

**PRAXIS**

Development and Global  
Citizenship Education, UCC

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# **Engaging Minds, Transforming Perspectives**

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**Summary report**

Part 2 of a three part research study:  
Exploring Global Citizenship and  
Development Education with Students at  
University College Cork.



**UCC**

**University College Cork, Ireland**  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

# Where to find the full report?

This is the summary of Part 2 of a comprehensive three-part study focusing on Global Citizenship and Development Education (GCDE) at University College Cork, Ireland.

This part of the study focuses on the student voice, exploring students' understanding of the aspirations for GCDE. It also examines the impact of GCDE pedagogy from a students perspective.

The full report can be found at the following address:

**<https://praxisucc.ie/research>**

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# Abstract

This report presents an in-depth exploration of the view of Global Citizenship and Development Education (GCDE), by students, at University College Cork, Ireland (UCC). It investigates both the perspectives of UCC students across UCC's four Schools (Humanities & Social Science, Law & Business, Medicine & Health and Science & Engineering), and the impact of GCDE education on a specific cohort of students who took a university-wide module (UW0012) which is open to all students. Through a comprehensive mixed-methods research approach encompassing surveys of all UCC students, with 498 responses; interviews with 23 individual students; mapping of academic courses across UCC; mapping of students' non-academic GCDE activities; and learning from a 2023 UCC report which maps the University's research, across all disciplines, to the each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Findings reveal a high level of student interest, evidenced by enthusiastic survey responses, interviews, and engagement in extracurricular GCDE activities. The study highlights the need for accredited GCDE modules, given the substantial demand expressed by students. Interviews with a diverse range of students show a sophisticated understanding of global justice issues in discipline specific areas, but students also suggest that an interdisciplinary approach is needed in order to address complex challenges. Respondents' insights provide recommendations for course design, format, and content, including transdisciplinary approaches, inclusive teaching teams, and region-specific content.

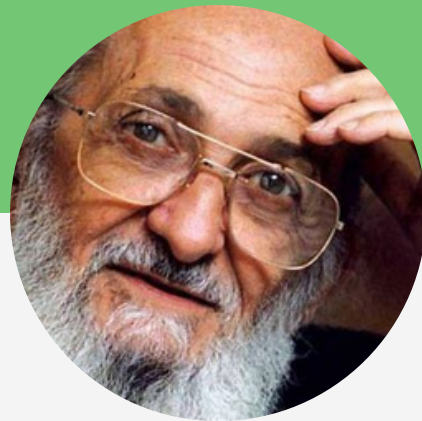
The transformative potential of GCDE is demonstrated through shifts in students' perspectives, knowledge, skills, and intentions, evident in projects such as a University Wide Module, UW0012, in GCDE. The study highlights the need for accredited GCDE modules and proposes actionable steps for stakeholders including students, academics, administration, businesses, government bodies, and civil society organisations. Through continuous research and innovation in pedagogy and assessment, universities can foster globally conscious citizens equipped to tackle contemporary global challenges. The article concludes by recommending GCDE integration across all Schools, acknowledging UCC's leadership, and advocating for GCDE's recognition as a distinct discipline.

# Global Citizenship and Development Education

GCDE

The Praxis Project aligns with the comprehensive description of Development Education proposed by Daly, Regan and Regan (2015: 1).

- Focuses directly on key development and human rights issues locally and internationally;
- Seeks to stimulate, inform and raise awareness of issues from a justice and/or rights perspective;
- Routinely links local and global issues;
- Explores key dimensions such as individual and public dispositions and values; ideas and understandings, capabilities and skills;
- Critically engages with the causes and effects of poverty and injustice;
- Encourages public enquiry, discussion, debate and judgement of key issues;
- Encourages, supports and informs action-orientated activities and reflection in support of greater justice;
- Takes significant account of educational theory and practice;
- Emphasises critical thinking and self-directed action;
- Seeks to promote experiential learning and participative methodologies;
- Routinely challenges assumptions by engaging with multiple, diverse and contested perspectives.



"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world." - Paulo Freire (1970)

"Justice is the cornerstone  
of a strong community."

*Choctaw Wisdom*



The "Kindred Spirit" sculpture in Midleton Co. Cork, pays homage to the selfless gesture made by the Native American Choctaw People in 1847.

Despite their own enduring hardships and poverty, they extended a hand of generosity to the Irish during the devastating Irish Famine. The sculpture captures the profound connection between two distant cultures, encapsulating the spirit of empathy that transcends borders and time.

# Part 2: Introduction

## 2.1 Overview

This report is Part 2 of a three-year study, based on the early work of the Praxis Project, University College Cork (UCC) which was established in September 2018 with funding from Irish Aid, the Irish State International Development Agency. The Praxis Project aims to promote 'Global Citizenship and Development Education' (GCDE) in pedagogy, research and capacity building activities across UCC. As staff began to form a community of Praxis, participate in capacity building activities and develop case studies on their GCDE practice, they also formed a research group, led by the academic coordinator of the Praxis Project. The results of the first part of this ongoing research project are available in the Report "Creating a Community of Praxis at University College Cork: Academic Report Part 1" (2021). While that report focused on UCC staff, this second stage of the research process focuses on the experience of UCC students, again from disciplines across campus. This report presents the findings of the second part of the research study.

The purpose of the research is to understand the student experience of GCDE at UCC and to assess levels of interest by students in this field of study. The research journey is guided by questions that investigate the ways in which students interact with GCDE within and beyond their formal education settings, and the transformative impacts of GCDE on students' perspectives, knowledge, skills, and actions.

It is hoped that this study will contribute not just to our own development as educators and practitioners in a Higher Education institution, but that our experience of integrating GCDE into our university, can contribute to academic debate and practice in a wider national and international context. We hope to disseminate our learnings widely across the Higher Education sector and wider GCDE sectors. We welcome comment and suggestions for the ongoing development of this project.



## 2.2 University College Cork

This section is adapted from extracts of UCC's Strategic Plan 2023–2028 'Securing our Future'. University College Cork (UCC) is a global research institution with 24,000 students, 3,200 staff, and an extensive alumni network of over 200,000 worldwide. UCC's diverse community includes 4,000 students from 138 countries, fostering a rich blend of perspectives. Anchored in community connections, education, health services, industry, arts, and heritage, UCC's identity is multifaceted.

