IdeasLab](#) continued to play a key role in developing student innovation capabilities, with a strong emphasis on sustainability-focused problem solving aligned to SDG 9. Through structured, challenge-based learning, IdeasLab enabled students to work collaboratively across disciplines to address real-world issues linked to industry, infrastructure and environmental sustainability. A central feature of activity during this period was the delivery of sustainability themed hackathons, where students worked intensively in teams to develop practical solutions. Delivered in partnership with industry and external stakeholders, these hackathons provided students with hands-on experience in design thinking, prototyping and solution development. A key example is the [Innovate4Sustainability](#) hackathon, delivered in November 2025 in partnership with Atlantic Technological University and supported by the Higher Education Authority. Hosted at PorterShed Galway, this one-day challenge brought students together to develop innovative responses to sustainability issues. Participants worked in interdisciplinary teams, applying creativity and problem solving to generate practical solutions while engaging with real-world issues affecting communities and industry. Alongside this, initiatives such as [CreateHER](#) expanded during the 2025–2026 reporting period, supporting female entrepreneurship and broadening participation in innovation. This complements hackathon activity by helping to ensure that innovation ecosystems are inclusive and representative. Through these experiences, students gain hands-on experience in ideation, prototyping and pitching, while developing key transversal skills including teamwork, communication and entrepreneurial thinking. This approach supports the development of future innovators and contributes to sustainable industrial and technological advancement.

Research Spotlight

Accelerating research to commercialisation: ARC Hub for healthtech

The ARC Hub for HealthTech strengthens national innovation infrastructure by accelerating the translation of research into commercial healthcare solutions. Through collaboration between academia, industry and clinicians, the hub supports the development and scaling of new technologies, reinforcing Ireland's position in global medtech innovation. See further details in SDG 3: Advancing health innovation through the ARC Hub for HealthTech.

ZEISS Labs: advancing research infrastructure and imaging capability

University of Galway strengthened its research infrastructure during the 2025–2026 reporting period through a strategic partnership with ZEISS, establishing the University as a European reference site for advanced imaging technologies. This investment was [further enhanced by the installation of a first-of-its-kind microscopy imaging system in Europe](#), positioning the University at the forefront of high-resolution scientific analysis. Together, these developments provide researchers with access to cutting-edge tools capable of visualising biological and material systems at unprecedented levels of detail. The infrastructure supports research across biomedical science, materials science and clinical investigation, enabling deeper insights into disease mechanisms, cellular processes and advanced materials. It also strengthens collaboration with academic and industry partners, facilitating joint research and knowledge exchange at national and international levels. In addition, the facility supports advanced training for researchers and students, building expertise in emerging imaging techniques. By combining strategic partnership with technological firsts, University of Galway enhances its capacity to attract leading researchers, secure competitive funding and accelerate the translation of research into real-world applications. This initiative represents a major advancement in research infrastructure and innovation, aligning strongly with SDG 9.

Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund project: advancing medtech innovation

University of Galway is contributing to innovation in the medtech sector through its involvement in a consortium led by Spiorad Medical, which secured €1.7 million in funding under Ireland's Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund during the 2025–2026 reporting period. The project focuses on developing a next-generation vascular closure device to support minimally invasive cardiovascular procedures such as TAVI and EVAR. By addressing a critical challenge in these procedures, the innovation aims to improve procedural reliability while reducing complications and recovery times. This initiative highlights the University's role in translating research into commercially viable healthcare technologies. The [collaboration](#) between University of Galway, Spiorad Medical and Dolmen Design and Innovation demonstrates an effective model of partnership, combining academic research, clinical expertise and product development capability. Such collaborations are central to strengthening Ireland's innovation ecosystem and supporting the growth of high impact indigenous enterprises. The project also reflects the importance of sustained investment in research and development to drive technological advancement. By supporting medtech innovation with clear pathways to clinical application and market adoption, University of Galway contributes to building resilient innovation infrastructure and advancing SDG 9 through impactful, industry-aligned research.



Research commercialisation and spin-out development

University of Galway continued to strengthen research commercialisation and spin-out development during the 2025–2026 reporting period, demonstrating strong performance in translating research into real-world impact. Through its Technology Transfer Office, the University provides structured support for intellectual property management, licensing and company formation, enabling researchers to progress innovations from discovery to market. Since 2020, the University has launched 24 spin-out companies and built a portfolio of over 35 active spinouts, reflecting a strong and sustained innovation pipeline. This activity is supported by significant research outputs, including over 240 invention disclosures and more than 80 technologies licensed to industry. Collaboration with external partners remains central, with over 300 industry projects contributing to the development and application of research. The University also plays a key role in supporting start-up growth, with more than 100 companies supported through its innovation ecosystem, contributing to the creation of over 3,300 jobs and attracting close to €800 million in funding. This activity is underpinned by strong regional strengths, particularly within Galway’s globally recognised medtech cluster. By supporting the progression of research into commercial and societal impact, University of Galway continues to strengthen innovation capacity, enterprise development and industry collaboration, aligning strongly with SDG 9.

Community Engagement

UrbanLab: collaborative infrastructure for urban innovation

University of Galway progressed the development of UrbanLab, representing a significant investment in regional innovation infrastructure aligned with SDG 9. The project involves the redevelopment of the Hygeia building into a shared, collaborative space designed to bring together researchers, policymakers and community groups to address complex urban challenges. Supported by Ireland’s Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, UrbanLab focuses on key areas including sustainable cities, housing, mobility and climate resilience. UrbanLab is designed as a living lab environment, enabling place-based innovation through direct engagement with communities and stakeholders. It provides a platform for knowledge exchange, co-creation and applied research, ensuring that solutions are grounded in real-world needs and local contexts. By facilitating collaboration between the University and Galway City, the initiative strengthens civic engagement and supports evidence-based decision making. The project also enhances regional capacity to respond to urban challenges by integrating research, policy and practice within a single innovation space. Through this approach, UrbanLab contributes to long-term resilience, sustainable development and inclusive growth. It represents a strong example of how investment in infrastructure can enable innovation, collaboration and community impact, reinforcing University of Galway’s contribution to SDG 9.

Regional innovation ecosystem

University of Galway continued to strengthen its contribution to regional innovation through active engagement with PorterShed and the wider Galway innovation ecosystem. PorterShed provides a collaborative environment where start-ups, entrepreneurs, researchers and community stakeholders come together to develop and scale innovative solutions. The University contributes to this shared infrastructure through student participation, research engagement and collaboration with enterprise partners, supporting knowledge exchange and real-world problem solving. In parallel, University of Galway works closely with key regional organisations including Platform94, WestBIC and Local Enterprise Offices. These partnerships support start-ups and enterprise development across the West of Ireland through mentoring, innovation programmes and collaborative initiatives. They provide valuable opportunities for students and researchers to engage with industry and apply their knowledge in practical contexts. Through these combined activities, the University plays a central role in strengthening links between academia, industry and the community. This supports knowledge transfer, enterprise growth and job creation, contributing to a strong and connected regional innovation ecosystem aligned with SDG 9.

Construct Innovate: advancing industry engagement and skills for sustainable construction

University of Galway, as host of Construct Innovate, continues to play a central role in advancing industry engagement and innovation in the built environment. The centre brings together over 300 researchers and extensive industry partners to drive innovation in sustainable construction, digitalisation and modern methods of construction. A key aspect of its community engagement is the delivery of flexible, industry-focused education and training. During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the University offered micro-credentials and postgraduate programmes in areas such as sustainability planning, digital construction technologies and modern methods of construction, designed to upskill professionals and support sector transformation. These are complemented by initiatives such as the Work Ready Graduate Programme, which connects graduates with industry placements while completing a postgraduate qualification, strengthening links between education and enterprise. Construct Innovate also delivers a wide programme of public-facing events, including webinar series on digital construction, sustainability and innovation, as well as industry exchange events. These activities engage industry professionals, policymakers and the wider community in knowledge sharing and innovation. Through this integrated approach, Construct Innovate strengthens Ireland’s construction innovation ecosystem and supports sustainable industry development in line with SDG 9.

Representatives from University of Galway, Atlantic Technological University and regional partners at the launch of the €34.3 million ARC Hub for HealthTech. Led by University of Galway in partnership with ATU and RCSI, the Hub supports researchers, clinicians and industry partners to translate innovative healthcare technologies and research discoveries into real-world solutions that improve patient care and health outcomes.



SDG 10

Reduced Inequalities



Students from Galway Educate Together Secondary School attending the Champion Schools of Sanctuary awards ceremony pictured with L-R: Sara Hakim, Director of Schools of Sanctuary Ireland; Cllr. Helen Ogbu, Galway City Council; Dr Mary Surlis, Senior Academic Manager and Dr Daniel Savery, Widening Participation Officer, Access Centre, University of Galway; Tara Broderick, Assistant Principal and Sarah Molloy, Principal of Galway Educate Together. Credit: Mike Shaughnessy

Key Facts



University of Galway hosts a Sensory Friendly Santa's Grotto, providing an accessible festive experience for over 40 children with additional needs and their families each year.



24% of full time students are from under-represented groups.



Over 2,000 students are registered with the Access Centre's Disability Support Services.



689 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Widening Participation Strategy 2025–2028

The [launch of the Widening Participation Strategy 2025–2028](#) marked a significant step in advancing equitable access to education at University of Galway. The Widening Participation Strategy removes barriers to higher education for underrepresented groups. (see further details in [SDG 4: Strategy on widening participation advancing equitable access to higher education](#)).

Adoption of the ALTITUDE Charter

The [adoption of the ALTITUDE Charter](#) in September 2025 marked an important milestone for students and learning at University of Galway. The ALTITUDE Charter embeds universal design principles across education to remove barriers for all learners. (see further details in [SDG 4: ALTITUDE Charter embedding inclusive education through universal design](#)). This work is further supported by the University's broader [Universal Design and Accessibility Policy and Action Plan](#) which extends inclusive practice beyond the classroom to digital systems, physical infrastructure and student services, ensuring a whole of institution approach to accessibility during the 2025–2026 reporting period.

Championing Sanctuary in Schools

University of Galway has strengthened its commitment to inclusion through its [Champion Schools of Sanctuary initiative](#). This programme recognises primary and post-primary schools that create safe, welcoming and inclusive environments for all students, including those from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The initiative supports schools to embed values of equality, respect and belonging across teaching, learning and school culture. Students engage with themes of migration, human rights and global citizenship through curriculum and school activities. This helps build understanding, empathy and respect for diversity from an early age. The programme also encourages student voice and participation in creating inclusive school communities. By recognising and celebrating these schools, University of Galway is supporting the development of inclusive education systems and reducing barriers for underrepresented groups. This initiative makes a meaningful contribution to [SDG 10](#) by promoting equal opportunities and fostering a culture where all students feel valued, supported and included.

Designing Futures programme

[Designing Futures](#) is a central student learning initiative at University of Galway and makes a strong contribution to [SDG 10](#) through its focus on inclusive, student-centred education during the 2025–2026 reporting period. The programme is designed to transform the student experience by supporting learners to develop the skills, confidence and pathways needed to succeed in higher education and beyond. It is built around four core pillars: a personalised student journey; IdeasLab innovation space; student success coaching; and the University Skills Passport, which together provide flexible entry points for students with different backgrounds and learning needs. A key feature is the delivery of transdisciplinary modules and research-based projects, where students work across disciplines and with external partners to address real-world challenges. The programme continued to deliver these modules alongside student success coaching, enabling students to build confidence and progress in their studies. Designing Futures is relevant to [SDG 10](#) because it promotes equity in how students learn and succeed. By embedding flexibility and integrating support within the learning journey, the initiative helps reduce barriers to participation and progression. This ensures that a wider range of students can fully engage and benefit from higher education.

