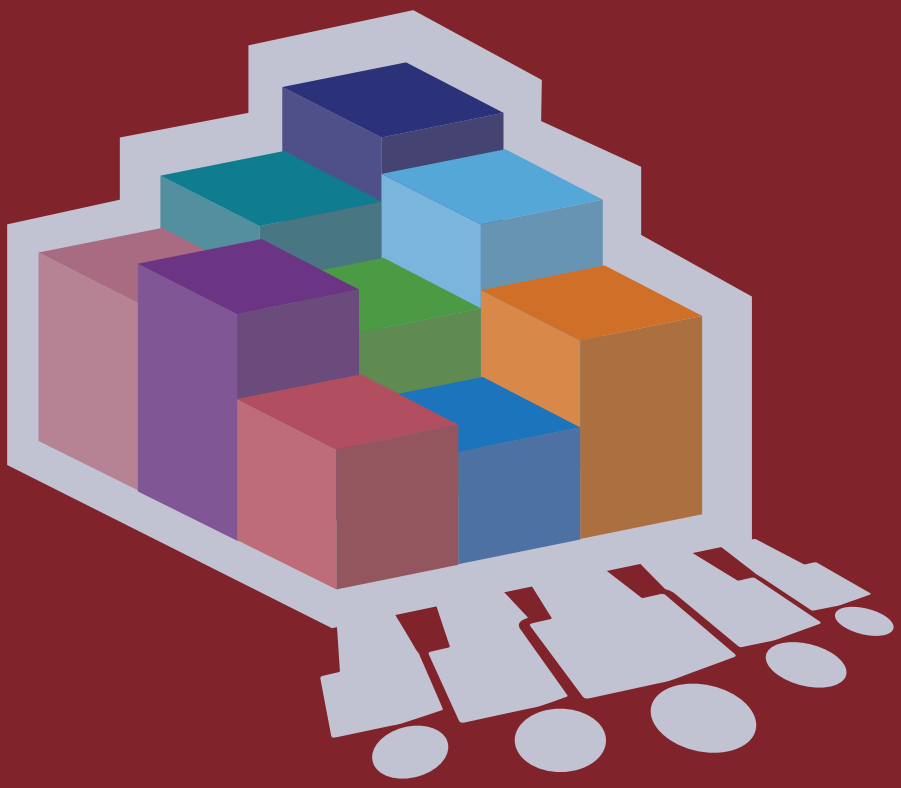

Numbers of Students with Disabilities Studying in Higher Education in Ireland

2015/16

ahead
Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

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Foreword

By Ann Heelan, Executive Director, AHEAD

This report not only gives us an overview of the participation rates of students with disabilities in the higher education sector, but allows us to see the developments, trends and patterns emerging. The findings for the academic year 2015/16 indicate that the diversity and equality policies in Higher Education Institutions are effective and that the numbers have risen. There are now a total of 11,244 students across 25 responding institutions representing 5.2% of the total student population. This is a 4% increase on the previous year and points to an upward trend which is extremely positive.

The inclusion of a diversity of students in higher education including students with disabilities is complex in terms of managing difference and in terms of changing the processes and structures within the institutions. This report shows that students with disabilities are succeeding in getting into all courses and this has implications for administration, admissions, placement, teaching and learning, transition to work and all other spheres of institutional life. A diverse student profile requires new thinking, new approaches and new solutions. Disability and access officers within institutions have been at the forefront of pushing for change and in working collaboratively with other staff across other functions to resolve issues. However, while this picture is undoubtedly encouraging, the report signposts a number of persistent trends and barriers which must raise questions for institutions and the education system as a whole.

- Why are the numbers of students in higher education who are blind or visually impaired decreasing?
- Why are so many students with disabilities in higher education drawn to Humanities and Arts in such numbers?
- Why are students with disabilities under-represented on part-time courses?
- Why are students with disabilities not considering post graduate courses at the same rate as non-disabled graduates?

These questions reach back into the second level system of education and in particular, highlight the impact on students with disabilities of an education system reliant on competitive written examinations as an entry mechanism for higher education.

It also raises concerns about the career guidance received by students with disabilities in second level - concerns which were mirrored in recent AHEAD research into the transition experience of students with visual impairments*.