UCC's commitment to transformative higher education is evident through its Connected Curriculum and Graduate Attributes Programme, fostering engaged learning, research, employability, and civic engagement. Emphasising inclusivity, equality, diversity, and inclusion, UCC provides pathways for students from diverse backgrounds.

Research excellence is integral to UCC's ethos. Renowned in areas like food, microbiome, sustainability, and quantum physics, UCC leads global research with centers like the Tyndall National Institute and APC Microbiome Ireland.

UCC's dedication to the UN Sustainable Development Goals is demonstrated by its sustainability initiatives. Ranked among the top 10 most sustainable universities globally, UCC's commitment reflects its excellence, innovation, and engagement.

Aligned with UCC's strategic goals, this research uniquely follows Goal Two: Research and Innovation, and Goal Five: Global Engagement. As UCC aims to internationalise its curriculum through partnerships and mobility, this work fosters a comprehensive approach to global citizenship education, integrating both global citizenship and global justice perspectives. By enhancing understanding of global issues and promoting ethical awareness, this study supports UCC's mission of empowering graduates to drive positive change.



## 2.3 The Praxis Project

The Praxis Project was initiated in September 2018 with funding from Irish Aid. Praxis aims to promote 'Global Citizenship and Development Education'(GCDE) in pedagogy, research, and capacity-building activities at University College Cork (UCC). While the 'Id Est Project' at the School of Education caters for initial teacher education, the Praxis Project works across all disciplines. The project's vision is to promote critical reflective engagement with GCDE among the UCC community. Its mission is to provide high-quality GCDE to UCC students, staff, and local communities, while also encouraging research and knowledge exchange in this field.

A survey carried out in its first year, 2018-2019, indicated that 88% of responding staff (out of 52) and 66% of students (out of 230) were interested in GCDE. The surveys in this current study will show how these percentages have increased considerably.

Some of its main achievements to date have been the production of GCDE strategic plans; the integration of a very popular university-wide module, "UW0012 Development and Global Citizenship Education," into UCC's suite of cross-university modules and the creation of a Digital Badge for staff. The UW0012 module is open to all UCC students and to the wider public. The GCDE Digital Badge for Higher Education staff has led to the creation of a 'Community of Praxis' resulting in staff also showcasing their work on the Praxis website [www.praxisucc.ie](http://www.praxisucc.ie). The project, led by UCC lecturer Dr Gertrude Cotter, has also resulted in this three-year research project.

The work of the project has been strengthened by several collaborative partnerships which have been established with NGOs and community organisations both locally and internationally. Liaison with other Higher Education institutions (HEIs) has also infused the work with a rich network of support, knowledge transfer and much appreciated encouragement.

The project's current three year research study focuses on the integration of GCDE into the work of UCC, The first study was undertaken in collaboration with 20 staff participants who also completed the Digital Badge. This second part of the study focuses on UCC students, their perceptions, understandings, experience and hopes for GCDE at UCC. The third section will focus on UCC policy and on GCDE as a discipline in Higher Education in Ireland.

## 2.4 Research Aims and Questions

### Overall Aim

The overall aim of this research study is to understand, through critical engagement with UCC staff and students, how best to integrate the theory and practice of GCDE into the work of UCC across all disciplines and across the work of the university.

### 01. Central Question

How can we integrate the theory and practice of GCDE into the work of UCC across all disciplines and across the work of the university as a whole and what are we learning as we do so?

### 02. Subsidiary Questions for Part 2 of the study

1. How do UCC students understand the concept of Global Citizenship and Development Education?
2. What is the UCC student experience of Global Citizenship and Development Education both within their academic and non-academic activities?
3. What are students telling us about the future of GCDE in UCC?



UCC students using drama to explore food security 2022. Photo: G. Cotter

## **Part 3: Literature Review & Mapping of UCC Research against the SDGs**

The literature review for Part 2 of the study focuses on the student experience of Global Citizenship and Development Education (GCDE) within the context of Higher Education in Ireland. Wider debates relating to GCDE in Higher Education can be found in Part 1 of this study. It is important to note that the study at a whole excludes initial teacher education and centers its exploration on the broader landscape of Higher Education. While recognising the vital importance of initial teacher education, this study and hence this literature review aims to shed light on themes within the GCDE literature that might have relevance to a wider student experience, across all university faculties.

In the Irish context, the Development and Intercultural Education Project (DICE) promotes the integration of GCDE in Initial Teacher Education at primary level. Similarly, the Ubuntu Network comprises educators engaged in education post-primary Initial Teacher Education. This is indicative of the attention given to GCDE in initial teacher education, as is the important pedagogical and research work of most Higher Education Institutions, especially Schools of Education, across the country. An audit of development education resources in Ireland conducted by Daly et al. (2013), spanning the years 2000 to 2012, identified only ten resources categorised under 'Third Level', of which eight related to teacher education. This trend continues to present time, as evidenced by a paucity in academic literature relating to GCDE in a wider Higher Education context and in the context of this review, particularly as it relates to the student experience.

There is however, an emerging body of literature on the student experience. A national survey led by Suas Educational Development and Amárach Research in 2013, examined opinions of 1,000 third-level students in Ireland regarding global development. Notably, around 81% of respondents believed it crucial to engage in activities benefiting others, reflecting the importance students attach to actions for positive change. The survey also highlighted the potential of volunteering and development education to enhance students' understanding of poverty and inequality while boosting their confidence to influence policy at various levels (Suas/Amárach, 2013).

In the same report, Bryan's constructive critique of the survey findings, point to the gap between interest and action, highlighting the need for transformational education that questions systemic issues and challenges superficial engagement. She also concludes that the findings show a great interest in development education among third level students, but that there is a lack of availability of modules which speak to those interests. Malone et al. (2014) provide an analysis of Suas' evaluation of the Global Citizenship Programme, highlighting the interest among stakeholders such as academic staff, student unions, and students in general.

Mc Gee's (2014) study of Value Added in Africa (now called Proudly Made in Africa) examines the integration of development education into business schools. It reveals students' positive response to development issues and the potential for interdisciplinary approaches catering to diverse student interests.





Saúde et al. (2018) explore the transformative potential of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in cultivating proactive citizenship among students. PBL equips students with critical skills and autonomy through real-world challenges.