This initiative contributes to reducing inequalities by promoting equal opportunities and fostering a culture where all students feel valued, supported and included.

Research Spotlight

Advancing intersectional equality through research and data

In December 2025, University of Galway [launched the *Intersectional Discrimination Index Report*](#), a significant research initiative led by the Centre for Global Women's Studies and supported by the Higher Education Authority. This research addresses a key [SDG 10](#) challenge by examining how multiple forms of inequality, including gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity, intersect to shape lived experiences of discrimination. The project moves beyond single axis analysis to provide a more accurate and evidence-based understanding of inequality in society. By developing new tools and data frameworks, the research supports policymakers, educators and institutions in designing more effective and targeted responses to inequality. The report also reflects a growing emphasis on intersectionality within equality research, recognising that disadvantage is often layered and systemic. For [SDG 10](#), this work is particularly important as it strengthens the evidence base needed to reduce inequalities in a meaningful and measurable way. It demonstrates how research can inform structural change by identifying where inequalities persist and how they can be addressed through policy and practice.

Research to advance equity, diversity and inclusion in clinical trials

In September 2025, University of Galway announced that it would lead three Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Network projects, including one focused on advancing equity, diversity and inclusion in clinical trials. This initiative aims to improve how healthcare research is designed and delivered, ensuring it is more inclusive, effective and responsive to societal needs. The programme also supports doctoral researchers to develop as future leaders, strengthening skills in innovation, collaboration and employability. Clinical trials have often failed to reflect the diversity of the populations who rely on healthcare interventions, contributing to inequalities in evidence, treatment access and outcomes. By targeting equity, diversity and inclusion in trial design and participation, the University is helping to address this long-standing imbalance. This work also strengthens research training by developing a new generation of researchers equipped to embed inclusive approaches in clinical and scientific practice. Through this leadership, University of Galway demonstrates how research can contribute to reducing inequalities and advancing [SDG 10](#).

Migration, protection and inequality in international systems

Research at University of Galway through the Irish Centre for Human Rights made an important contribution to understanding inequality within international protection systems during the 2025–2026 reporting period. Recent research outputs, including published working papers and [international research events](#), examined the lived realities of migrants and refugees navigating complex legal and administrative processes. A 2025 study on [age assessment for unaccompanied minors in Ireland](#) highlighted how uncertainty in decision making can create unequal access to services, legal protections and supports. Further research activity in 2026 explored the experiences of displaced populations living in precarious conditions, including undocumented migrants and those outside formal protection systems. This body of research is relevant to [SDG 10](#) because it focuses on how inequality is produced and reinforced within migration systems. It demonstrates that access to rights, services and protection is not experienced equally, particularly for young people and those in vulnerable situations. By combining legal analysis with real-world evidence, the research supports more consistent, fair and transparent approaches to protection. It highlights the need to design protection systems that reduce, rather than reinforce, inequality.

Co-producing inclusive care

University of Galway advanced [SDG 10](#) through a [major participatory research initiative](#) that places young disabled people at the centre of shaping future care and support systems. The study, funded through a significant national research award, engages participants aged 18 to 24 as co-researchers, ensuring that lived experience directly informs evidence generation and policy development. This approach represents a shift from traditional research models towards inclusive, rights-based methodologies that prioritise voice, agency and representation. The project examines how care systems can better support independent living, dignity and equality, while also identifying gaps and barriers within existing structures. By embedding co-production throughout the research process, the initiative strengthens the relevance and impact of its findings, supporting more equitable and responsive policy outcomes. It also contributes to national and international discourse on disability rights and inclusive research practice. This work demonstrates how the University integrates high-quality research with social impact, advancing understanding while directly supporting efforts to reduce inequality. It provides a strong example of how research can empower underrepresented groups and inform systemic change in line with the ambitions of [SDG 10](#).



Community Engagement

University of Sanctuary scholarships and World Refugee Day 2025

University of Galway marked World Refugee Day 2025 with the announcement of 16 places under its University of Sanctuary Scholarship programme. Universities of Sanctuary scholarships remove financial barriers to higher education for refugees and vulnerable groups (see further details in SDG 1: University of Sanctuary scholarships). The scholarships reflect the University's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive academic environment, aligned with its Strategic Plan 2025–2030 and its continued designation as a University of Sanctuary. The initiative also supports inclusion and engagement beyond admission to higher education. As part of the World Refugee Day programme, the University welcomed 50 pupils from Galway Educate Together National School for a campus tour through the Schools of Sanctuary Programme, alongside an interactive workshop led by current Sanctuary scholars. These activities aimed to build understanding, strengthen relationships and promote a welcoming and inclusive society. The day also included a panel discussion on transgender rights and international protection, bringing together perspectives from advocacy, research, legal practice and lived experience. By providing financial support, mentorship and opportunities for engagement, the programme contributes to more inclusive pathways into higher education and civic life.

University of Galway adopts the ALTITUDE Charter (l-r) Dr Bairbre Fleming, Director of UCD Access and Lifelong; Dr Maureen Haran, Universal Design for Learning Lecturer and ALTITUDE Project Lead, ATU; Dr Deirdre Mc Hugh, Universal Design Manager, University of Galway ALTITUDE Project Partner; Professor David Burn, University of Galway President; Dr Helen Maher, Vice-President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, University of Galway; and Dr Lisa Padden, Deputy Director UCD Access and Lifelong Learning, UCD ALTITUDE Project Partner. Credit: Aengus McMahon.

Anti Racism and Equality Initiatives

Nelson Mandela Anti Racism Week is led by the Office of the Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Delivered annually to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the 2025 programme brought together students, staff and external partners through initiatives such as Wear Red Day, cultural events, workshops and race equality training. Activities included 'Coffee and Culture' events, intercultural storytelling sessions and workshops on international protection and migration, alongside staff and student training to build race equality competence. Nelson Mandela Anti Racism Week 2026 built on this approach, again aligning with national campaigns such as Wear Red Day and delivering a programme of awareness raising and campus engagement activities. Complementing this, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Project Fund 25-26 supported targeted initiatives that advanced institutional priorities including Race Equality, Gender Equality, Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment, Widening Participation, and Universal Design and Access. The fund prioritised projects that tackle overlapping barriers to inclusion across areas such as gender, race, disability and socio-economic background. In parallel, the University continued to deliver Race Equality training and capacity building initiatives during the 2025–2026 period, alongside the development of programmes such as Race Equality Champions, strengthening staff and student capability to address inequality and support inclusive practice. Across the 2025–2026 reporting period, these initiatives were underpinned by the continued implementation of the University's Race Equality Framework and action plans, translating policy commitments into practical actions across teaching, research and campus life.



Free tax support for vulnerable groups launched in Galway. Pictured (l-r): Sophie Sweeney, Lecturer in Taxation, University of Galway; Elizabeth Keane, Galway County and City Librarian; Professor Emer Mulligan, Director of the Tax Clinic and Professor of Taxation and Finance, University of Galway; Eileen Ruane, Director Of Services, Galway County Council; Professor Jonathan Levie, Head of J.E. Cairnes School of Business & Economics, University of Galway; Meliosa McIntyre, Senior Executive Librarian, Galway County Council; Dr Maggie O'Neill, Tax Clinic Coordinator, University of Galway; Dr Abigail Rekas, Lecturer in Law and Innovation, University of Galway; and Aisling Lennon, Associate Director of Development, College of Business, Public Policy and Law, University of Galway.

Expanding access to financial support for vulnerable groups

University of Galway contributed to a first-of-its-kind initiative in Ireland providing free tax support to vulnerable groups, representing a strong example of SDG 10 in action through community engagement. The programme offers accessible, expert guidance to individuals who may otherwise face barriers in navigating the tax system, including lone parents, older people and those experiencing financial or social vulnerability. Delivered through trusted community settings such as public libraries, the initiative removes practical and psychological barriers to accessing support. By improving understanding of tax rights and supports, it enables individuals to maximise income, reduce financial stress and strengthen economic resilience. The initiative also reflects effective collaboration between the University, public bodies and community organisations, demonstrating how academic expertise can be mobilised to address real-world inequalities. Importantly, it targets groups who are often underrepresented or underserved within formal financial systems, ensuring that support is inclusive and accessible. Through this initiative, University of Galway is contributing to reducing structural inequalities and promoting fairer access to financial resources, while strengthening community wellbeing and inclusion in line with the ambitions of SDG 10.

Advancing equity through youth and civic engagement

University of Galway strengthened its commitment to reducing inequalities through the establishment of a UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement. This initiative positions the University as a global leader in research and practice that supports the inclusion, wellbeing and active participation of children and young people, particularly those from marginalised or underrepresented groups. The Chair focuses on amplifying youth voice in decision-making, promoting social and emotional learning, and advancing alternative education pathways that respond to diverse needs. A strong emphasis is placed on collaboration with communities, policymakers and practitioners to ensure that research translates into meaningful societal impact. Through partnerships with schools, community organisations and international networks, the initiative supports more inclusive systems that recognise and respond to inequality in education and civic life. It also creates opportunities for young people to act as co-researchers and active citizens, strengthening their agency and sense of belonging. By connecting research, policy and practice, University of Galway is helping to shape more equitable and participatory societies, ensuring that all young people can contribute to and benefit from social, educational and civic development.



SDG 11

Sustainable Cities and Communities



Key Facts



University of Galway is advancing a campus-wide living lab approach, integrating sustainable transport, energy, biodiversity and infrastructure to support low-carbon and resilient urban development.



University of Galway was awarded the NTA Smarter Travel Mark recognising its leadership in promoting sustainable and active travel for staff and students.



Researchers at University of Galway uncovered a high-status ancient ringfort overlooking Galway Bay, revealing the region's historic global connections and strengthening understanding of Ireland's cultural heritage.



281 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

ALIVE Volunteering programme

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the University of Galway's ALIVE (A Learning Initiative and Volunteering Experience) Programme continued to play a pivotal role in connecting students with community-led initiatives that support more inclusive and sustainable communities. The year began with a large-scale Volunteering Fair, bringing together 35 organisations from across the region to engage students in civic and environmental action. Building on this, students participated in a wide range of impactful initiatives, including intergenerational volunteering through the Rethink Ireland *Deonacht Digiteach /Digital Volunteer* project, supporting older adults in developing digital skills in partnership with organisations such as COPE Galway and Age Action Ireland. Students also contributed to community-led climate and sustainability initiatives, including volunteering roles at the Community Climate Assembly and Connacht Youth Climate Assembly, where they facilitated workshops and supported youth engagement on climate action, mobility and sustainable communities. Through these diverse opportunities, ALIVE enables students to develop practical skills, civic awareness and a strong sense of social responsibility, while actively contributing to the development of more resilient and inclusive communities in Galway and beyond. ALIVE provides a structured framework for recognising this engagement. To achieve an ALIVE award, students complete a minimum of one semester (10 hours) of volunteering and undertake a reflective learning process aligned with the SDGs. This ensures that volunteering is embedded within the student learning journey, strengthening civic responsibility and contributing to more resilient and inclusive communities. During the 2025–2026 academic year, almost 400 students completed all aspects of the award, volunteering with charities, societies and non-profit organisations, and were recognised at the President's ALIVE Award ceremony.