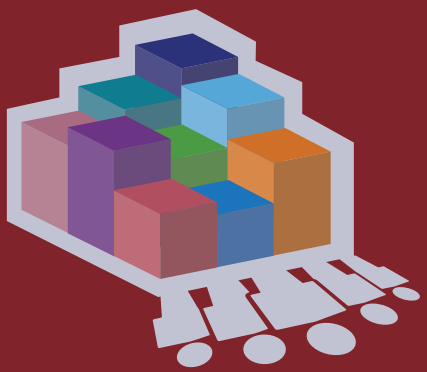
* AHEAD, 2015. Giving voice to blind and visually impaired student's transition experiences, addressing gaps in policy provision. Dublin, Ireland: AHEAD Educational Press.

These students need to be informed and encouraged to look at the upcoming employment opportunities in occupational areas such as STEM, Financial Services, Health Sciences, Manufacturing and Leisure industries as identified in the Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025[†].

The challenge for higher education is to respond holistically to this changing context of diversity and to ensure it is everyone's job and not just the role of the Disability /Access Officer to include and support students. While Disability/Access officers have a vital role to play in the diversity strategy of the institution it is vital that they work with key players to identify the barriers and gaps, and to be innovative and flexible in finding solutions that are sustainable and appropriate for the institution.

† Dept. of Education & Skills, 2016

Introduction



Introduction

AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access and Disability) is the National Centre for Inclusive Education. An independent non-profit organisation AHEAD's mission is 'To empower more students to succeed in education and graduate employment'.

One of the key activities undertaken by AHEAD in pursuance of its mission is the research into the number of students with disabilities studying in higher education in Ireland. To achieve this AHEAD surveys, on an annual basis, all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that are funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) plus other additional higher education institutions that are an important part of the higher education system. The objective of the participation rates survey is to provide an accurate national measure of the numbers of students with disabilities in higher education, to identify where and in what academic field they are studying, and to give an insight of their progress from one academic year to another.

To this extent survey findings offer a comprehensive snapshot of the numbers of students with disabilities entering and progressing through the higher education system at a given time along with identifying emerging trends and areas of improvement. It is intended that survey results will assist and inform strategic planning in the education sector. This report details the results of AHEAD's survey on the participation rates of students with disabilities in higher education in Ireland covering the academic year 2015/16.

Going forward a key driver to the implementation of the core activities of AHEAD is a focus on building an inclusive learning environment in higher education that embeds flexibility and equality into learning and assessment practices across all higher education courses.

AHEAD seeks to achieve its mission by pursuing four core strategic themes:

To influence national policy to impact positively on the inclusion of students with disabilities in education and employment

To develop AHEAD's existing emerging partnerships and build on its successes

To build relationships within the higher education sector to promote the integration of the principles of Universal Design for Learning in education and employment

To sustain and grow the organisation of AHEAD through engagement with key strategic partners

Survey Method

This survey was carried out by AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, in collaboration with Disability/Access Officers of selected institutions throughout the country. A survey questionnaire was sent to the Disability/Access Officer in each of the selected institutions. Selected institutions were targeted on the basis that they are funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and therefore included in the HEA annual statistics on the total student population. This allows a comparison between AHEAD survey results and HEA data for the same academic year 2015/16*. Despite the National College of Ireland being funded by the Dept. of Education, it was included in this year's survey due to the nature of its size. 27 institutions were approached and 25 of those responded to the survey, all of which are listed below. Some institutions were unable to complete every section of the survey, and this is explained in footnotes throughout the report.

Universities (later referred to as)

-University College Dublin (UCD)

-University College Cork (UCC)

-National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG)

-Trinity College Dublin (TCD)

-Maynooth University (MU)

-Dublin City University (DCU)

-University of Limerick (UL)

-Marino Institute of Education (MIE)

-Mary Immaculate College (MIC)

-National College of Art and Design (NCAD)

-Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)

-St. Angela's College (St. Ang)

Institutes of Technology and Other Institutions (later referred to as)

-Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT)

-Cork Institute of Technology (CIT)

-Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)

-Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology (DLIADT)

-Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)

-Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB)

-Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC)

-Institute of Technology Sligo (ITS)

-Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT)

-Institute of Technology Tralee (ITTRA)

-Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT)

-National College of Ireland (NCI)

-Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)

* Higher Education Authority, "HEA Annual Statistics 2015/2016", 2016, <www.hea.ie/en/statistics> [accessed Nov 20th 2016]