Downes (2006), investigates the 'kinds of perspectives of global development issues students are exposed to through the visual imagery displayed in higher education institutes'. The findings suggest that students have a sophisticated reading of visual images. She concludes that image producers need to catch up with their audience by informing themselves and interrogating their approaches.

Cotter (2019) examines the effectiveness of community-linked learning (CLL) and Multimedia Learning (MML) in engaging students in DE. The study emphasises the significance of CLL and in bridging local and global contexts, promoting social justice, and empowering students and community partners as agents of change. Mahadeo's (2009) study in Northern Ireland also examines the interconnectivity of local and global communities through DE approaches in both formal and informal education settings.

Dillon et al. (2016) provide a Development Education resource for third-level educators, addressing both theory and methodology. The work clarifies the terminology surrounding development education and advocates for a critical approach at the tertiary level.

Joyce et al. (2021) explore the experiences of minority ethnic students participating in DE courses, advocating for increased inclusivity in practice. The question of institutional cultures is addressed in a study (Campbell and Hourigan, 2008) on two undergraduate development education programmes, in Sociology and in Education in two third level institutions. It highlights how values impact on learning outcomes.

Thormey and Kiely (2006) explore ethnography's transformative role in development education research. Cotter's (2019) study finds that critical ethnography is a valuable research methodology for GCDE, since it enables the researcher and participants to adopt an action agenda with the purpose of empowering people and transforming political and social realities.

The literature indicates the willingness of students to engage in global development initiatives while highlighting barriers like limited course offerings. The studies show how GCDE can be integrated, both pedagogically and institutionally. The aspiration remains to foster a generation of critically engaged global citizens, equipped to address the complexities of the 21st century.



## Lest we forget. Why GCDE matters.

1. **Climate Change and Environmental Degradation:** Rising global temperatures, sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and loss of biodiversity threaten ecosystems, economies, and communities.
2. **Poverty and Economic Inequality:** Disparities in income and wealth distribution persist, with many people lacking access to basic necessities and opportunities for economic advancement.
3. **Food and Water Insecurity:** Millions of people struggle with inadequate access to nutritious food and clean water, leading to malnutrition, hunger, and related health issues.
4. **Conflict and War:** Ongoing armed conflicts, civil wars, and geopolitical tensions result in loss of lives, displacement of people, and destabilisation of regions.
5. **Forced Migration and Refugee Crisis:** Millions of individuals are forcibly displaced due to conflicts, persecution, and environmental factors, leading to humanitarian challenges and strained resources in host countries.
6. **Global Health Crises:** Pandemics and infectious diseases, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, pose significant health threats and strain healthcare systems worldwide.
7. **Gender Inequality and Discrimination:** Women and marginalised genders face unequal access to education, employment, healthcare, and political participation, emphasising societal disparities.
8. **Human Rights Violations:** Various forms of human rights abuses, including violations of civil, political, economic, and social rights, persist in many parts of the world.
9. **Technological Advancement Challenges:** Rapid technological advancements present ethical, privacy, and security challenges, shaping the future of societies and economies.
10. **Political Instability and Authoritarianism:** Erosion of democratic institutions, rise of authoritarian regimes, and declining political freedoms threaten governance and human rights in several countries.

These crises are interconnected and often exacerbate each other, requiring global cooperation and comprehensive approaches for effective solutions.

# Mapping of UCC's Research to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Of relevance too to this study is a 2023 research project conducted by UCC to map UCC's research across all faculties, to the 17 SDGs. The recommendations of that report are relevant too for GCDE at UCC and some implications can be drawn as follows:

**Tailored Approach:** The understanding that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't apply to mapping the SDGs in research indicates the importance of recognizing the diverse nature of research areas. Similarly, for GCDE integration, acknowledging the unique characteristics of different academic disciplines and tailoring GCDE strategies to each context is crucial.

**Research Impact Mapping:** The mapping of research and innovation activities to the SDGs suggests a structured way to evaluate the real-world impact of academic work. Translating this to GCDE, there could be an emphasis on assessing the tangible impact of GCDE initiatives on local and global communities, helping students understand the direct relevance of their education.

**Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** The recommendation to leverage SDGs Champions for interdisciplinary research partnerships aligns with the interdisciplinary nature of many GCDE themes. Encouraging collaboration across different academic fields helps students explore complex global challenges from multiple perspectives.

**Awareness and Training:** The suggestion to offer training for staff and students to understand how their work aligns with the SDGs can be mirrored in the GCDE context. Providing workshops or training sessions on global issues, cultural awareness, and sustainable development can enhance students' awareness and understanding.

**Communication and Visibility:** Highlighting the SDGs in communications materials and integrating SDG logos in official communications showcases a commitment to global challenges. Similarly, emphasising GCDE initiatives in university communications can help raise awareness and encourage participation.

**Incorporate SDGs into Education:** Encouraging postgraduate students to identify SDGs aligned with their research and providing tools for early-stage researchers parallels the idea of incorporating GCDE themes within curriculum design, promoting responsible and globally aware research.

**Funding and Recognition:** Linking research funding opportunities to SDGs and establishing awards for impactful research encourages engagement. Similarly, recognising students who engage in impactful GCDE activities through awards or certificates can motivate more students to participate.

**Regular Evaluation and Updating:** The recommendation to regularly update mapping results and resources aligns with the need for continuous evaluation and improvement in GCDE integration. Ongoing assessment ensures that strategies remain relevant and effective.

**Showcasing Impact:** Just as the report highlights the impact of research on SDGs, showcasing the impact of GCDE initiatives through case studies and success stories can inspire students and the broader community.

**Integration in Events and Activities:** The suggestion to link research symposia and conferences explicitly to SDGs is analogous to organising events and activities that focus on GCDE themes, creating platforms for discussions and knowledge sharing.

**Holistic Approach:** The overall approach of combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies to map research to the SDGs can be mirrored in GCDE efforts. This balanced approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of how the university's activities contribute to global development.

**In conclusion,** the recommendations made for SDG integration within UCC's research activities provide a roadmap for integrating GCDE principles into various aspects of university life. By adapting and applying these recommendations to GCDE initiatives, UCC can foster a culture of global citizenship and sustainable development across its student body, staff, and research community.