Sustainability Champion Digital Badge

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the University of Galway advanced student engagement with SDG 11 through the Student Sustainability Champion Digital Badge, recognising students who actively contribute to more sustainable university campus. A Sustainability Champion is a student who drives sustainability through leadership, advocacy and hands-on action, raising awareness among peers on issues such as climate change, waste reduction and responsible consumption, while promoting sustainable behaviours including recycling, energy conservation and active travel. Collaboration is central to the programme, with students working alongside staff, student organisations and community partners to deliver sustainability-focused initiatives that enhance campus and community wellbeing. Students earn the digital badge by completing sustainability training and engaging in structured pathways such as the Community and University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP), the Students' Union Climate Crew, the Student Sustainability Leadership Awards, or as Student Residences Sustainability Champions, alongside reflective learning. During the 2025–2026 reporting period, eleven students were recognised for their contributions.

ENLIGHT

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the University of Galway strengthened student engagement with SDG 11 through active participation in the ENLIGHT European University Alliance, enabling students to contribute to collaborative, international approaches to sustainable cities and communities. Through ENLIGHT, students engaged in challenge-based learning, short courses, exchanges and collaborative projects addressing themes such as climate action, sustainable mobility and community resilience. Students participated in ENLIGHT student networks and communities of practice, creating peer-to-peer learning environments focused on sustainability and societal impact. Student leadership in this space is recognised through initiatives such as the ENLIGHT Sustainability Awards, which highlight impactful, student-led solutions to real-world challenges. Notably, University of Galway student Adam Mullins was awarded the ENLIGHT Sustainability Award 2025 for his 'SPÉIR Students' Union Pantry' project (see SDG 2: SPÉIR Students' Union Pantry for full details).

These international opportunities complement strong local engagement, reinforcing the University's living lab approach and equipping students with the skills and global perspective to support sustainable urban development.

Just 3- a focus on international student volunteering and urban green space

The Just 3 initiative, led by the International Office in partnership with Terryland Forest Park, represented a strong example of community engagement aligned with SDG 11. The programme invites all incoming international students to volunteer "just three hours" of their time in conservation activities within Terryland Forest Park—Ireland's largest urban woodland. During the 2025–2026 reporting period students have participated in weekly Saturday sessions based at An Nead on Sandy Road, contributing to activities such as invasive species removal, native tree planting, development of an edible forest, acorn harvesting and park clean-ups. Group participation has ranged from small teams to large cohorts of up to 60 students, working alongside local volunteers and community stakeholders. This initiative directly supports SDG 11 by enhancing access to safe, inclusive and sustainable green spaces, while fostering community integration and environmental stewardship. Students not only contribute to the maintenance and biodiversity of a key urban asset but also engage with the social and ecological history of Terryland Forest Park as a carbon sink, wildlife corridor and shared public space. By connecting international students with local communities, 'Just 3' strengthens social cohesion and reinforces the role of the University as an active contributor to sustainable urban development in Galway.

Research Spotlight

Climate and flood forecasting (T3UD and IMUFF)

University of Galway secured Met Éireann funding for two major research projects addressing climate risk and flood forecasting, with direct relevance to sustainable and resilient communities. The T3UD (TRANSLATE-3: Underpinning Data) project, led by Dr Paul Nolan, focuses on developing high-resolution climate projections for Ireland, providing critical data to support national and local decision-making. This research enhances understanding of future climate scenarios, enabling planners, utilities and policymakers to design infrastructure and services that are resilient to long-term climate change. Complementing this, the IMUFF (Integrated Multi-model multi-hazard Flood Forecasting) project, led by Dr Indiana Olbert, applies advanced modelling techniques and artificial intelligence to improve forecasting of compound flooding events, including interactions between coastal and river systems. The research addresses a significant gap in predicting multi-hazard flood risks, particularly relevant to Ireland's coastal and riverine settlements. By improving the accuracy and timeliness of flood predictions, the project supports more effective emergency planning and risk management. Together, these projects generate critical evidence and tools that inform infrastructure planning, land use decisions and disaster preparedness, contributing directly to the development of safer, more resilient communities.

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Understanding urban light pollution to support sustainable cities

An international citizen science project, with contributions from University of Galway, has revealed that streetlights are far from the only source of light pollution affecting our night skies. The study revealed that a significant proportion of artificial light at night originates not only from public street lighting, but also from residential and commercial buildings. This challenges traditional assumptions and highlights the need for a broader, more integrated approach to managing light in cities. By identifying previously underestimated sources, the research supports more effective urban planning and policy development aimed at reducing unnecessary light emissions. This has clear implications for improving energy efficiency, reducing environmental pressures and enhancing the quality of urban life. The findings also contribute to protecting biodiversity, as excessive artificial light is known to disrupt ecosystems and wildlife behaviour. By addressing an often-overlooked aspect of environmental management, University of Galway is contributing to more liveable and ecologically responsible cities, in line with the ambitions of SDG 11.

Storm Éowyn coastal risk research

In 2025, researchers at University of Galway conducted a detailed analysis of coastal dynamics during Storm Éowyn, providing new insights into the interaction between tidal systems and extreme weather events. The study utilised extensive observational datasets to examine how storm surge and tidal conditions combined to influence water levels along Ireland's western seaboard. Findings revealed the scale of the event and highlighted how close certain coastal areas came to experiencing significantly greater impacts, underscoring the vulnerability of coastal settlements and infrastructure. The research advances understanding of compound coastal hazards by identifying the conditions under which storm surges can amplify tidal effects, leading to increased flood risk. This improved knowledge base is critical for the design and management of coastal infrastructure, including ports, transport networks and urban settlements. It also supports more accurate risk assessments and informs long-term coastal planning strategies. This research strengthens understanding of coastal risk and supports more resilient infrastructure planning and disaster preparedness.



Community Engagement

Advancing the campus as a living lab for sustainable cities and communities

University of Galway is developing its campus as a living lab for sustainable cities and communities, using its physical environment to demonstrate solutions that support low-carbon, resilient and liveable urban systems. Key initiatives include the Biodiversity Trail, which enhances urban nature, supports pollinators and provides accessible green spaces; a network of drinking water fountains that promotes sustainable consumption and reduces single-use plastic; and visible energy initiatives, including solar photovoltaic installations, deep energy retrofits and the GEOFIT project, demonstrating innovative approaches to low-carbon buildings. Further developments during the 2025–2026 reporting period are reflected in recent projects delivered by the Buildings and Estates Office, embedding sustainability within the design, construction and operation of University infrastructure. The campus also contributes to the city's cultural life through initiatives such as a public book bench in the Máirín de Valéra Garden, commemorating graduate and Irish language poet Caitlín Maude as part of the Galway Poetry Trail. This approach is further strengthened by the University's contribution to cultural research and public engagement, including work on the history and representation of Gaelic games, connecting culture, identity and place. The University works in close partnership with Galway City and regional stakeholders to support sustainable urban development through research, infrastructure and community engagement.

Galway International Arts Festival

The Galway International Arts Festival 2025 demonstrates a significant and measurable contribution by University of Galway to SDG 11 through an expanded and deepened strategic partnership with the Galway International Arts Festival. The University served as a major festival partner, hosting 21% of all festival venues on campus and welcoming approximately 54,000 attendees to performances, exhibitions and talks. This enhanced partnership enabled the most ambitious festival programme ever delivered on campus, reinforcing the University's role as a key cultural platform and creative hub for the city and region. The campus hosted world premieres, major theatre productions and visual installations, while also serving as the location for the festival's largest venue, the Heineken Big Top, which staged 12 major live music performances. The University also facilitated the *First Thought Talks* series, bringing leading thinkers, artists and University academics together to engage the public on contemporary cultural and environmental issues. In addition, productions such as *Why the Moon Travels* highlighted underrepresented voices, contributing to cultural inclusion and diversity within the city. By opening its campus at this scale and embedding long-term cultural collaboration, University of Galway strengthens Galway's cultural infrastructure, enhances access to shared public space and contributes directly to SDG 11 by fostering a vibrant, inclusive and culturally rich urban environment.



Archaeologists from University of Galway at work during an eight-week excavation of the Rathgurreen Ringfort, in the Maree area of Co Galway. The research was led by Dr Michelle Comber and Dr Noel McCarthy of the University's Discipline of Archaeology.



Professor Becky Whay together with students and staff accepts the NTA Smarter Travel Mark.

Credit: Aengus McMahon

Galway Science and Technology Festival

Another example of University of Galway's contribution to SDG 11 is its leading role in the Galway Science and Technology Festival 2025, particularly through hosting the flagship Festival Exhibition on campus in November 2025. As a key academic partner, the University opened its campus as a large-scale, free and accessible public space, welcoming thousands of visitors from across the region to engage with science, technology and innovation. The 2025 exhibition featured over 100 interactive exhibits and approximately 25 live shows and workshops, delivered by university researchers alongside industry partners, schools and community organisations. Visitors engaged with topics including health, environment, sustainability and emerging technologies, with hands-on demonstrations designed to encourage participation and learning across all age groups. By transforming the campus into an inclusive civic space for public engagement, the University supports SDG 11 targets relating to accessible public spaces, community participation and inclusive urban environments. The festival also strengthens connections between the University and the wider community, fostering collaboration, curiosity and shared learning. Through its leadership and active involvement in the 2025 festival, University of Galway demonstrates its role as an anchor institution supporting a vibrant and inclusive city.

Award of the Smarter Travel Mark

University of Galway's leadership in sustainable transport has been recognised through the award of the Smarter Travel Mark by the National Transport Authority, during National Bike Week 2025. This national accreditation acknowledges the University's sustained efforts to promote active and low-carbon travel among staff and students. Initiatives include investment in high-quality cycling infrastructure, enhanced pedestrian pathways, secure bike parking and facilities, and the integration of sustainable transport planning across campus operations. The University has also supported behaviour change through targeted awareness campaigns, travel planning supports and engagement programmes that encourage walking, cycling, public transport use and car-sharing. These actions contribute to reducing transport-related emissions while improving health, wellbeing and accessibility across the campus community. Recognition through the Smarter Travel Mark highlights University of Galway's role as a sector leader in sustainable mobility and demonstrates how higher education institutions can contribute to more connected, low-carbon and liveable cities in line with SDG 11.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY
Sustainability Report
2025-2026



Ollscoil na Gaillimhe
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY

100%
My Green Lab
Certified

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS



my green lab
certification.

SDG 12
Responsible
Consumption
and Production

12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



Credit: Aengus McMahon

Key Facts

NO 1

University of Galway retained 1st place in Ireland in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025 for SDG 12, the fourth year in a row.



University of Galway renewed its AASHE STARS Gold rating for the second-time, recognising excellence in sustainability performance across operations, teaching and research.



University of Galway eliminated all single-use cups from campus catering in September 2024, preventing tens of thousands of disposable items annually and driving behaviour change at scale.