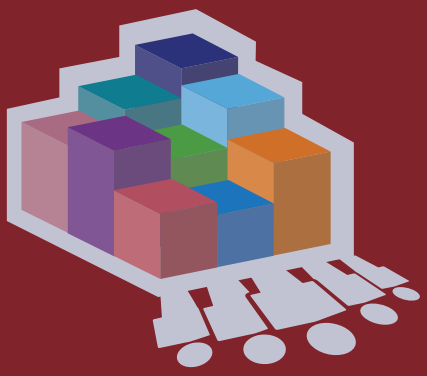
In this report you will find comparisons between the findings of this survey and the findings of eight similar surveys of participation rates of students with disabilities for the academic years 2014/15, 2013/14, 2012/13, 2011/12, 2010/11, 2009/10, 2008/09, 2005/2006 and 1998/1999, all of which were undertaken by AHEAD.

There are some differences in the approach to the nine surveys, most notably, that the 98/99 survey was much larger in scale. It is important to point out these differences if one is to make an informed comparison of the educational landscapes of the relevant years. In the 98/99 survey, 42 institutions returned information regarding the participation of students with disabilities, in comparison with 22 in 05/06, 21 in 08/09, 26 in 09/10, 23 in 10/11, 25 in 11/12, 26 in 12/13, 27 in 13/14, 27 in 14/15 and 25 in the current survey, although most of the major institutions are represented in all of them. There are also some comparisons made where possible, with a survey carried out by AHEAD on the same topic for the academic year 1993/1994 and it should be noted that this survey included Northern Ireland's higher education institutions, which were not included in subsequent surveys.

It should also be noted that when the term "students with disabilities" (shortened to SWDs in parts) is used in this report, it refers only to students with a disability or specific learning difficulty who have registered with the disability/access services of participating institutions. This requires a student to declare a disability verified by medical documentation. In other words, students with a disability who have not registered with the services of one of the participating institutions are not included in the findings.

Throughout this report the phrase 'participation rate' is referenced. When used in this report, this phrase refers to the number of students with disabilities in higher education as a percentage of the total student population.