# Part 4: Methodology

The study employs a mixed methods research design, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, in order to comprehensively explore the research questions. The theoretical framework for the study as a whole is critical pedagogy with a GCDE lens. This reflects a reality that is socially constructed and influenced by power dynamics. Aligning with this stance, the methodological approach is also committed to actively shaping a more socially just reality, guided by the principles of 'critical qualitative research' as a form of social activism.

Guided by the research questions, the study investigates students' understanding of, experience of and hopes for GCDE. It explores students' attitudes, engagement, and personal development. Employing surveys, interviews, project analysis, students' course evaluations and mapping methodologies, the study ensures a multifaceted exploration. Surveys capture quantitative insights, interviews elicit qualitative perspectives, the literature review contextualises the research, and mapping of UCC course offerings as well as students' non academic GCDE activities, offer holistic insights into GCDE integration and student involvement.

Participants were recruited through a combination of open invitations and purposeful sampling. Participants are from diverse backgrounds, academic levels and disciplines. The focus is on students across the university, although does not focus on teacher education which has been the subject of studies elsewhere.

Academic rigour is evident in the comprehensive literature review, robust data collection techniques, and rigorous data analysis. The study aspires to uphold scholarly excellence. Methodological triangulation, blending qualitative and quantitative methods, ensures the validity and reliability of the findings. Ethical considerations, peer debriefing, and expert consultations further elevate the research's credibility. The study has received ethical approval. Participants' consent is obtained through comprehensive consent forms, ensuring their rights and privacy are protected throughout the research journey. Ethical protocols mitigate potential harm and maintain participants' welfare.

The synthesis and analysis process distills meaningful insights from the extensive data collection. Quantitative data undergoes meticulous examination to identify trends and patterns. Qualitative data are subjected to thematic analysis, unearthing nuanced insights from participants' narratives. This holistic approach ensures the credibility and applicability of the findings.

The chapter acknowledges potential limitations, including the single-university context, reliance on self-reported data, and possible selection bias. These limitations are addressed through careful interpretation and contextualization of findings, while also paving the way for future research avenues.



# Research Methods

## **Literature Review:**

This reviews existing scholarly literature on GCDE, and focuses on key concepts, debates, and trends in the field. It sets subsequent exploration and analysis within current scholarly, research and policy-orientated discourses.

## **Quantitative Surveys:**

Surveys serve as a quantitative tool to understand student perspectives on GCDE, capturing their demographics, academic levels, and opinions on GCDE integration into the curriculum. There are three surveys in total, two targeting all UCC students with a total response rate of 548 students, the third targeting students of the UW0012 module.

## **Qualitative Interviews:**

In-depth interviews of 23 UCC students offer a qualitative dimension, allowing students to articulate their experiences, thoughts, and aspirations related to GCDE. These interviews uncover nuanced insights that quantitative data may overlook.

## **Course Mapping:**

By mapping academic courses at UCC, the study identifies opportunities for GCDE integration across disciplines, supporting the examination of curriculum-related aspects.

## **Non-Academic Activities Mapping:**

Mapping the non-academic activities at UCC provides insights into the engagement of students with global issues beyond the classroom, both in UCC and outside of UCC.

## **Project Analysis and End of Year Module Evaluation:**

This approach involves listening carefully to and learning from students who took University Wide Module in GCDE (UW0012) in 2021 and 2022. It comprises analysis of students' end of year collaborative projects and an analysis of an evaluation survey students took, at the end of the year.



Students of UW0012, 2019. Photo: G. Cotter

# Part 5: Findings and Analysis

A comprehensive analysis of the findings drawn from five distinct research approaches provides an exploration of the landscape of Global Citizenship Development Education (GCDE) at University College Cork (UCC).

## Key Statistics from Surveys

498 Students responded to the two college wide surveys

71% of students surveyed said they would consider studying GCDE

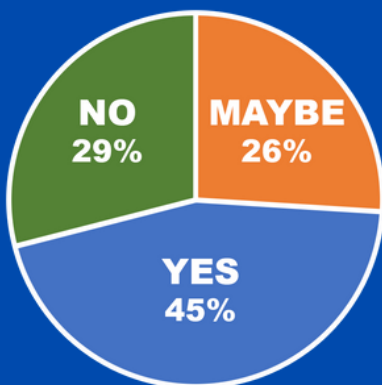
3% of students had taken an accredited module in GCDE, however, none exist. This figure refers almost exclusively to students of UW0012 which while a 5 credit module, cannot at present form part of an academic degree.

100% of respondents said GCDE should be an accredited module available to all students.

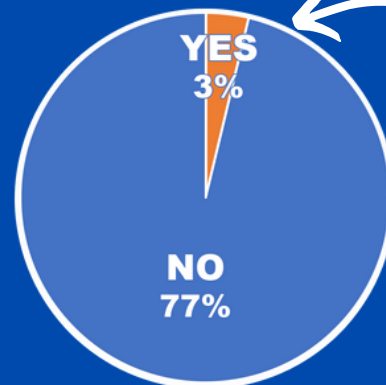
51% would consider taking GCDE as a full subject in an undergraduate degree program,

24.48% express interest in incorporating it as part of a master's program. This figure is even higher for those who were interviewed individually, where a marked interest in postgraduate study was evident.

***Would you consider studying GCDE in your degree?***



***Have you studied an accredited GCDE module?***



Note: the 3% here comprises UW0012 students, which is a 5 credit module but cannot be used towards students' qualifications.

## Student Interviews. Some Opinions...

"We need an accredited module to connect students from all Faculties"

"Of course, we are not exposed to this kind of education enough. We should all have global awareness and a chance to understand how we can contribute to a better world. It is challenging but this is third level and we should be challenging ourselves! It seems so obvious to me that this is something we should all be literate in"

(Survey Respondent)

# 5.1 Student Survey

## Survey of all UCC Students

### Student Interest, Engagement, and Awareness:

The survey provides a window into the considerable student desire for heightened exposure to GCDE. The response rate of 498 participants reflects a keen interest, with 71% expressing enthusiasm for potential GCDE offerings, even though only a modest portion state that they have encountered accredited GCDE modules. These results suggest an undercurrent of latent demand for this transformative educational opportunity.