362 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Wasted Week

Wasted Week 2025 at University of Galway was a student-led sustainability awareness campaign organised by the Students’ Union during the final week of January. The initiative brought together students, societies and sustainability groups to highlight key environmental challenges such as waste, fast fashion and unsustainable consumption, while encouraging practical actions aligned with SDG 12. Students participated in a range of interactive events including a Fast Fashion Workshop, a Climate Café with the Environmental Society, creative activities such as a leaf printing workshop, and a Paper-free quiz, demonstrating low-waste event practices. A central initiative was the Clothes Swap Shop, where students exchanged pre-loved clothing, promoting reuse and circular economy principles. Wasted Week 2026 built on this approach, with the Students’ Union again delivering a programme of sustainability-focused events and engagement activities across campus in March 2026. Events included a pop-up second-hand clothes shop and practical sustainability workshops, supporting reuse and low-impact lifestyles. Together, these initiatives encourage students to reflect on everyday consumption and adopt more sustainable behaviours, while strengthening peer-to-peer engagement on climate action and sustainable living.

Teaching and learning programmes

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, teaching and learning continued to support student understanding of SDG 12 through programmes, modules and professional micro-credentials focused on sustainable production, resource efficiency and circular economy approaches. Undergraduate programmes such as BSc Environmental Science and BSc Earth and Ocean Sciences include teaching on environmental management, sustainable resource use and waste systems. A dedicated Sustainable Production and Consumption module explores global supply chains, circular economy strategies, sustainable consumption behaviour and policy responses designed to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency. At postgraduate level, programmes such as the MSc Environmental Leadership examine sustainability transitions and circular economy solutions, while the ME Energy Systems Engineering programme explores resource efficiency and sustainable energy systems within industrial processes. In addition, the University offers professional micro-credentials including the new Green Labs micro-credential, which provides training on reducing waste, improving procurement practices and minimising the environmental footprint of laboratory research. Together, these programmes and courses embed SDG 12 principles within teaching and learning and prepare graduates to contribute to more responsible consumption and production systems.

Research Spotlight

Trane Technologies sustainable manufacturing research partnership

University of Galway announced a strategic research partnership with Trane Technologies focused on advancing sustainable manufacturing and industrial innovation. The collaboration brings together University researchers and industry partners to develop technologies and processes that improve energy efficiency, reduce material waste and support more sustainable production systems. The partnership focuses on reducing resource use and advancing low-carbon manufacturing solutions. Researchers are working with industry specialists to explore new approaches to product design, manufacturing processes and materials management that minimise environmental impact while maintaining high performance and reliability. The partnership also supports knowledge exchange between academia and industry, enabling research insights to inform real-world applications while providing students and early-career researchers with opportunities to engage directly with industry challenges. By linking academic research with industrial innovation, the initiative demonstrates how universities can play a key role in advancing sustainable production systems. It contributes directly to SDG 12 by promoting responsible manufacturing practices and improving resource efficiency across industrial supply chains.

Circular bioeconomy and waste-to-resource innovation

Research at University of Galway during the 2025–2026 reporting period advanced solutions that support the transition to more circular and resource-efficient production systems. A 2025 peer-reviewed study by University researchers examined the feasibility of producing biomethane from food waste through anaerobic digestion. The findings highlight the potential to convert organic waste into renewable energy while reducing landfill disposal and greenhouse gas emissions. Complementing this work, researchers at University of Galway are developing technologies that transform waste and wastewater into valuable resources as part of the circular bioeconomy. This research explores converting industrial and agricultural waste streams into renewable fuels such as hydrogen, as well as producing bio-based materials including fertilisers and bioplastics. By replacing linear waste disposal models with circular production processes that recover energy and materials from waste streams, these projects contribute to improved resource efficiency and reduced environmental impacts. Together, these research initiatives demonstrate how University of Galway is supporting SDG 12 by developing innovative approaches to waste reduction, sustainable production and circular resource management.

Community Engagement

Green Labs in the spotlight

The Sustainability Engagement Fund continued during the 2025–2026 reporting period as an important mechanism for supporting student- and staff-led sustainability initiatives. The fund provides small grants for collaborative projects that contribute to the SDGs while strengthening links between the University and the wider community. Funded projects include community-based outreach, educational workshops and creative engagement activities that promote awareness and understanding of sustainability challenges and solutions. A key priority during this period was support for initiatives linked to the Green Labs programme, encouraging laboratory teams to reduce resource consumption and environmental impacts within research environments. This work is further strengthened through the establishment of a Green Labs Forum, providing a regular platform for lab staff to meet during the semester, share best practice, discuss challenges and collaborate on solutions to advance more sustainable laboratory practices. The Forum has been highlighted through Sustainability Office communications and social media, supporting ongoing engagement across the research community. These initiatives promote responsible resource use and improved environmental performance across research and campus operations. The programme also provides valuable experiential learning opportunities for students, enabling them to apply sustainability knowledge in practical contexts while developing skills in project management, collaboration and community engagement.

Publication of Waste Management Report

University of Galway's Waste Management Report 2026 outlines how waste is managed across campus and highlights efforts to reduce waste and improve recycling during 2025. The University continues to make strong progress, with the overall recycling rate reaching 51.5%, exceeding the 50% benchmark. High performance in key areas, including approximately 60% on the main campus and 69% across catering outlets, reflects targeted interventions, improved infrastructure and strong engagement across the University community. Total waste from student residences also decreased to 231 tonnes despite an increase in student numbers, indicating positive momentum in waste reduction. While these results are encouraging, they highlight the need for greater consistency across campus, with further opportunities to improve segregation practices and reduce general waste. Ongoing initiatives, including enhanced recycling infrastructure, awareness campaigns and actions to reduce single use materials, alongside robust data tracking, support evidence-based decision making and continued progress.

University of Galway Students' Union lead circular economy initiatives across the campus, for example, the Re-turn it Right scheme.



Glassary and other student-led circular economy initiatives

The Glassary initiative at University of Galway is a student-led programme that promotes circular economy practices while supporting local charities. Each year at the end of the academic term, students living in campus residences are encouraged to donate unwanted items such as clothing, kitchenware and non-perishable food rather than disposing of them. Collection points are set up across residences, and the items are sorted and redistributed to local community organisations and charities. The initiative, delivered in collaboration with Accommodation Services, SU and student volunteers, significantly reduces waste during peak move-out periods while supporting those experiencing need in the wider Galway community. Following a successful rollout in summer 2025, the programme is being repeated and expanded in 2026. Additional student-led initiatives include Donate Don't Dump recycling schemes, battery and vape recycling initiative, bottle re-turn scheme, SU Pantry food redistribution project (See SDG 2: SPÉIR Students' Union Pantry for full details) and second-hand pop-up shops. Together these initiatives further embed circular economy practices across campus.

Embedding sustainable procurement practices

University of Galway is strengthening sustainable procurement practices by embedding environmental, social and ethical criteria across the full procurement cycle, aligned with its Climate Action Roadmap 2025 (see SDG 13) and institutional sustainability policies. The University's Sustainable Public Procurement Handbook guides purchasing decisions from planning through to contract management, incorporating life-cycle costing, environmental impact assessment and social responsibility considerations such as labour standards, equality and ethical sourcing. Sustainable procurement is further supported through operational policies and practices, including requirements for suppliers to align with environmental and ethical standards, and a strong emphasis on responsible sourcing of food, materials and services. This includes prioritising local and sustainable suppliers, reducing waste through procurement decisions, and integrating circular economy principles into purchasing. By embedding circular economy approaches within procurement, the University also contributes to SDG 8 by supporting responsible, local and ethical economic activity, while advancing SDG 13 through reduced lifecycle emissions and more climate-conscious supply chains. Recognising that procurement represents a significant proportion of institutional carbon emissions, the University is continuing to strengthen supplier engagement and embed green procurement practices across contracts and campus operations, supporting its wider climate targets and contributing to more sustainable supply chains.



Student Sustainability Leaders Molly Hickey and Peter O'Neill test the University's new network of outdoor drinking water fountains. Credit: Aengus McMahon.

SDG 13 Climate Action



Nature Positive

Net Zero

Durham Declaration

Durham Declaration

Credit: Mike Shaughnessy

Key Facts



The University of Galway Climate Action Roadmap 2025 showcases leadership in climate action through national alignment, transparent reporting and active community engagement.



University of Galway's 2025 emissions performance shows total emissions reduced by 52.2% and fossil fuel emissions by 43.7% against baseline levels, while energy efficiency improved by 52.9%, already exceeding the national 2030 target.

CO₂

University of Galway is a signatory to the Durham Declaration on Climate Change and Sustainability.



451 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Integration of climate content into teaching

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, University of Galway continued to embed climate action within teaching through established postgraduate programmes while also strengthening more flexible and applied learning opportunities. Climate-focused content is delivered across programmes such as the [MSc in Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security](#), [MSc Sustainable Environments](#), [MSc Global Environmental Economics](#), [MSc Ocean, Atmosphere and Climate](#) where students engage with applied topics including climate adaptation, low-carbon transitions, sustainable energy systems and environmental policy. While these programmes represent ongoing provision, their delivery in the 2025-2026 reporting period is closely informed by current research and policy developments, including recent University research on flood risk, peatland carbon mapping and climate resilience. Importantly, the University expanded its more flexible learning offering through continued rollout of its [multiple climate related micro-credentials](#). This combination of research-led teaching within degree programmes and accessible micro-credentials reflects a clear shift towards equipping both students and wider society with up-to-date, applied climate competencies, supporting Ireland's transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient future.

Climate Crew and student peer-led climate engagement initiatives

The Students' Union [Climate Crew](#) provides a key platform for peer-to-peer engagement on sustainability and climate action. During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the Climate Crew met regularly to identify and progress practical actions to improve sustainability across campus. Working closely with the SU Environmental and Sustainability Officer, the group supported a range of initiatives including awareness campaigns, behaviour change activities and hosted engagement events as part of SDG Week 2025. The Climate Crew represents an important informal learning pathway, enabling students to develop leadership, communication and climate advocacy skills outside the formal curriculum. University of Galway Botany Society won the Best Green Initiative in the BICS National Societies Awards 2026 for their Plant for the Planet, a student-led tree planting and biodiversity initiative during Tree Week 2025.

Research Spotlight

Climate–health research contributing to international reporting

University of Galway is contributing directly to global climate–health reporting through its involvement in the [Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change](#), one of the world's leading scientific assessments of the links between climate change and human health. Research led by Professor Karyn Morrisey from the from the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics forms part of the 2025 Lancet Countdown report, a major international collaboration involving over 120 experts worldwide. Through this contribution, University of Galway plays a direct role in the development, analysis and reporting of key indicators used to track climate-related health risks and responses, including exposure, vulnerability, adaptation and resilience. As a contributing author, the University is strengthening the global evidence base on the health impacts of climate change and supporting more informed decision-making. This work demonstrates the University's role in connecting climate science with health outcomes and informing policy and action at international, national and local levels, contributing directly to SDG 13 through evidence-based responses to climate change.

Climate policy and global equity research

[Research](#) led by University of Galway highlights the importance of fair and ambitious climate policy in tackling global climate change. The study examines Ireland's proposed approach to climate targets, particularly the use of a 'no additional warming' model for agricultural methane. It warns that this approach could allow historically high emissions to continue, reducing the overall ambition needed for effective climate action. Conducted in collaboration with international partners, including researchers from University of Oxford and International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, the study brings a strong global perspective to climate policy debates. It highlights how such approaches may favour high-emitting, livestock-exporting countries while limiting opportunities for lower-income nations that depend on agriculture for food security and economic development. By effectively 'locking in' current emission levels, the research shows how climate policy choices can deepen global inequality and increase risks of food insecurity. The findings strengthen the case for science-based targets that reflect both environmental limits and social fairness. This work demonstrates the University of Galway's leadership in climate research and policy engagement. It supports SDG 13 by promoting evidence-based, equitable climate action and by highlighting the need for international cooperation to ensure climate solutions are both effective and just.