Findings

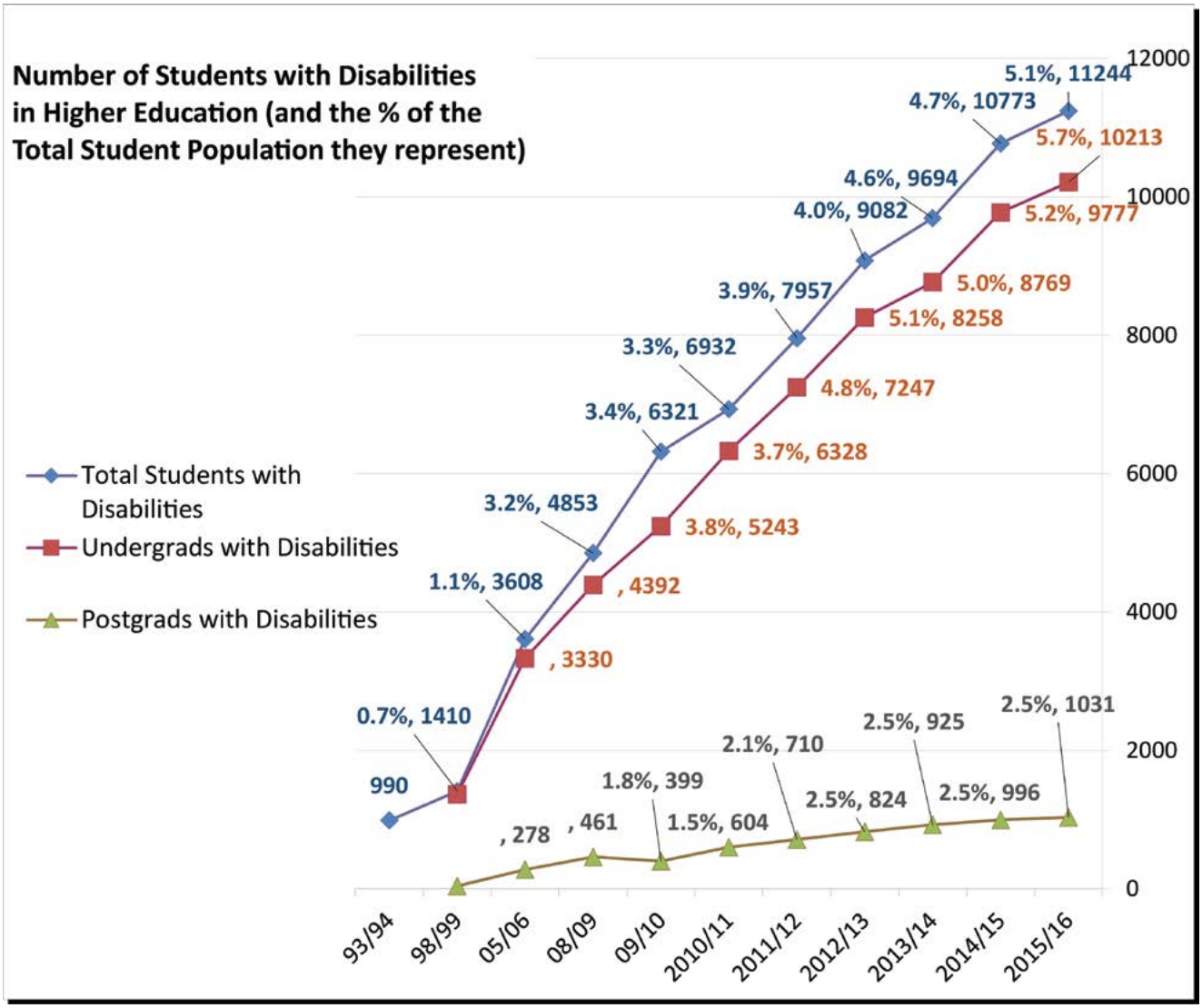


Findings

Participation Rates of Students with Disabilities

The 25 responding institutions in Ireland identified a total of 11244 students with disabilities, representing 5.2% of the total student population, of which 10213 are studying undergraduate courses and 1031 are studying postgraduate courses. This represents a 4% rise in the total number of students with disabilities from 14/15, when the figure was 10733. This means that students with disabilities now make up 5.2% of the total student population in the responding institutions, up slightly from last year's figure of 5.1%.

Figure 1 - Increasing numbers of students with disabilities from AHEAD's first survey of the subject in 1993/94 right through to 2015/16



The average participation rate of students with disabilities in the Institutes of Technology/ Other sector was 5.5% (up from 5.4% last year) in comparison to 5% (up from 4.9% last year) in the University sector. The participation rate varied significantly across different institutions with rates as low as 1.2% in some institutions and as high as over 10% in others. Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology had the highest rate of participation at 10.2%, followed by Institute of Technology Tralee at 9.7%. National College of Art & Design had the highest participation rate in the University Sector with 8.5% of their total student population being made up of SWDs. See Table 13 in the Appendix for further information on the numbers of students with disabilities registered in each of the responding institutions.

In the academic year 2015/16, SWDs made up 5.8% (10213) of the total undergraduate population but just 2.6% (1031) of the total postgraduate population in the 25 responding institutions. From the data collected for this report, it is not possible to discern why the participation rate at undergraduate level is more than double that at postgraduate level. It is likely that there are a myriad of complex reasons for this and anecdotal evidence suggests they could include:

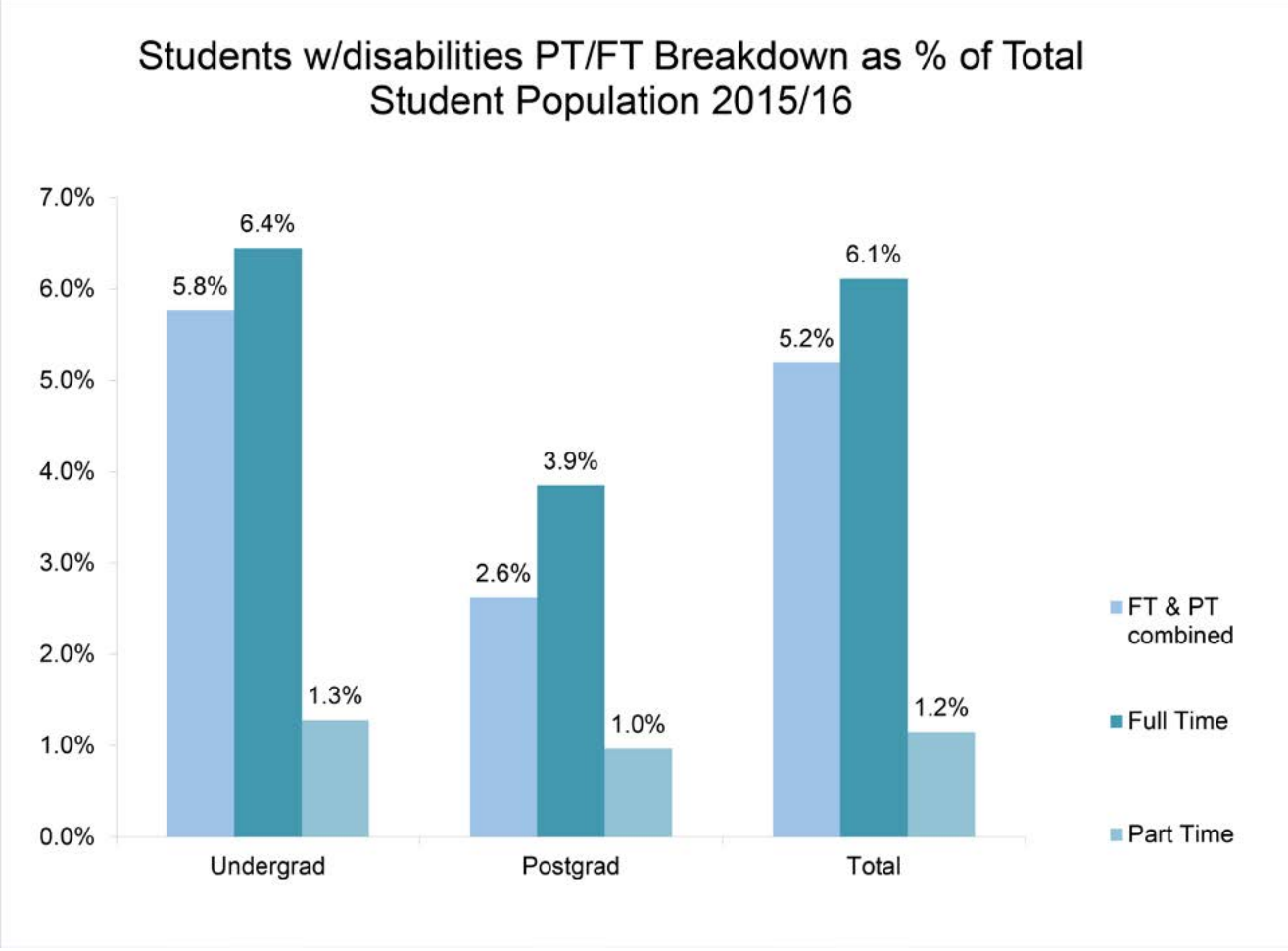
- The nature of postgraduate study (usually relying on a large amount of reading and written work putting those with print disabilities at a natural disadvantage).
- The fact that postgraduate study is more likely to occur in the university sector and this sector has already a lower participation rate than the IoT/Other sector.
- The likelihood that some students, having required support to get through their undergraduate studies, may now be more equipped to study without the assistance of disability support services and as such, may decide against registering for the disability/access service, in which case they would not be identified and counted in this report.
- The reality that many students may opt out of further study and instead seek out career opportunities.
- The cost of postgraduate study.

Full Time/Part Time Divide

AHEAD collected data on the breakdown of SWDs by the full time/part time status of their courses. The 25 responding institutions provided the full time/part time breakdown of all SWDs registered with the disability support services. The responding institutions identified 10781 SWDs undertaking full time courses representing 6.1% (up from 5.9% last year) of the total full time student population while just 463 SWDs undertaking part time courses were reported, representing only 1.2% of the total part time student population (down from 1.3%).

AHEAD surveys have consistently observed a significant gap between the participation rate of SWDs on part time courses compared with full time courses. Given the impact of certain disabilities along with the consideration that part time study is a more sustainable choice for many students with disabilities, one might reasonably expect that the part time participation rate would be higher than the full time rate but the data does not reflect this, suggesting that there are systemic barriers present. While we have no robust evidence of the nature of these barriers, anecdotal sources such as calls made to the AHEAD information service indicates that the lack of available funding for the provision of supports for students through the Fund for Students with Disabilities in the part time sector is a real obstacle to participation, in particular where supports are costly as is the case with, for example, sign language interpretation or personal assistance.

Figure 2 - Breakdown of students with disabilities registered with the disability service of the responding institutions by full time and part time course participation



Key Point: The participation rate of Students with Disabilities in full time courses is more than 5 times the participation rate in part time courses. There are likely many complex reasons for this, but anecdotal evidence suggests that in many cases it may be due to the lack of funding for the provision of supports in the part time sector.