### Interest in Curriculum Integration:

There is a noteworthy interest in the integration of GCDE into degree programmes. This aspiration not only points to the appeal of a dedicated GCDE discipline but also hints at the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration. A detailed breakdown of preferences demonstrates that 51% of respondents consider taking GCDE as a full subject in an undergraduate degree programme, and 24.48% express interest in incorporating it as part of a master's program. An additional 1.64% would consider GCDE at a PhD level.

### Challenges and Considerations:

The survey identifies challenges facing the integration of GCDE, including the pandemic's impact on extracurricular activities. Effective communication and promotion of offerings, exemplified by UW0012, also emerge as important considerations for those surveyed. Although it should be noted too that UW0012 has been over-subscribed for the past two years.

## Would you take GCDE as a full undergraduate or postgraduate degree programme along with other related subjects?

This question paints a more nuanced picture of what student preferences might be in relation to GCDE in their formal education.

- 26% would take it as one full subject in an undergraduate degree programme
- 13% would take it as one subject in a taught masters programme.
- 1.64% (12 students) would take it at PhD level.
- 24.59% would take it as part of an undergraduate programme with a combination of related subjects such as intercultural communications, sustainable development, community development, international global development studies, international relations
- 11.48% would take it as part of a postgraduate programme with a combination of related subjects.
- 3.28% would take it as a full undergraduate degree programme and 4.92% would take it as a full master's programme.

These are useful figures for future strategic planning. A total of 51% of respondents would take GCDE as a full subject in an undergraduate degree programme. A total of 24.48% would take it as part of a master's programme. That is 75.48% of respondents, with a further 1.64% at PhD level who would consider GCDE at postgraduate level.

## 5.2 Student Interviews

The total Number of Students interviewed from across four UCC colleges was 23.

### **Diverse Course Formats and Content**

The interviews revealed a range of preferences concerning course formats and content. Some emphasised the importance of a transdisciplinary approach, integrating perspectives from various fields. Others stressed the need for practical learning experiences that extend beyond theoretical knowledge. The consensus among students was that GCDE should offer a holistic view of global challenges and have a strong action focus. The details of students' insights offer a blueprint for the development of GCDE modules and reading the full report is recommended.

### **Challenges and Engagement**

While there is strong interest in global justice issues and deeper engagement by some through extra-curricular activities, one of the main challenge for students is time. Many students are working and the cost of house rental in this context was mentioned many times. While such non-formal involvement will always be present for those who can, many students would like to see global justice issues within their degree programmes, so that time can be allocated to it. 100% of interviewees said that GCDE should be available to all students.

### **Call for Action and Implementation**

The interviews highlighted students' strong desire for GCDE to be established as a formal discipline at UCC. Students expressed a collective eagerness to engage with GCDE through structured courses that foster responsible global citizenship.

### **Inclusion of Minority and Diverse Perspectives**

The importance of including minority and diverse perspectives in GCDE was a recurring theme. Students emphasised the need to provide a platform for underrepresented voices, such as people working on development projects, LGBT community, refugees, people from 'other parts of the world', in discussions surrounding human rights, sustainable development, gender, sexuality, and inclusion. This reflected a broader aspiration to cultivate an inclusive understanding of global issues and promote equitable participation.

### **Specifics Interests**

While the broad title of GCDE might not immediately capture attention, students demonstrated increased interest when the specific content and learning outcomes were explained. This points to the importance of communicating the diverse and enriching aspects of GCDE to potential students, enabling them to connect with the subject matter on a deeper level.

### **Action-orientated education**

Suggestions were put forth to incorporate practical activities, such as campaigns, policy-advocacy, creative arts, into the GCDE curriculum. This hands-on approach would provide students with opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios, enhancing their learning experience and enabling them to become proactive agents of social justice change. Those who attended the UW0012 course suggested this course would be a good foundational course for all students, but was too short as a 12 week module.

### **Conclusion**

Many had a good knowledge of global issues within their own disciplines but recognised the need for interdisciplinary approaches within at least some aspects of their education. The level of interest and enthusiasm for this work was undeniable but the lack of opportunities which speak to these interests is also very much in evidence. Clarity of definition is also noted.

## 5.3 Part 1: Analysis of Student Projects

### Learning from UW0012 Students

The Praxis Project runs a GCDE course for all UCC students each year since 2019. It is a five credit module, taken over one semester comprising 24 contact hours. The students' collaborative projects conducted in 2021 and 2022 and their course evaluations have yielded valuable insights and outcomes that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Global Citizenship and Development Education (GCDE) approaches. The analysis of projects has led to the following conclusions:

#### **Diverse Global Perspectives:**

The student projects showcase a wide range of global issues, reflecting the diversity of challenges and opportunities in the field of global citizenship. Topics such as child labour, business and human rights, food security, refugee rights, FGM, sustainable development, financial justice and climate justice were explored, illustrating the multidimensional nature of GCDE.

#### **Empowerment through Engagement:**

The projects highlight the sense of agency that comes from actively engaging with global issues. Students' in-depth research, critical analysis, use of a range of multimedia and creative methodologies and problem-solving demonstrate their capacity to contribute meaningfully to addressing complex global challenges. Taking into account the fact that this course is taken outside of their formal degree programmes, on a voluntary basis, their commitment is commendable.

#### **Interdisciplinary Understanding:**

Because UW0012 students come from across all disciplines, the projects show the value of an interdisciplinary approach to GCDE. Students drew upon insights from fields such as politics, law, sociology, environmental studies, and economics to provide holistic perspectives on global issues. This approach also instructs on the interconnectedness of these challenges.

#### **Application of Theoretical Frameworks:**

Projects integrated theoretical frameworks such as postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and human rights perspectives. This demonstrated students' ability to apply theoretical insights to real-world issues, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complex underpinnings of global problems.

#### **Practical Implications:**

Projects proposed practical solutions and actions to address global challenges, showcasing students' commitment to creating tangible positive change. Recommendations for policy changes, radio shows, event management, community engagement, policy advocacy and awareness campaigns illustrate the applied nature of GCDE.



Students presenting project on theme of Child Labour, 2022. Photo: G. Cotter

# Analysis of Student Projects. Continued...

## **Collaborative Learning:**

Group projects facilitate collaborative learning experiences and develop teamwork, communication, and intercultural understanding. The projects reflect the power of collective efforts in generating innovative ideas and solutions. Not all students like 'collaborative project work', since some may contribute more than others, however, there are ways of ensuring that the individual contribution is understood, such as personal reflection journals, provision of individual artefacts within the group project or other associated narrative requiring critical engagement with readings or resources..