Peatland research and climate action

University of Galway is strengthening climate action through advanced peatland research and the establishment of the [All-Ireland Peatlands Centre of Excellence](#). Launched at the University's Ryan Institute, the Centre brings together researchers, policymakers and communities to support peatland restoration, conservation and sustainable land management, addressing key challenges including decarbonisation, biodiversity loss and just transition. Further advancing peatland research, the University's Hydrogeophysics and Remote Sensing group is enhancing understanding of peatland extent and carbon storage through innovative mapping techniques. A [2025 study](#) used environmental gamma radiation data from the Geological Survey Ireland Tellus aerial survey to identify peat soils across approximately 80% of Ireland with significantly improved accuracy. By analysing how peat soils absorb natural gamma radiation, the research team developed a new method to detect peat and identify transitions between peat and mineral soils, including areas hidden beneath forests and grasslands. This approach increases the estimated extent of peaty soils and provides more detailed spatial data to support decision-making. Importantly, this research provides policymakers with clearer evidence on where carbon is stored in the landscape and where emissions may occur due to drainage or land use change, enabling more targeted climate mitigation measures. Together, these initiatives support SDG 13 by integrating research, collaboration and advanced mapping to strengthen climate mitigation, inform policy and support peatland restoration.

Climathon Galway 2025: research-driven climate innovation and collaboration

University of Galway continued to advance climate action research through its hosting of [Climathon Galway 2025](#), organised by the Ryan Institute and held on campus in October 2025. The event brought together researchers, students, policymakers and industry partners to collaborate on innovative solutions to local climate challenges. Climathon provides a platform for translating research into real-world impact, with University of Galway researchers playing a key role in shaping challenge themes, guiding interdisciplinary teams and contributing evidence-based insights throughout the event. Drawing on expertise across environmental science, sustainability, engineering and policy, researchers supported participants in developing practical, scalable solutions to issues such as urban resilience, climate adaptation and low-carbon transitions. The event also strengthens links between academic research and external stakeholders, including local authorities and innovation hubs, ensuring that research-informed solutions are grounded in real societal needs. Social media engagement and participation from research groups across the University further highlight the role of researchers in driving collaboration and innovation beyond traditional academic settings. This work supports SDG 13 by linking research, innovation and collaboration to enable practical, locally relevant climate solutions.

Advancing climate adaptation through satellite innovation and data-driven insights

University of Galway advanced climate action [through research](#) that strengthens global understanding of climate adaptation, as demonstrated by a recent study highlighting the critical role of satellite data in tracking and supporting resilience efforts. The research explores how Earth observation technologies, combined with artificial intelligence, can provide real-time, scalable insights into how communities and ecosystems are responding to climate change. By enabling the monitoring of key indicators such as land use, water availability, vegetation health and the impacts of extreme weather events, this work supports more informed and timely decision-making. A key contribution of the study is its alignment with international climate frameworks, particularly the Global Goal on Adaptation under the Paris Agreement. The research addresses a significant global challenge: the lack of consistent, comparable data to measure adaptation progress. By demonstrating how satellite-based approaches can fill this gap, University of Galway researchers are contributing to the development of robust tools that can guide policy, investment and climate planning at national and international levels. This work highlights the University's role in producing policy-relevant, impact-driven research that supports climate resilience. By bridging science, technology and decision-making, it contributes to more effective responses to climate risks and strengthens global capacity to adapt to a changing climate, aligning strongly with the objectives of SDG 13 Climate Action.

Flood forecasting and climate services research

University of Galway researchers were [awarded funding](#) from Met Éireann to develop advanced climate services and flood forecasting models as part of national efforts to address climate change and extreme weather events. The funded projects focus on improving predictive capabilities through the integration of climate data, hydrological modelling and multi-hazard forecasting approaches. In particular, the development of integrated flood forecasting systems enhances the ability to anticipate and respond to flooding events across catchments, supporting more effective management of water systems. This research contributes directly to SDG 6 by strengthening integrated water resources management and improving resilience to water-related hazards. Enhanced flood forecasting enables policymakers, planners and emergency services to better protect communities, infrastructure and ecosystems from the impacts of extreme weather. It also supports improved decision-making in relation to land use, water management and climate adaptation. By advancing national capacity in flood prediction, this work supports more resilient and sustainable water systems.



Community Engagement

Climate leadership and Climate Action Roadmap 2025

University of Galway advanced climate leadership through a coordinated, whole-of-university approach across governance, research and operations. At governance level, Of Galway, For the World the Strategic Plan 2025–2030, embeds sustainability and climate action as institutional priorities. The University signed the Durham Declaration on Earth Day 2025, committing to whole-of-university climate leadership across research, teaching, and operations. The University of Galway Climate Action Roadmap 2025 provides a clear example of institutional leadership contributing to SDG 13 through community engagement, transparency and public sector alignment. Developed in response to Ireland's Climate Action Mandate, the roadmap sets out how the University will measure, plan and reduce its greenhouse gas emissions while embedding climate action across operations, research and engagement. Importantly, the roadmap is not an internal document alone; it is publicly available, supporting transparency and accountability, and demonstrating the University's alignment with Ireland's Climate Action Mandate. The roadmap outlines significant progress, including a 35% reduction in fossil fuel emissions and a 57% improvement in energy efficiency against statutory baselines, demonstrating measurable climate mitigation outcomes. It also highlights cross-campus actions in areas such as sustainable transport, green procurement, waste reduction and low-carbon buildings. Through its publication and ongoing annual updates, the Climate Action Roadmap serves as a mechanism for accountability, knowledge sharing and collaboration, enabling the University to engage externally while supporting wider societal transition to a low-carbon future.

Campus decarbonisation initiatives

University of Galway advanced climate mitigation through a range of campus-based decarbonisation measures aligned with its Climate Action Roadmap 2025. These include investment in energy efficiency retrofits, expansion of solar photovoltaic installations, and the rollout of low-carbon heating solutions through projects such as GeoFit. The University also progressed sustainable transport initiatives, including the introduction of electric buses and upgrades to cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Together, these actions support measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and demonstrate how campus operations function as a living laboratory for climate action.

The Carbon Budget project led by the Sustainability Office is investigating how a carbon budget or internal carbon pricing might be implemented at the University to reduce emissions from business travel and procurement. The University is also part of an ENLIGHT Carbon Group examining examining how other universities have implemented similar schemes

University of Galway launches the All-Ireland Peatlands Centre of Excellence. Pictured (l-r): Louis Gilet, John Connolly, Katja Bruish, Piaras Ó Giobúin, Lisa Coleman carrying out field work in Co Roscommon. Credit: Dr Terry Morley, University of Galway.



Higher Education Authority Performance Agreement 2024–2028

The University of Galway Performance Agreement 2024–2028 with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) represented a key example of national-level partnership supporting SDG 13 through governance, accountability and coordinated climate action. The agreement sets out institutional priorities aligned with national policy, including sustainability, climate action and responsible resource management, and establishes clear expectations for performance monitoring and reporting. Through this formal agreement, the University commits to embedding climate action within its strategic planning and operational delivery, supported by senior leadership structures and institutional oversight. This includes integrating climate considerations across teaching, research, campus operations and engagement, in line with Ireland's Climate Action Plan and public sector mandates. The agreement also strengthens collaboration between the University and government, ensuring that progress on climate action is aligned with national targets and contributes to wider societal goals. As a structured partnership framework, the Performance Agreement demonstrates how higher education institutions can play a coordinated role in advancing climate action through policy alignment, reporting and shared accountability, reinforcing the University's contribution to SDG 13 at a national scale.

Hosting UN Special Rapporteur

University of Galway hosted the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, Astrid Puentes Riaño, as part of her official country visit to Ireland. The visit focused on examining national progress and challenges in implementing human rights obligations related to climate change and environmental protection. During her engagement with the University, researchers from the Ryan Institute and the Irish Centre for Human Rights shared expertise on environmental rights, climate justice and access to justice, highlighting the University's contribution to policy-relevant climate research. A key component of the visit was an open forum involving a wide range of civic and community organisations, including FairSeas, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Galway City Community Network, Corrib Beo and the Global Legal Action Network. This created an important space for dialogue between academia and civil society on issues such as biodiversity, water, food systems and climate governance. The visit also contributes to international policy processes, with findings from the Special Rapporteur's Ireland visit informing a report to the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2027. This initiative demonstrates the University's role as a convenor of dialogue, connecting research, community perspectives and global policy on climate action and environmental rights.



University of Galway hosts Community Climate Assembly 2025





Celebrating 50 years of marine excellence at Carna Research Station

SDG 14
Life Below Water



Key Facts



The [Ryan Institute](#) coordinates a wide network of marine and environmental research, contributing to national policy, international collaboration and the sustainable management of ocean ecosystems.

50 Years

University of Galway marked 50 years of marine research at Carna Research Station through the [Todhchaí Ghorm – Blue Future](#) event.



The Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit ([SEMRU](#)) produces Ireland's [Ocean Economy Report](#), providing national data on marine sector employment and economic value.



420 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Student-Led Beach Clean-Ups with Marine Society and Students’ Union

Student societies continued to organise coastal clean-up initiatives aimed at protecting marine ecosystems and reducing ocean plastic pollution. The Marine Society and the Students’ Union Climate Crew organised beach clean events involving student volunteers, often targeting local beaches such as Grattan Beach. These events combined practical environmental action with applied learning on marine ecosystems and coastal pollution. For example, specific student beach clean events took place in September and October 2025, organised through the Marine Society and student networks, bringing volunteers together to remove litter from local beaches and raise awareness about marine conservation. Through these activities, students gained practical experience in environmental stewardship while contributing to the protection of Galway’s coastal environment, directly supporting SDG 14.

Photo by Prof. Chaosheng Zhang



Sustainability Engagement Fund – spotlight on SDG 14

The University of Galway [Sustainability Engagement Fund](#) supports student-led sustainability initiatives and interdisciplinary projects addressing environmental challenges, with the pilot programme focusing specifically on SDG 6 and SDG 14. Student projects funded through the programme included initiatives exploring coastal ecosystems and marine environments. For example, one project examined the Galway coast and the River Corrib through documentary storytelling and exploration activities, helping students communicate the importance of aquatic ecosystems and ocean protection. Other funded initiatives included educational workshops and outreach activities that connect communities with the importance of clean water, marine environments and sustainable resource use. These projects encourage collaboration between students, researchers and community groups while providing students with opportunities to design sustainability engagement activities themselves. By supporting student-led initiatives addressing ocean and freshwater ecosystems, the Engagement Fund strengthens sustainability learning and empowers students to actively contribute to the protection of aquatic environments.

