



Leaders in International Higher Education

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*Leading Internationalization in
a New Era: Collaborating for
Global Solutions*

SIO leadership in Ireland – protecting the warm Irish welcome in the face of adversity

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University College Dublin
Ireland's Global University

- Ireland's Global University
- 30,000 students in Ireland
 - 8,500 international students in Dublin
 - 29% international
- 3,800 international students overseas
- 5 UCD Global Centres
 - USA, China, India, Asia-Pacific & Middle East
- 280,000+ alumni in 165 countries
- Highest research output in Ireland
- www.ucd.ie



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

- Globally focused research-led University
- Top 1% in QS University rankings
- 19,000 students including 3,900 international students
- 197 taught postgraduate programs
- 110,000 alumni worldwide
- www.nuigalway.ie



UNIVERSITY OF
LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

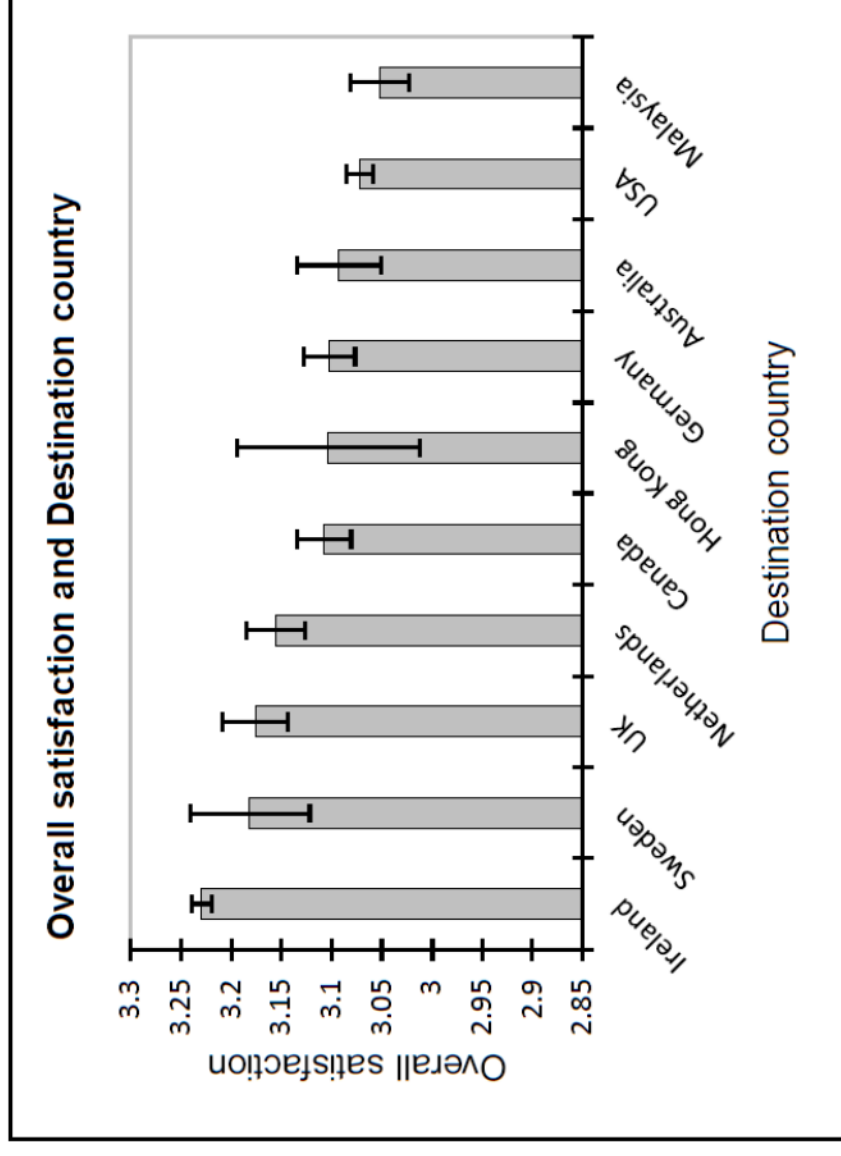
- Ireland's most beautiful campus
- Established 1972
- Top 100 World Ranked University under 50 (QS 2020)
- 16,000 students including 3,000 international students
- Highest Graduate Employability in Ireland, Sunday Times Good University Guide 2020
- 104,000 alumni worldwide
- www.ul.ie

Context

- Close to 12,000 US students study abroad in Ireland each year (EI & ASAPI, 2018)
- 6th most popular destination – 3.4% of all US students studying abroad (Open Doors, 2020)
- Growing number of US full degree students choosing Ireland
- International student satisfaction in Ireland is high
 - Ammigan, R., Dennis, J. L., & Jones, E. (2020). The differential impact of learning experiences on international student satisfaction and institutional recommendation. *Journal of International Students, 11*(2).