## **Personal Transformation:**

The process of working on projects to lead to personal transformation among many. Reflections express increased empathy, awareness, and a sense of responsibility towards global issues.

## **Amplifying Disenfranchised Voices:**

The projects contribute to raising awareness about less-discussed global challenges, shedding light on voices and issues that often receive inadequate attention in mainstream discourse.

## **Partnership Approaches:**

The partnership approach to education is undoubtedly very attractive to students. Working with international development agencies at home and abroad and local communities, allows students to develop their global citizenship skills in a real world environment, understand the work of such agencies and make connections between local and global challenges.

## **Continued Interest in GCDE:**

The student projects reflected a strong interest and engagement in GCDE among the student body. The variety of topics and the depth of research showcased a commitment to exploring and understanding global issues. More longitudinal research would add value to the field of study.

## **Role of Education:**

The projects illustrate the role of education in fostering responsible global citizens. Students' engagement in critical analysis, empathy-building, and cross-cultural understanding exemplify the transformative potential of education.



Students presenting project on theme of Financial Justice, 2022. Photo: G. Cotter



## 5.3 Part 2: End of Course Student Evaluations. Learning from UW0012 Students

The end-of-course evaluation conducted with students of the UW0012 module in the summer of 2021 provides valuable insights into the students' experiences and perceptions of the course. The findings from this evaluation offer significant conclusions that contribute to the overall understanding of the module's impact and effectiveness.

### **Positive Student Feedback:**

The feedback from the end-of-course evaluation is overwhelmingly positive, indicating a high level of satisfaction among the participating students. Of the 15 respondents, 11 rated the course as "excellent," and 4 rated it as "very good." None evaluated the course as "fair" or "poor," which is a testament to the course's effectiveness and engagement.

### **Appreciation for Course Structure:**

Students appreciate the course's unique combination of input from lecturers and interactive spaces for discussion and activities. The blend of educational content and interactive elements, both with peers and with guest partners, contributed to their confidence in applying their learning to real-world situations.

### **Peer Learning and Collaboration:**

Students value interactions with peers, even in the online format required by the COVID-19 pandemic. They highlight the quality of discussions and learning from fellow participants, indicating a strong sense of community and shared learning.

### **Pedagogical Approach:**

The students recognised the dedication, passion, and engaged approach of the course instructor. The teaching style, characterised by interactive delivery and accessibility of content, was highlighted as a strong point of the course. Students appreciate the different approaches to learning, the methodologies and the comprehensive knowledge acquisition across various GCDE themes and theories. Students demonstrate an understanding of the complex interplay of global issues and a commitment to fostering positive change and feel 'less daunted' about engaging with such issues in the future.

### **Skills Development:**

Participants mention acquiring diverse skills such as storytelling for social justice, group facilitation, deep listening, leadership, teamwork, campaigning, collaboration, and presentation skills. The course contributes to both personal and academic skills enhancement.

### **Challenges**

The students were kind and gracious in their comments e.g., when asked, 'What advice would you give the course coordinators, to help improve this course?', one student said 'keep doing what you are doing -the link to real world organisations and issues is fantastic' and another said 'I appreciate the coordinator, i think she did well'.

However, there were some constructive criticisms. The first related to the ambitious nature of the course and highlighted the difficulty of running a five credit module which was not part of the students' degree programmes. One suggestion was 'to increase the course's duration from 12 weeks to more, if possible, a full year'.

## 5.4 Conclusions Part 4: Mapping of Academic Courses at UCC

In the full report, an in-depth analysis of undergraduate and postgraduate courses or modules which might align with GCDE is available. Defining GCDE is critical for the analysis. In the specific sense used here, UCC offers a university-wide module, UW0012 in GCDE, accessible to all students but not forming part of their degree programmes. However, many academic programmes and/or modules align with GCDE principles or approaches. Currently, UCC places a strong emphasis on sustainable development, driven by senior management's encouragement to align with the SDGs. A question arises about whether this emphasis enhances or potentially dilutes GCDE's focus on global (political, economic, and social justice issues. However this depends on individual specialisms.

In Arts, Celtic Studies, and Social Sciences, disciplines such as sociology, politics, geography, languages, religious studies, film, media, music, drama, community development and history touch upon international public policy, social justice, politics, development and global issues. In Science, Engineering, and Food Science, sustainability themes are integrated into STEM curricula. Programmes and modules include Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences, Sustainable Energy, and specialised modules like Sustainable Food Production and Global Food Policy. The School of Business and Law school offers a BSc in International Development and a postgraduate degree in Law (LLM) focusing on International Human Rights Law and Public Policy. The School of Medicine and Health incorporates global health modules into undergraduate and postgraduate programs, particularly in Public Health. Modules include Contemporary Global Health Issues, Health Promotion for midwifery practice, Challenges to Global Health, and more. Adult and continuing education have a number of offerings relating to environment, sustainability and climate.

There are a number of courses available as University Wide modules, Continuing Professional Development courses, or digital badges. Apart from those run by the Praxis project, there are CPD courses in Global Sustainable Development: Interdisciplinary Perspectives; International Children's Rights; and 'Sustainability'. There are digital badges in 'Citizenship for Global Development', Climate Law & Governance for Engaged Citizenship and there is a University Wide modules in Sustainability, Global Sustainable Development: Interdisciplinary Perspectives <<https://ucc-ie-public.courseleaf.com/modules/>>.

To conclude, UCC offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and modules which align with GCDE objectives but no specific module in GCDE in any degree programme. Greater coordination and collaboration between schools could enhance the overall GCDE experience. Interdisciplinary programmes could enrich UCC's provision greatly as could the provision of a GCDE offering as part of the student academic experience.



## 5.5 Mapping students' non-academic GCDE activities

The non-academic activities described in this section illustrate both student commitment but also the importance of the University space and support for fostering global citizenship, social responsibility, and sustainable development among its student body.

### Diverse Engagement with Global Citizenship:

UCC societies, students union, students themselves and university initiatives such as awards and programmes provide spaces for engagement with diverse issues such as geopolitics, migration, sustainable development, human rights, and social responsibility. The following examples are not exhaustive, but is indicative of the interests of students at this time.