MSc Marine and Freshwater Resources Management programme

University of Galway offers the [MSc in Marine and Freshwater Resources Management](#), a postgraduate programme that develops advanced knowledge in marine ecology, water resource management and sustainable ocean governance. The programme trains students in topics such as fisheries management, aquatic biodiversity, marine policy and sustainable coastal resource management. Through interdisciplinary teaching and research-led learning, students examine key environmental challenges including marine pollution, climate impacts on oceans and the sustainable management of aquatic ecosystems. Students engage in fieldwork, research projects and policy analysis, developing the scientific and management skills required to address marine sustainability challenges. The programme draws on the University’s strong marine research ecosystem, including the Ryan Institute and marine science research groups. By equipping graduates with the expertise needed to protect and manage marine environments, the programme contributes directly to advancing SDG 14 through education and capacity building.

Research Spotlight

Coral reef microbiome discovery research

Researchers from University of Galway contributed to international research revealing new insights into the microbial ecosystems associated with coral reefs. The study analysed microbiome samples collected from coral reefs across the Pacific Ocean and identified hundreds of previously uncharacterised microbial species associated with coral hosts. The research demonstrated that coral reefs host highly specialised microbial communities that contribute to ecosystem functioning and produce bioactive compounds with potential applications in medicine and biotechnology. Scientists reconstructed the genomes of hundreds of microbial species, highlighting how much of coral ecosystem biodiversity remains unknown. The findings emphasise the importance of protecting coral reef ecosystems, which support a significant proportion of marine biodiversity and provide critical ecosystem services. By expanding understanding of marine microbial diversity, the research contributes to global efforts to conserve marine ecosystems and protect ocean biodiversity in line with SDG 14.

CÓIR – Changing Ocean Ireland Climate and Marine Ecosystem Research

University of Galway researchers are leading the [CÓIR \(Changing Ocean Ireland\)](#) project, which investigates how climate change is affecting marine ecosystems and biodiversity in Irish waters. The project brings together marine scientists from multiple disciplines to study ocean conditions, marine species and ecosystem services. The research integrates physical oceanography, marine ecology and socio-economic analysis to understand how climate change is altering ocean ecosystems and food webs. By modelling ecosystem responses to environmental change, the project helps identify potential risks to marine biodiversity and fisheries. The findings support national and international efforts to develop effective marine conservation policies and sustainable management strategies for Ireland’s ocean environment. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and partnerships with national marine research networks, the project contributes valuable scientific knowledge for protecting marine ecosystems and supporting sustainable ocean management.

Marine ecosystem and ocean economy research

The Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit ([SEMURU](#)) played a key role in analysing Ireland’s ocean economy and supporting sustainable marine policy. In 2025, SEMRU collaborated with the Marine Institute to publish Ireland’s [Ocean Economy Report](#), which examines economic activity linked to marine sectors such as fisheries, shipping, tourism and marine energy. The research provides data on economic output, employment and trends within Ireland’s marine industries, offering evidence that supports sustainable marine planning and ocean governance. Understanding the socio-economic value of the ocean is essential for balancing economic development with the protection of marine ecosystems. By integrating economic analysis with marine sustainability research, SEMRU contributes to policy development aimed at promoting a sustainable blue economy while safeguarding marine biodiversity. This work supports evidence-based decision-making and strengthens Ireland’s contribution to achieving SDG 14.

50 years of Carna Research Station: supporting marine research and collaboration

In 2025, University of Galway marked 50 years of marine research excellence at its Carna Research Station through the [Todhchaí Ghorm – Blue Future](#) event, highlighting its role in marine research and collaboration. Over this period, Carna has developed as an important marine research facility, supporting work in areas such as aquaculture, marine ecosystems and the sustainable management of ocean resources. The anniversary event brought together researchers, industry partners and coastal stakeholders, reflecting the station’s role in knowledge exchange and applied research linked to Ireland’s blue economy. Research activity at Carna contributes to understanding marine environments and supports ongoing work in areas such as biodiversity, coastal systems and climate-related pressures on ocean ecosystems. The station operates within the wider Ryan Institute, connecting field-based research with interdisciplinary expertise across the University. Through its long-term research activity and collaborative approach, Carna Research Station contributes to the sustainable management of marine environments in line with SDG 14.



Community Engagement

Irish Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation meeting

University of Galway hosted the Third Annual Irish Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) Meeting through the Ryan Institute. The event brought together scientists, policymakers and national agencies including Met Éireann and Maynooth University to discuss the latest research on ocean circulation and climate change. The meeting focused on the Atlantic Ocean circulation system, which plays a critical role in regulating climate and storing carbon dioxide in the ocean. Researchers presented findings on polar ocean processes, marine carbon storage and climate feedback mechanisms. By bringing together academic researchers, policymakers and environmental agencies, the event provided an important forum for translating marine science research into policy discussions. The conference also strengthened collaboration between Irish research institutions working on ocean observation and climate science. Events such as the AMOC meeting demonstrate the University's role as a convener of national and international expertise on ocean systems and climate impacts. Through these knowledge-exchange events, University of Galway contributes to improved understanding and governance of ocean ecosystems, directly supporting SDG 14.

2025 Marine Economics and Policy Research Symposium

Researchers from the Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit (SEMRU) at University of Galway regularly organise and contribute to the [Marine Economics and Policy Research Symposium](#), an annual event that brings together researchers, policymakers and industry representatives to discuss ocean economy and marine policy issues. The symposium provides a platform for presenting research on topics such as sustainable fisheries, marine tourism, blue economy development and ocean governance. Participants include economists, marine scientists, policymakers and industry stakeholders involved in Ireland's marine sector. The event encourages dialogue between academic researchers and decision-makers, helping translate marine research into policy and management strategies that support sustainable ocean use. Discussions also address emerging challenges such as climate change impacts on marine industries and the transition to sustainable maritime economies. Through this annual symposium, University of Galway supports evidence-based marine policy development and fosters collaboration between researchers and stakeholders working to protect marine ecosystems and promote sustainable ocean management.

Strategic marine alliance for research and training

University of Galway is a key partner in the Strategic Marine Alliance for Research and Training (SMART), an all-island collaboration that brings together universities and research organisations to strengthen marine science research, innovation and training across Ireland. Through this partnership, researchers at University of Galway contribute expertise in marine ecosystems, ocean observation, marine policy and the sustainable blue economy. The University's marine research community, including scientists connected with the Ryan Institute, collaborates with national partners to advance interdisciplinary research addressing challenges such as climate change impacts on oceans, marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of marine resources. SMART also supports postgraduate training and knowledge exchange between academia, government agencies and industry stakeholders in the marine sector. By participating in this strategic partnership, University of Galway helps strengthen Ireland's capacity in marine research and innovation while supporting collaboration that informs sustainable ocean governance and marine environmental protection, contributing to progress on SDG 14

University of Galway supports evidence-based marine policy development and fosters collaboration between researchers and stakeholders working to protect marine ecosystems and promote sustainable ocean management.

Coral reefs in Papua New Guinea, University of Galway researchers contributed to an international study that uncovered thousands of previously unknown microbial species living within Pacific coral reefs, revealing new opportunities for medicine, biotechnology and biodiversity conservation. Credit Oliver Thomas

SDG 15

Life on Land



University of Galway celebrates earning Green Campus status for the third time. Pictured (l-r): Richard Manton, Director of Sustainability; Professor Becky Whay, Deputy President and Registrar; Michelle O'Dowd Lohan, Sustainability Officer; Dr Colin Lawton, Ryan Institute; Molly Hickey, University of Galway Students' Union and CUSP member; Tracey Lydon, An Taisce; and Valentina Stampa, An Taisce. Credit: Aengus McMahon.

Key Facts



University of Galway has achieved An Taisce Green Campus status for the third time, including recognition for biodiversity and green laboratories.



The University supports on-campus biodiversity through initiatives including a Biodiversity Trail, pollinator-friendly planting and habitat restoration projects.



University of Galway is introducing a new, dedicated Level 8 Zoology degree starting in September 2026. This programme will focus on animal biology, behaviour, evolution, and conservation.



258 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

Creation of a pocket forest

University of Galway strengthened its commitment to biodiversity and climate resilience through the [creation of a Pocket Forest on campus](#). Led by the Pocket Forests social enterprise, the mini woodland was created by a team made up of university staff and students, Transition Year students from Coláiste Muire Máthair, Galway, community volunteers and Brendan Smith from Terryland Forest Park. The project established a densely planted native woodland using the Miyawaki method, which enables forests to grow rapidly and support high levels of biodiversity within a relatively small space. Native Irish tree species were planted to create habitat for birds, insects and other wildlife while contributing to improved soil health, carbon sequestration and local climate regulation. Beyond its ecological value, the Pocket Forest also serves as an educational resource for students and staff, demonstrating practical approaches to ecological restoration and nature-based climate solutions. The initiative forms part of the University's broader commitment to using its campus as a living laboratory for sustainability learning and biodiversity protection. By integrating habitat restoration into the campus landscape, University of Galway provides opportunities for students to engage directly with environmental stewardship and strengthens its contribution to SDG 15.

Green Campus award renewal

University of Galway has been [awarded](#) the Green Campus Flag for the third time, recognising continued progress in sustainability and environmental management across the University. The Green Campus programme, coordinated in Ireland by An Taisce, is the higher education equivalent of the Green Schools initiative and assesses institutional performance across areas such as biodiversity, energy, waste, water and climate action. The award reflects the collective work of staff and students to improve environmental performance and embed sustainability within campus operations. Biodiversity protection and responsible land management form an important component of the programme, including habitat protection, pollinator-friendly planting and awareness initiatives across the campus landscape. The renewal of the Green Campus Flag highlights the University's sustained commitment to environmental stewardship and continuous improvement. Through participation in this national programme, University of Galway demonstrates institutional leadership in sustainability and reinforces its contribution to SDG 15, ensuring that biodiversity protection and responsible land management remain integral to campus sustainability efforts.

Campus as a Living Laboratory for Biodiversity

University of Galway is advancing biodiversity protection through its campus as a living laboratory, integrating habitat restoration, green infrastructure and ecological monitoring into the campus landscape. Initiatives such as the Biodiversity Trail, pocket forest, pollinator-friendly planting and naturalised green spaces create diverse habitats that support wildlife while providing opportunities for student learning and research. Our [Biodiversity Action Plan](#), delivered in collaboration with the Buildings and Estates team, ensures biodiversity is embedded within campus planning and management. By linking infrastructure, research and education, the University enables students and staff to engage directly with ecosystem protection while contributing to more resilient and nature-positive campus environments. Our work aligns with national biodiversity and climate policy priorities, including Ireland's commitments to ecosystem restoration and nature protection.

University of Galway plants 'Pocket Forest' woodland on campus.
Credit: Aengus McMahon



Research Spotlight

Launch of an All-Ireland peatlands centre of excellence

University of Galway has recently launched the [All-Ireland Peatlands Centre of Excellence](#), hosted by the Ryan Institute, to advance research, policy development and collaboration on peatland conservation and restoration. Peatlands represent some of Ireland's most important ecosystems, supporting biodiversity while also acting as major carbon stores. However, decades of drainage and peat extraction have significantly degraded many of these landscapes. The Centre brings together researchers, policymakers and community stakeholders to develop knowledge and solutions related to peatland restoration, biodiversity protection and sustainable land management. It builds on previous research initiatives, including projects that have mapped historic peatland landscapes and assessed restoration potential. By supporting interdisciplinary research and knowledge exchange, the Centre aims to inform national and regional strategies for peatland recovery while contributing to climate mitigation and biodiversity conservation. Through this initiative, University of Galway strengthens its role as a national leader in peatland research and demonstrates a significant contribution to SDG 15.