New Entrant and Final Year Undergraduates with Disabilities

The institutions surveyed were asked to supply numbers of new entrant undergraduates registered with the disability services in 2015/16, “new entrant” meaning students in their first year of study. A total of 3075 new entrants were registered with the services of the 25 responding institutions (up from 3016 in 14/15) representing 30% of the total disabled undergraduate population, down from 31% in 14/15.

The Institutions surveyed also returned the numbers of final year undergraduates registered with the disability services in 2015/16. A total of 2539 final year undergraduates were registered with the services of the 25 responding institutions, representing 25% of the total disabled undergraduate population, up from 23% in 14/15.

Mature Students with Disabilities

The institutions surveyed were asked to supply numbers of mature students registered with the disability service in 2015/16. A total of 1381 (down from 1443 in 14/15) mature students were registered with the services of the 24 responding institutions who provided data for this section*, representing 16.3% of the total population of students with disabilities in those institutions.

* DLIADT were unable to provide this data

New Registrations

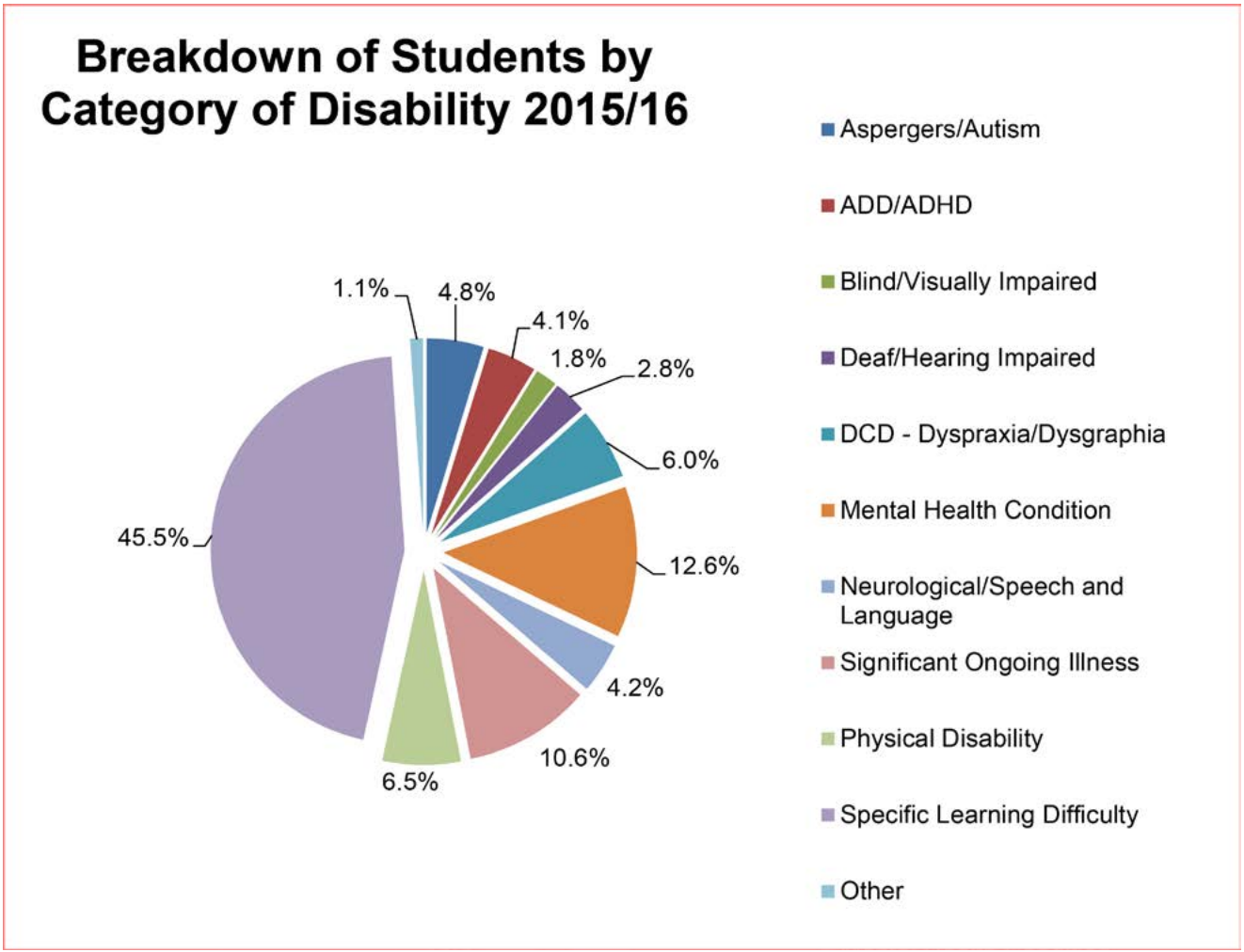
Institutions were asked to provide information on the number of all students who newly registered with the disability services in 2015/16, including those that were not new entrants to the institutions. This question was asked in an attempt to capture the approximate number of students who were going through first year (or more) without support and then subsequently realised they required support and registered in 2015/16. We calculated this number by taking the number of new registrations and subtracting the number of new entrants. The 25 responding institutions identified 975 students newly registered with disability services who were not new entrants to the institutions, representing 9.7% of total SWDs in these institutions (up from 6.7% the previous year) and 24% of total new registrations.