### Displacement and Migration:

Support for asylum-seeking and refugee people is important to UCC students at this time. The Fáilte Refugee society is a dynamic student society which organises many events, conferences, campaigns over the year including for UCC's University of Sanctuary week. The group are critically aware of the need for attention to all people from all countries, who have been forcibly displaced.

### Global Citizenship Through Education and Dialogue:

The International Development Society's initiatives encourage students to explore innovative solutions to global challenges. These activities deepen students' understanding of global issues.

### Sustainability and Environmental Awareness:

Through the UCC Green Campus program, the University engages students and staff in discussions and actions related to climate change, pollution, sustainability, and eco-friendly living. These initiatives promote responsible environmental stewardship.



**UCC**  
University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Would you like to take part in a global negotiation to address climate change?

**COP26 @ UCC**

This November, 196 countries of the world will meet in Glasgow at COP26 to negotiate the next stage of an agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees

To mark the importance of COP26 in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, on **Oct 26th**, UCC will host a role-playing version of the negotiations to understand the challenges & to see if a global agreement can be reached.

Participants will adopt negotiating positions for different country groupings & have the opportunity to experience first-hand the challenges of reaching a global agreement on emissions reductions targets that will be tested with climate modelling software.

**We are looking for students (undergraduate & postgraduate) to participate as country negotiators**

This event is being jointly organised by the President's WG on COP26, UCC Green Campus, and a number of UCC Student Societies. If you have any questions about this event please email [Fiona.Regan@ucc.ie](mailto:Fiona.Regan@ucc.ie)

If you are interested in participating in this unique event, [please register your interest here](#)

Participants will be selected on a first-come-basis if interest exceeds venue capacity.

## 5.5 Mapping students' non-academic GCDE activities

### Addressing Basic Needs and Human Rights:

The University's student-run food bank and hygiene products initiative address fundamental needs and human rights within the community. These significantly assist students facing financial hardship and food insecurity. Some involved in this initiative also engage with the Global Food Summit.

### Student-Led Engagement and Collaboration:

Student societies and clubs actively drive these initiatives, highlighting the power of collective action in addressing complex global issues. Collaborations among societies also fosters a sense of shared responsibility.

### Institutional Recognition of Global Citizenship:

The "Global Citizenship Award" category in the UCC Employ Agility Awards reflects the University's commitment to nurturing graduates who contribute to global equality, fairness, and sustainability.

### Real-World Simulations and Advocacy:

Many opportunities arise in informal spaces, such as simulation of events like the UN climate conference and policy research submissions provide students with opportunities for real-world engagement, advocacy skill development, and contributions to global discussions.

### Informal Opportunities provided by Irish Aid funded organisation SUAS

The Global Citizenship Education organisation SUAS Education, mobilise third level students to stand up for global justice, equality and sustainability through their STAND programme.



### Conclusion

There is an interest amongst some student groups, and within the university in global citizenship, sustainable development, and social responsibility. Through a range of initiatives, events, and collaborations, students create or engage with pressing global issues, work toward positive change, and develop the skills and values required to be active and responsible global citizens. However, these do attract certain groups of students who are for instance engaged in societies and have the time to do so. This can exclude students with financial and time restraints.

# Conclusions

1. **Emergence of GCDE Momentum:** The research underscores the growing momentum of Global Citizenship and Development Education (GCDE) as an integral part of higher education, indicating its potential to shape well-rounded and globally aware graduates.
2. **Student Demand and Engagement:** The enthusiastic response to surveys and interviews demonstrates a clear student demand for GCDE, reflected in the interest to enroll in accredited GCDE modules and courses.
3. **Interdisciplinary Integration:** The desire among students to integrate GCDE with their degree programs highlights the importance of flexible and interdisciplinary approaches to curriculum design, fostering a holistic educational experience.
4. **Transformative Learning Pathways:** The study illuminates how GCDE can be a catalyst for transformative learning experiences, expanding students' worldviews and nurturing their commitment to social justice and sustainable development.
5. **Challenges in Promoting Engagement:** Challenges, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and communication gaps, underscore the need for innovative strategies to promote engagement in extracurricular activities and GCDE courses.
6. **Equity and Inclusion:** The research spotlights the importance of addressing equity and inclusion within GCDE, ensuring that diverse student voices are heard and that global justice education is accessible to all.
7. **Educational Ecosystem Enhancement:** The findings suggest the potential for UCC to enrich its educational ecosystem by establishing GCDE as a recognized discipline and embedding it in diverse academic and non-academic activities.
8. **Student-Centric Approach:** The research reaffirms the significance of adopting a student-centric approach in designing GCDE initiatives, valuing student perspectives, and aligning with their aspirations for transformative learning.
9. **Local and Global Nexus:** The study reveals the interconnectedness of local and global issues, indicating the importance of fostering a deeper understanding of how individual actions and global challenges intersect.
10. **Empowerment for Change:** Ultimately, the research underscores the transformative power of GCDE in empowering students to become agents of positive change, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values to contribute meaningfully to global justice, equity, and cross-cultural understanding.

# Recommendations

## Generic

### **Recognise GCDE as a Discipline in its own right or a clear field of study within ‘Education’:**

Acknowledge Global Citizenship Development Education (GCDE) as a distinct discipline, grounded in its robust social justice, radical, academic, and activist tradition. This acknowledgment would show that UCC is listening to the resounding student interest which is revealed in the survey. A substantial 75.48% of 748 students (survey) expressed an interest in participating in accredited GCDE modules, affirming the necessity for comprehensive and specialised studies in global justice and development. 100% of 23 students interviewed individually said that GCDE should be a discipline in UCC.

### **Terminology Clarification:**

Establish a clear description of GCDE concepts and principles, fostering communication among stakeholders. While GCDE should not be reduced to a ‘standardised definition’, it is clear that there is great confusion about GCDE and particularly how it differs from (1) UCC policy on the SDGs and (2) Education for Sustainable Development. Such a discussion on language would also promote interdisciplinary dialogue and streamlines the process of curriculum development.

Develop accessible resources that clearly define and differentiate GCDE or Critical Global Justice Education from related concepts such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ensure that stakeholders understand the distinct focus and objectives of GCDE.