Pollinator and bee research

University of Galway continued to make a significant contribution to pollinator conservation through research focused on the native Irish honeybee (*Apis mellifera mellifera*) and the survival of wild honeybee colonies. Researchers at the University are leading the [FREE-B](#) project, contributing to international research examining how free-living honeybee colonies persist in natural environments without human management. This work built on the University's long-running [Wild Honey Bee Study](#) which has monitored unmanaged colonies across Ireland since 2015 through a combination of field research and citizen science. The research provides valuable insights into pollinator resilience, behaviour and ecosystem interactions, supporting broader biodiversity conservation efforts. On campus, a dedicated [log hive monitoring station](#) enables researchers and students to study colony health and behaviour while raising awareness of the importance of pollinators. Complementary initiatives, such as regional bee censuses and citizen science activities, further strengthen data collection and public engagement. For example, the [Inishowen honey bee census](#) invited beekeepers, farmers, schools and community members to record bee colonies across the peninsula. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how University of Galway integrates research, monitoring and community participation to support pollinator biodiversity, contributing directly to the protection and restoration of ecosystems in line with SDG 15.

Community Engagement

Climate and nature conference

University of Galway partnered with the Mary Robinson Centre to host the [Climate and Nature Conference](#), bringing together researchers, policymakers, activists and community organisations to address the interconnected challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. Centred on the theme 'Climate in Crisis', the conference created a platform for dialogue on ecosystem protection, nature restoration and sustainable land management. Keynote speakers included former President Mary Robinson, alongside leading experts such as Anja Murray and Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin, who shared perspectives on climate justice, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. The programme featured panel discussions, workshops and public engagement activities that encouraged participants to rethink approaches to environmental challenges and to support policy and behavioural change. By connecting academic research with public dialogue and policy engagement, the conference strengthened awareness of the need to protect natural ecosystems as part of climate action. It highlights the University's role as a convener of knowledge and collaboration, supporting more integrated and nature-positive approaches to sustainability in line with SDG 15.

By integrating habitat restoration into the campus landscape, University of Galway provides opportunities for students to engage directly with environmental stewardship and strengthens its contribution to SDG 15.

Citizen science and community engagement in biodiversity conservation

University of Galway continued to support biodiversity protection through citizen science initiatives that combine ecological research with public engagement and science communication. These projects invite communities to participate directly in wildlife monitoring while contributing valuable data to national biodiversity records. A notable example is the All-Ireland survey of red squirrels, grey squirrels and pine martens, launched in collaboration with conservation partners including Ulster Wildlife and Vincent Wildlife Trust. Members of the public were encouraged to record sightings of these species across the island of Ireland, helping researchers better understand wildlife distribution and long-term ecosystem change. This engagement work is complemented by University of Galway research examining how biodiversity issues are communicated and understood by the public. A study analysing more than half a million social media posts about invasive species highlighted how public attention often focuses on animals, while invasive plants receive far less visibility despite their ecological impact. Researchers from the University also joined conservation partners to launch Hedgehog Conservation Ireland, which aims to improve understanding and protection of hedgehog populations. The initiative brings together researchers, wildlife organisations and community groups to monitor hedgehog distribution, raise awareness and encourage wildlife-friendly practices such as creating hedgehog-friendly gardens and reducing habitat fragmentation. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how research, citizen participation and science communication can support biodiversity conservation and advance progress toward SDG 15.

Biodiversity outreach

During SDG Week 2025, University of Galway used its campus biodiversity assets as a platform for sustainability learning and engagement. One of the activities was a guided walk along the University's Biodiversity Trail, which introduces participants to a range of habitats across the campus landscape including woodland areas, riverbanks, gardens and pollinator-friendly planting zones. The event provided students and staff with an opportunity to explore local ecosystems and learn about biodiversity conservation in an accessible and interactive setting. The University also collaborates with local partners on habitat restoration initiatives, including engagement with community-led projects in Terryland Forest Park and Galway National Park City. In parallel, the University supports biodiversity awareness through outreach with schools and the wider community, using the campus as a living space for learning and engagement. Together, these initiatives enhance public understanding of ecosystem protection and contribute to SDG 15.





SDG 16

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Launch of the University of Galway Strategic Plan 2025–2030. Pictured (l–r): John Connolly TD, Spokesperson on Further and Higher Education and TD for Galway West; James Lawless TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science; Professor Peter McHugh, Interim President of University of Galway; and Dr Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, Chair of Údarás na hOllscoile.

Credit: Andrew Downes, XPOSURE.

Key Facts



University of Galway appointed Professor David J. Burn as its 14th President, strengthening institutional leadership and governance.



University of Galway launched its Strategic Plan 2025–2030, *Of Galway, For the World*, developed through extensive consultation and setting out a clear framework for institutional governance, transparency and long-term decision making.



University of Galway is represented in the Government of Ireland's National SDG Ambassador Programme, contributing to national leadership, public engagement and awareness of the SDGs.



497 Publications (*Scopus Publications 2020–2025*)

Students and Learning

School of Law launches 2025 LLM *Criminology, Criminal Justice and Human Rights Year in Review*

The School of Law at University of Galway highlighted the first Year in Review of the LLM in Criminology, Criminal Justice and Human Rights, a postgraduate programme launched in 2024 that combines academic study with direct engagement in justice systems. The programme is designed to provide students with an interdisciplinary understanding of criminology, criminal justice systems and human rights law, while building the analytical and policy skills needed for careers in justice, law and advocacy. Throughout the year, students participated in a wide range of experiential learning activities that connect classroom learning with real-world justice institutions. These included visits to key criminal justice sites such as the Supreme Court, Cloverhill Prison and Limerick Prison, where students engaged directly with legal professionals and gained insight into the operation of Ireland's justice system. Students also attended guest lectures and masterclasses delivered by leading practitioners, including Supreme Court judge Mr Justice Peter Charleton, who provided expert perspectives on sentencing and evidence law. This blend of academic, professional and public engagement equips students with the skills to critically assess justice systems in practice. Through these activities, the LLM provides students with opportunities to connect research, policy and practice while deepening their understanding of justice, governance and human rights in contemporary society.

Hosting an online school on human rights

The Irish Centre for Human Rights at University of Galway collaborated with international partners to deliver the Online School on Human Rights 2025, an intensive programme examining the theme 'Rights in Europe: The Risks and Impact of Authoritarianism'. The initiative brought together 40 participants from more than 20 countries, selected from over 450 applicants, representing a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds. Delivered over six weeks, the programme provided participants with an interdisciplinary exploration of contemporary human rights challenges in Europe and neighbouring regions. Interactive lectures addressed topics including the relationship between democracy and human rights, the implementation gap in rights protection, digital rights in the age of disinformation, gender and LGBTQI+ rights, climate justice, and the impact of states of emergency on civil liberties. Participants also examined issues such as justice and accountability for human rights violations and the role of citizens in promoting and defending human rights. The Online School was organised in partnership with Ghent University, the University of Groningen, Uppsala University and the Elena Bonner Human Rights School, reflecting University of Galway's strong international collaboration in human rights education and research. The initiative was supported through the ENLIGHT European University Alliance and EU-funded projects promoting civil society engagement and academic cooperation. This competitive and internationally collaborative initiative strengthens global capacity in human rights education and policy.

Student-led Model UN event

Student leadership at the University of Galway also contributes to the values of SDG 16 by encouraging dialogue on global governance and international cooperation. Students from the Literary and Debating Society organised the University's first Model United Nations (MUN) conference bringing together secondary school students from across Ireland to debate global challenges and explore how international institutions operate. The event was coordinated by student organiser Hugh Gately, who helped lead the initiative through his role in the Society. The two-day conference provided participants with the opportunity to represent different countries in simulated United Nations committees, debate international policy issues and develop skills in diplomacy, negotiation and public speaking. The conference provided a practical introduction to international governance and highlighted the importance of youth engagement in diplomacy and global cooperation.

University of Galway partners with Government of Ukraine to strengthen democracy and media education

University of Galway announced a new international partnership with the Government of Ukraine aimed at strengthening democracy, media education and public communication. The collaboration was formalised through a Memorandum of Cooperation signed in Dublin, at an event hosted by the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska. The agreement establishes a programme of joint work between the University and Ukrainian institutions focused on media literacy, democratic resilience and the rule of law, particularly in the context of Ukraine's ongoing defence against the Russian invasion and widespread disinformation campaigns targeting democratic societies. As part of the partnership, University of Galway will participate in the Global Coalition of Ukrainian Studies, an international initiative coordinated by the Office of the President of Ukraine that promotes academic cooperation and supports research and education on Ukraine. The initiative includes joint teaching, guest lectures, collaborative research and academic exchange. This initiative positions the University within a wider European response to challenges facing democratic institutions.

Research Spotlight

Human rights and migration research

Research at the University of Galway continues to advance knowledge on justice, human rights and institutional accountability, contributing directly to SDG 16. At the Irish Centre for Human Rights, several research initiatives during the 2025–2026 reporting period examined the protection of vulnerable populations and the strengthening of international legal systems. A notable example is the work of Dr Sophie Capicchiano Young, who was awarded a prestigious Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship for her research project on state responsibility for the death and disappearance of refugees and migrants, examining how international law addresses accountability when migrants die or disappear during migration journeys. Complementing this work, researchers affiliated to the Centre are examining contemporary migration governance and refugee protection through the Migration and Refugee Law and Policy research cluster, which explores legal responses to displacement and the protection of migrants' rights. Research presented through the Centre's Let's Talk Research seminar series in 2026 has also examined global refugee policy developments and the impact of shifting immigration policies on refugee protection systems. Additional research has examined maritime law and state obligations to protect life at sea, contributing to international debates on migration governance.

Conference about public interest litigation and access to justice

The School of Law at University of Galway hosted a two-day conference titled 'Public Interest Litigation and Access to Justice: Domestic and International Challenges and Opportunities'. Held in the Michael D. Higgins Auditorium on 14–15 November, the event brought together leading academics, legal practitioners, activists and members of the judiciary to explore how litigation can be used to advance the public interest and strengthen access to justice. The conference was led by Professor Donncha O'Connell and featured a keynote address by Professor Emeritus Gerry Whyte of Trinity College Dublin. Across a series of expert panels, participants examined the role of public interest litigation in addressing systemic injustices and holding institutions accountable. Sessions explored themes including the role of statutory bodies and NGOs in advancing legal accountability, the strategic use of international human rights mechanisms, and emerging issues such as strategic litigation, judicial review, disability rights and barriers to accessing courts. Speakers included representatives from organisations such as the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) and the Global Legal Action Network, alongside international scholars and legal practitioners. Attended by approximately 100 participants, discussions highlighted barriers including legal costs and access to courts, emphasising the need for more equitable legal systems.

Community Engagement

Governance, transparency and participatory decision-making

University of Galway supports strong institutional governance and transparency through its strategic planning, reporting and stakeholder engagement processes. The Strategic Plan 2025–2030, 'Of Galway, For the World', was developed through extensive consultation with staff, students and external stakeholders, ensuring inclusive and accountable decision-making. Governance for sustainability is further strengthened through the Community and University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP), which operates through a dedicated General Board and thematic groups, supported by a Sustainability Advisory Board, enabling cross-campus collaboration and oversight. This structured approach is underpinned by clear governance frameworks, including a Sustainability Governance Handbook, which guides roles, responsibilities and decision-making processes across the institution. This partnership model directly informed the development of the University's third Sustainability Strategy 2026–2030, shaped through extensive consultation over a six-month period with the campus community and external partners. The Strategy sets a renewed direction for a Carbon-neutral, nature-positive and healthy university. The University also publishes key frameworks such as its Climate Action Roadmap (see SDG 13) and Performance Agreements, demonstrating transparency and alignment with national policy. Together, these approaches reinforce accountability, participatory governance and institutional effectiveness, contributing to SDG 16.