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Context

- International higher education in Ireland
 - Research intensive universities
 - Technological unis & Institutes of Technology
 - Specialist colleges
- Comprehensive internationalisation
- International students
 - UCD, NUIG & UL enrol (between them) around 25% of all international students in Ireland
- Outbound mobility – Erasmus & beyond
- Partnerships, global engagement, alumni...

National responses

- Staff & student travel concerns (Chinese New Year)
- China focus → Southern Europe focus → global focus
- Early institutional support for students outside Ireland

- Irish lockdown from 13 March 2020 – live broadcast by Taoiseach from USA
- Immediate national support for international students in Ireland
 - Access to Pandemic Unemployment Payment
 - Automatic health cover for COVID-19 testing and treatment
 - Visa extensions

National responses

- Borders have remained open
 - 14 day restricted movement on arrival
 - Testing and tracing
 - 5 level framework for lockdown
- Now in third wave of pandemic
- Level 5 restrictions
 - Work from home, study remotely (schools & universities), only essential shops open, facemasks necessary in shops and busy outdoor environments, stay within 5km of your home...
- Vaccination rollout
- New proposals re. quarantine hotels



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021

Plan for Living with COVID-19



Irish University Association responses



- 7 research intensive universities – 74% of all international students in Irish HE
- Well established network of 7 SIOs and secretariat support within IUA
- Weekly meetings held from April 2020 onwards
- Additional support provided by IUA
- Communication with relevant arms of Government intensified
- Agile and responsive
- Learning lessons from each other and problem solving collectively

Institutional responses

- Frequent intersection with (then) Department of Education and Skills on international student wellbeing
- Flexible course delivery enabled students to return home, if they wanted
- Delayed semester/exam dates & access to Post-Study Work visa
 - Close intersection with Department of Justice to enable 2020 graduating cohort to remain in Ireland to work
- New government formed in June 2020 with brand new “Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science”
 - New Minister = former Minister for Health in previous Government

National protocol

- Developed by the Higher Education sector over summer 2020 in partnership with:
 - Department of Further and Higher Education Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)
 - Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and
 - Relevant airports
- Universally applied throughout the Republic of Ireland, effective from August 19th 2020
- Detailed guidelines on key safeguards and supports required for the 4 week run up to class start
- Provided clarity and assurance for all stakeholders
- Covered the safe arrival of 7,700 student in September 2020

Pre-Arrival

- ✓ Students were required to complete a daily symptom tracker for 14 days before departure for Ireland
- ✓ Students who had symptoms were advised not to travel to Ireland until they have been symptom free for 14 days
- ✓ If travelling from a non-Green List country, students were asked to arrive 14 days before class start to undertake a period of restricted movement
- ✓ Provide information and training on health measures in Ireland

On Arrival

- ✓ Nationally coordinated airport greet and transfer service with private transport to student accommodation
- ✓ Free to all students and funded by Government
- ✓ COVID-19 Passenger Locator Form & track and trace App
- ✓ 14 Day post-arrival health monitoring by institution
- ✓ Welcome packs and a comprehensive schedule of engagement events (social, cultural and wellbeing) during the restricted movement period

Covid Positive Procedures

- ✓ In the event of an international arrival testing positive for COVID-19 the following steps will be taken:
 - ✓ Students contacted daily by a member of the Global team to check on welfare and advise on the need to self-isolate and an outline of health guidelines
 - ✓ Global teams provide any support required on accessing food deliveries, medication, laundry etc.
 - ✓ Additional counselling and wellbeing support provided to all new arrivals, but additional support for anyone self isolating
 - ✓ Should a student require hospitalisation the university will provide daily liaison between the student's family/guardian and the hospital services
- ✓ All health care for Covid-19 related illness is free

Lessons for SIO leadership

- A detailed national protocol on international student travel provides assurances to all stakeholders
- The 2020 protocol required minimal tweaking and was fully operational for the Spring 2021 semester entry
- Direct access to - and a good working relationship with - key decision makers in government is required to facilitate the policy change needed in complex issues such as Immigration, public health...
- Dedicated funding at institution level needed to role out a comprehensive COVID-19 response

SIO Resilience & Managing the Team

- Importance of flexibility
- Recognising the inherent challenges for people
- Listening to the disparate needs of staff
- Provision of training in digital marketing
- Honing skills re virtual events
- Regular communication in a constantly evolving situation
- Creating opportunities for on-line social connectivity

Positive outcomes

- Creation of cross-unit projects resulting in knowledge sharing and adding value
- Deeper understanding of challenges faced by staff based overseas - 'levelled the playing field'
- Enhanced capability to attend additional virtual fairs etc.
- Deeper engagement of academic community
- Development of 'working from home policy' across University sector

Many thanks for your attention!

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