Launch awareness campaigns and training sessions to foster a clear understanding of GCDE's role in promoting social, economic, political, and environmental justice.

# Recommendations for stakeholders

## STUDENTS

**ADVOCATE FOR GCDE INTEGRATION:** Collaborate with student unions and associations to push for the inclusion of GCDE modules and courses within degree programs. With 75.48% of students showing interest in a survey and 100% in interviews, there is substantial demand for global justice education.

**PARTICIPATE IN CURRICULUM DESIGN:** Engage with staff and academic boards to co-create GCDE courses. Student involvement ensures that their perspectives shape the educational trajectory.

## ACADEMICS AND SCHOOLS

**EMBRACE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES:** Foster interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty to develop dynamic GCDE courses. This aligns with the preference of 76.77% of students for interdisciplinary courses.

**AMPLIFY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING:** Forge partnerships with NGOs and expand non-academic activities to provide students with practical learning opportunities addressing global justice issues.

**DEVELOP GCDE MODULES:** Collaborate to create GCDE modules that align with existing courses, offering insights into global citizenship within specialized fields.

## UCC SENIOR MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLICY STAFF

**ALLOCATE RESOURCES FOR GCDE DEVELOPMENT:** Provide dedicated resources for staff training, curriculum refinement, and establishing GCDE-focused departments or programs.

**PROMOTE INNOVATIVE TEACHING METHODS:** Encourage innovative teaching methodologies, including integrating podcasts, webinars, and interactive online platforms.

**INCLUDE GCDE IN STRATEGIC PLANS:** Ensure GCDE is explicitly included in university strategic plans to underscore its significance.

**PROMOTE GLOBAL JUSTICE SCHOLARSHIPS:** Establish scholarships to support students excelling in GCDE studies, fostering change-makers for global justice.

## EMPLOYERS AND WIDER SOCIETY

**FOSTER BUSINESS-EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS:** Collaborate with industries and employers to provide practical learning opportunities that integrate global citizenship skills.

**HIGHLIGHT SKILL DEVELOPMENT:** Showcase how GCDE equips students with skills like cross-cultural communication and problem-solving.

**EMBED GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN GRADUATES' PROFILES:** Collaborate with employers to integrate global citizenship attributes into students' profiles.

**SHOWCASE EMPLOYER BENEFITS:** Demonstrate the advantages of hiring graduates with strong global citizenship skills.

# Recommendations for stakeholders

## **FUNDERS**

INVEST IN GCDE INITIATIVES: Allocate resources for the expansion of GCDE programs.

SUPPORT RESEARCH AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: Direct funding towards innovative pedagogical methods and curriculum design.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND NGOS**

FACILITATE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT: Provide platforms for students to engage in community initiatives applying GCDE principles.

COLLABORATE ON INNOVATIVE PROJECTS: Collaborate with educational institutions for projects addressing global challenges.

## **IRISH AID AND GOVERNMENT BODIES**

PROMOTE GCDE IN POLICIES: Advocate for integrating GCDE into national education policies.

ALLOCATE FUNDING: Dedicate funding to initiatives promoting GCDE.

## **LOCAL AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT**

STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS: Foster partnerships between local communities, global organizations, and educational institutions.

ENCOURAGE GLOBAL COLLABORATIONS: Support cross-border collaborations among institutions.

## **CONTINUOUS RESEARCH**

SUPPORT RESEARCH INITIATIVES: Encourage research on innovative pedagogical methods and curriculum development.

BRIDGE THEORY AND PRACTICE: Foster research collaboration between scholars, educators, and students.

## **INNOVATION IN EDUCATION**

PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT: Explore project-based learning, VR simulations, and global collaborative workshops.

RESEARCH AND PROJECTS: Engage in community-based research and data-driven analysis.

INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION: Organize hackathons, collaborate with artists, and explore AI's impact on global justice.

## **CURRICULUM DESIGN INNOVATION**

PERSONALISED LEARNING PATHS: Develop tailored learning paths for students.

DECOLONIAL APPROACHES: Incorporate decolonial perspectives into GCDE curriculum.

FUTURES THINKING: Introduce futures thinking methodologies.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS**

ENCOURAGE EMPLOYERS TO UNDERSTAND GCDE: Engage employers to appreciate the value of global citizenship skills.

FORGE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS: Collaborate with industries to create opportunities for students to apply their knowledge.



# Final words

This research, conducted as part of the Praxis Project at University College Cork (UCC), is a comprehensive exploration of Global Citizenship Development Education (GCDE), with a primary focus on the perspectives and aspirations of UCC students. The study, which constitutes the second phase of a three-part inquiry, is part of a broader project at UCC which aims at fostering global engagement, critical awareness, and meaningful action in the field of GCDE.

In this phase, a total of 748 students participated in the university-wide survey, unveiling a great interest in the themes and principles underpinning GCDE. This positive response highlights a compelling need for education that equips students with the skills, knowledge, and values to navigate complex global challenges. Moreover, it highlights the importance of recognising GCDE as an autonomous field of study, deeply rooted in both academic and activist traditions.

The voices of students resonate throughout this research, articulating a strong desire for a holistic and inclusive education that transcends disciplinary boundaries. The conclusions drawn from their perspectives provide clear guidance on curricular design, methodologies, and pedagogical approaches. These recommendations not only signal the aspirations of students but also provide a roadmap for integrating GCDE more profoundly into the educational fabric.

A central tenet of this research advocates for the formal recognition of GCDE as a discipline within the academic landscape. While drawing inspiration from broader global goals, GCDE possesses its unique ethos and history, manifesting in a fusion of academic rigor and social justice advocacy. Amidst the demands of educational priorities, this report highlights the necessity of upholding GCDE as a distinct and integral component, deserving of strategic recognition and support.

In the pursuit of a just and interconnected world, education emerges as a potent tool for transformative change. This research culminates in a call to action, a call to action across disciplines, sectors, and stakeholders. It urges the academic community to embrace the multifaceted dimensions of GCDE, to champion innovative approaches, and to provide pathways toward a more equitable and empathetic global society. As the journey continues, the integration of GCDE into the heart of education emerges as an embodiment of University College Cork's commitment to excellence, global citizenship, and the advancement of social progress. As Paulo Freire says of this journey "we make the road by walking".



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