Community Climate Assembly

University of Galway hosted the Community Climate Assembly as part of SDG Week 2025, bringing together community organisations, researchers, local authorities and members of the public to discuss climate action and sustainability challenges facing the Galway region. By bringing together communities, researchers and policymakers to identify shared priorities, the Community Climate Assembly demonstrates participatory governance in practice, enabling inclusive decision-making and strengthening democratic engagement. See further details in SDG 13: Community Climate Assembly.



Sustainability Engagement Fund 2025 to 2026 – spotlight on SDG 16

The University of Galway Sustainability Engagement Fund 2025 to 2026 supported student and staff initiatives that advance the SDGs through collaborative projects on campus and in the wider community. The fund encourages partnerships between students, academics and societies to develop practical projects that promote sustainability awareness, civic engagement and social responsibility. For the 2025 to 2026 funding round, the initiative focused on two SDG themes, including SDG 16. Projects funded under the SDG 16 Peace stream support dialogue, civic participation and institutional accountability within the University community. The 2025 to 2026 recipients included Anita Ferrara, Hugh Gately, Sarah Jenkins and Sophie Sweeney. These projects foster dialogue, civic participation and active citizenship across the University community. This targeted funding approach demonstrates how universities can support informed dialogue, critical engagement and participation in issues of justice, governance and peacebuilding.

Students participate in the annual Model United Nations conference, organised by the University of Galway Literary and Debating Society in partnership with the Societies Office and Sustainability Office, and supported through the Sustainability Engagement Fund.



University of Galway hosted the Community Climate Assembly as part of SDG Week 2025

SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



Credit: Aengus McMahon

A Snapshot of our partnership approach

SDG 17 highlights the importance of partnerships in achieving the SDGs. At University of Galway, partnerships are central to delivering sustainability through a whole-institution approach, beginning within the University community and extending to local, regional, national and international collaboration. The University engages with a wide network of partners across community, government, industry and international institutions, reflecting the scale and diversity of its approach to sustainable development.

This approach is underpinned by the Community and University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP), which brings together staff, students and external stakeholders to co-create and deliver sustainability actions across governance, research, teaching and campus operations. CUSP reflects a shared model of leadership and collaboration, embedding sustainability across all areas of university activity.

Beyond the campus, the University works in partnership with local authorities, community organisations and regional stakeholders to support place-based action and community engagement. At national level, collaboration with government agencies and public bodies supports policy development and coordinated action on climate and sustainability. Internationally, the University engages with global networks, research collaborations and strategic alliances to address shared challenges and contribute to the advancement of sustainable development.

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, these partnerships strengthened the University's ability to drive innovation, support communities and contribute to sustainable development at local, national and global levels.



Together, these partnerships and recognitions demonstrate how a whole institution approach enables coordinated action and measurable progress towards sustainable development.

Partnerships in Practice

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, University of Galway continued to strengthen its partnership approach through coordinated action, national engagement and international recognition. Central to this approach is the Community and University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP), which brings together staff, students and external stakeholders to co-create sustainability initiatives across the University. This partnership model directly informed the development of the University's third Sustainability Strategy 2026–2030, shaped through extensive consultation over a six-month period with the campus community and external partners. The Strategy sets a renewed direction for a carbon-neutral, nature-positive and healthy university. In 2025, University of Galway marked the 10-year anniversary of CUSP, celebrating a decade of collaborative sustainability leadership and partnership across the campus and wider community.

University of Galway SDG Week 2025 provided a key platform for partnership in action, bringing together students, staff and community organisations to promote awareness, collaboration and engagement across the SDGs. The University is also represented in the Government of Ireland's [National SDG Ambassador Programme](#), contributing to national leadership and public engagement on the SDGs.

This approach is reinforced through recognised national and international frameworks. The University is an accredited participant in the An Taisce Green Campus Programme and secured its [third Green Flag](#), including recognition for green labs. Internationally, the University renewed its [AASHE STARS Gold rating](#), recognising excellence across teaching, research, operations and governance. Nationally, leadership in sustainable transport has been recognised through the award of the [Smarter Travel Mark](#).

At a global level, the University reports progress through the SDG Accord and United Nations Academic Impact, reinforcing its commitment to accountability, transparency and international collaboration. Together, these partnerships and recognitions demonstrate how a whole-institution approach enables coordinated action and measurable progress towards sustainable development.

International and strategic partnership

University of Galway participates in several strategic partnership networks that support collaboration on sustainability, research and education. One of the most significant international partnerships is the ENLIGHT European University Alliance, a network of ten European universities working together to address global societal challenges. Through ENLIGHT, University of Galway collaborates with partner institutions on joint educational initiatives, research collaborations and mobility opportunities for students and staff. The alliance encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and supports innovative approaches to addressing issues such as climate action, health and social equity. University of Galway received the ENLIGHT Student Impact Award in recognition of student-led sustainability initiatives, including the SPÉIR SU Pantry. The University also secured competitive ENLIGHT funding to support collaborative projects and joint activities across partner institutions. In June 2026, University of Galway will host ENLIGHT Sustainability Staff Week, bringing together representatives from across the alliance to share best practice, explore Education for Sustainable Development and strengthen institutional collaboration. University of Galway strengthened cooperation through a partnership with the Government of Ukraine focused on democracy and media education. This collaboration brings together academic experts, policymakers and educators to support democratic resilience and media literacy in the context of evolving geopolitical challenges. It highlights the role of universities in supporting knowledge exchange, capacity building and international cooperation on complex societal issues.

At an international level, University of Galway is a signatory to the [Durham Declaration](#), and the [SDG Accord](#), reinforcing its commitment to global collaboration, accountability and leadership in sustainable development. The University is an active member of [Sustainable Development Solutions Network Ireland](#) branch. Together, these partnerships strengthen international collaboration, support knowledge exchange and enhance the University's capacity to address global sustainability challenges.

Research and Innovation Partnerships

Collaborative research partnerships are a key mechanism through which University of Galway contributes to sustainable development. The University announced new partnerships with leading Chinese institutions, including Hebei Medical University and Xiangya School of Medicine, Central South University. These partnerships focus on stem cell research and PhD education, strengthening international research collaboration and capacity building in critical areas of health and biomedical science. The University also contributes to innovation-driven partnerships through programmes such as BioInnovate Ireland, which brings together clinicians, researchers and industry partners to develop solutions to unmet healthcare needs. This model of needs-led innovation demonstrates the value of cross-sector collaboration in translating research into real-world impact. Regionally, the University works closely with enterprise and innovation partners including Platform94, PorterShed, WestBIC and Local Enterprise Offices. These partnerships support entrepreneurship, start-up development and knowledge transfer, connecting research and student innovation with industry and regional economic development. The Ryan Institute continues to demonstrate real-world leadership through impactful research partnerships. During the 2025–2026 reporting period, this included advancing peatland research through its role in hosting a national Peatland Centre of Excellence at the University of Galway, supporting climate action and land use policy. The Institute also marked a major milestone with the celebration of 50 years of marine research at Carna Research Station, highlighting long-standing collaboration in marine and coastal sustainability. Across its research programmes, the Institute works in partnership with government agencies, international collaborators and industry to address challenges in climate, biodiversity and sustainable resource management, demonstrating the value of coordinated, cross-sector research partnerships. These collaborations demonstrate how partnership-driven research accelerates innovation and delivers real-world impact.



Community and Civic Partnerships

University of Galway continues to strengthen place-based partnerships that support inclusive and community-driven approaches to sustainability. Through the Community and University Sustainability Partnership, the University connects researchers, students and community organisations to collaborate on challenges such as climate action, biodiversity and sustainable living. Through its General Board, working groups and Sustainability Advisory Board, CUSP provides a structured framework for collaboration and governance. During 2025–2026, it progressed key initiatives, including leading the development of the Sustainability Strategy 2026–2030, supporting SDG Week 2025 and advancing projects through the Sustainability Engagement Fund 2025. Students play a central role in this partnership model through active participation in CUSP projects, Students’ Union initiatives and programmes such as the Sustainability Leadership Awards, SU Climate Crew and ALIVE volunteering, which in 2025 supported student engagement with community organisations on sustainability, social impact and civic action.

A key example of civic partnership in action is the 2025 Community Climate Assembly, which brought together citizens, researchers, policymakers and community organisations to deliberate on climate challenges and local responses. University of Galway contributed academic expertise in climate science, sustainability and environmental policy, supporting evidence-based discussion, while the participatory format ensured that community perspectives informed outcomes. Student engagement also supported facilitation, dialogue and shared learning. The Assembly strengthened collaboration between the University and regional stakeholders and demonstrates how inclusive, deliberative processes can support collective approaches to climate action.

The University also advances partnerships that promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Collaboration with Traveller organisations supports access to education, awareness and the development of more inclusive institutional practices. This work is complemented by partnership-based initiatives such as Anti-Racism Week and International Women’s Day 2025, which bring together students, staff and community partners to promote dialogue, visibility and action on equality and human rights. Student participation is central to these initiatives, reinforcing the role of the University as an inclusive civic space.

Biodiversity and nature-based partnerships are a growing area of collaboration. The University supports initiatives such as the Just 3 programme led by the International Office and contributes to the Galway National Park City movement, promoting connection to nature, biodiversity awareness and community engagement. Students engage through volunteering, awareness campaigns and campus-based initiatives, further strengthening the link between learning, community and environmental stewardship.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate how place-based partnerships support knowledge exchange, student engagement, inclusion and collective action, reinforcing the University’s contribution to sustainable development at local and regional levels.

National and Policy Engagement Partnerships

University of Galway continues to strengthen partnerships with national agencies and public bodies to support coordinated action on sustainability and climate policy. Through its engagement with the Higher Education Authority, the University contributes to the delivery of its Performance Agreement 2024–2028, aligning institutional priorities with national objectives on climate action, sustainability and societal impact. This reflects a collaborative governance approach, where higher education institutions work in partnership with government to advance shared goals.

The University also plays an active role in national climate action through implementation of its Climate Action Roadmap 2025, developed in alignment with national policy frameworks. Delivery of the roadmap by University of Galway is supported through ongoing collaboration with agencies such as the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, enabling progress on energy efficiency, emissions reduction and sustainable energy practices.

In addition, University of Galway continues to engage with local authorities and regional stakeholders on climate and sustainability initiatives, supporting knowledge exchange and place-based action. The University’s leadership in sustainable transport has been formally recognised through the Smarter Travel Mark by the National Transport Authority, highlighting its commitment to promoting active travel and behaviour change across campus.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate how place-based partnerships support knowledge exchange, student engagement, inclusion and collective action, reinforcing the University’s contribution to sustainable development at local and regional levels.



Launch of the Curlew Awards, a new regional initiative recognising excellence in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), developed through a partnership between University of Galway, the ATU ESD Academy and the Mary Robinson Centre, with support from Minister Dara Calleary.



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University of Galway Sustainability Report

2025-2026

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