Key Point: Almost a quarter of all students who registered with disability services in higher education institutions in 2015/16 were not in their first year of study.

It is important to understand the difference that support makes to the retention of students with disabilities and the all-round benefits to be gained by promoting registration with the disability services at the earliest possible juncture.

Nature of Disability

Figure 3 - Breakdown of total disabled student population 2015/16 by categaory of primary disability



The categories of disability in the breakdown match those outlined in the guidelines provided by the Higher Education Authority to institutions applying to the Fund for Students with Disabilities albeit with an 'Other' category added for students registered with the services who do not fall into one of these categories.

The responding institutions provided the primary disability profile of 10213 undergraduates with disabilities and 1031 postgraduates with disabilities. Of the 11244 students represented in the disability profile, 535 (4.8%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 461 (4.1%) have ADD/ADHD, 205 (1.8%) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 313 (2.8%) are in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing category, 678 (6%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 1416 (12.6%) have a Mental Health Condition, 474 (4.2%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition, 1193 (10.6%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 731 (6.5%) have a Physical Disability, 5116 (45.5%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 122 (1.1%) are listed under Other category.

The most significant changes in the year-on-year percentage breakdowns are in the categories Specific Learning Difficulty down (1.4 percentage points to 45.5%), the Dyspraxia/ Dysgraphia category (up 1.1 percentage points to 6%) and the Neurological/Speech and Language category (up 0.9 percentage points to 4.2%). Other changes show Asperger/Autism up 0.5 percentage points, ADD/ADHD up 0.3 percentage points, Blind/Visually Impaired down 0.3 percentage points, Mental Health Condition up 0.1 percentage points, Significant Ongoing Illness up 0.4 percentage points, and Physical Disability down 0.3 percentage points.

Key Point: The Specific Leaning Difficulty category has fallen as a percentage of total students with disabilities every year for the last 5, from 60.5% in 2010/11, to 45.5% in the current survey.

Despite the issue of underrepresentation of students with sensory impairments in Higher Education being flagged in several previous AHEAD reports, and an increase in their participation recognised as a strategic objective in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019, the only category that has seen a drop in actual numbers of students is the Blind/Visually Impaired category. While the total numbers of students with disabilities rose 4% year on year, the number of students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category actually fell by 10% in the academic year 15/16.

Key Point: While the total numbers of students with disabilities rose 4% year on year, the number of students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category actually fell by 10% - the second fall in consecutive years.

Other interesting year on year changes include the numbers of students in the Dyspraxia/ Dysgraphia category rising 28% and those in the Neurological/Speech and Language category rising 35%.

New Entrant Disability Breakdown

Of the 3075 new entrant undergraduate students with disabilities identified by the responding institutions, 194 (6.3%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 132 (4.3%) have ADD/ADHD, 50 (1.6%) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 90 (2.9%) are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, 231 (7.5%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 343 (11.2%) have a Mental Health Condition, 139 (4.5%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition, 304 (9.9%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 175 (5.7%) have a Physical Disability, 1361 (44.3%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 56 (1.8%) were placed in the Other category.

Final Year Disability Breakdown

Of the 2539 final year undergraduate students with disabilities identified by the 25 responding institutions, 85 (3.3%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 95 (3.7%) have ADD/ADHD, 48 (1.9%) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 57 (2.2%) are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, 116 (4.6%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 310 (12.2%) have a Mental Health Condition, 85 (3.3%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition, 238 (9.4%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 167 (6.6%) have a Physical Disability, 1290 (50.8%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 48 (1.9%) were placed in the Other category.

