

UCC world's first university to get Green Flag award

UCC has become the first university in the world to be presented with the prestigious international Green Flag award.

The award was presented for the Green Campus initiative, which, in the past three years has seen the university save €300,000 in waste management costs, by reducing waste to landfill by nearly 400 tonnes and improving recycling from 21% to 60%.

Furthermore, UCC has conserved almost enough water this year to fill the equivalent of the Lough in Cork city.

An Taisce, on behalf of the Foundation for Environmental Education ([FEE](#)), granted the international accreditation after a rigorous assessment by an expert panel. The award was presented by Environment Minister John Gormley, on behalf of An Taisce, to UCC president Dr Michael Murphy.

In addition to staff recycling systems that previously existed, new recycling facilities for students are now available in front of the lecture halls and in the canteens where staff are trained in minimising waste.

Students in lecture theatres and laboratories are alerted to turn off lights and electrical equipment.

College maintenance vehicles are now running on biodiesel and carpooling has been introduced to facilitate lifts to and from campus.

"It is quite a leap, transforming the Green Schools programme - geared for the typical school of a few hundred students - to a complex campus of 130 acres, 16,000 students and almost 3,000 staff," Dr Michael John O'Mahony of An Taisce said.

"In population terms, UCC is bigger than your average Irish town - so, bringing together all the necessary parties and practices to develop it into a sustainable Green-Campus was a real challenge."

UCC's Dr Murphy said it is a source of great pride to the university, its staff and its students, that UCC has become the first third level institution in the world to be awarded the designation. "It is a wonderful achievement to have innovative thinkers among the staff and students in UCC - all working towards the same objective.

"It was these students, who had been part of the Green Flag programme at secondary school level, who believed from the outset that the concept could be transferred successfully to an institution of UCC's size and that, by raising awareness throughout the university, we could, together, make a real difference."