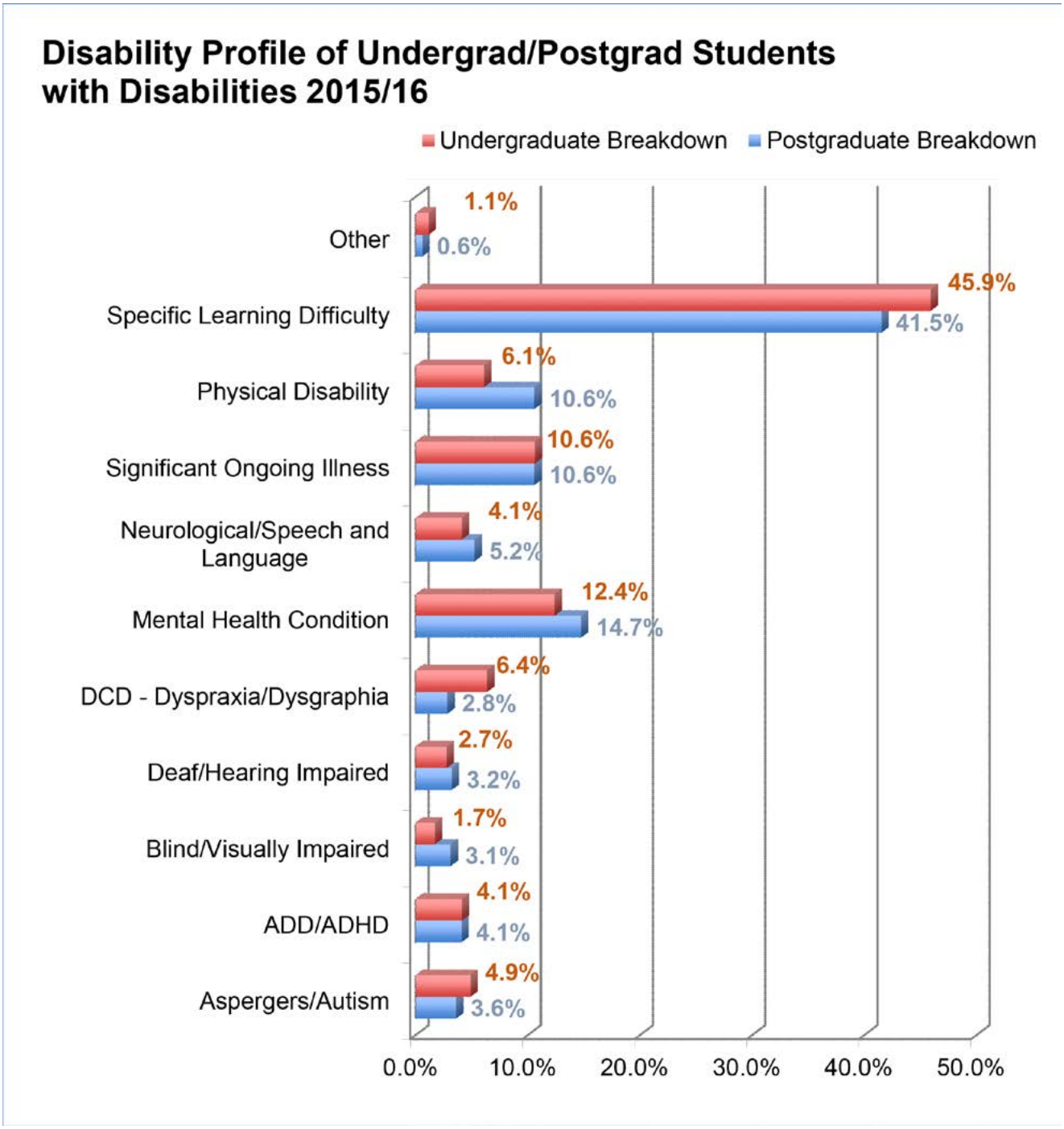
Undergraduate Disability Breakdown

Of the 10213 undergraduate students with disabilities identified by the responding institutions, 498 (4.9%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 419 (4.1%) have ADD/ADHD, 173 (1.7%) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 280 (2.7%) are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, 649 (6.4%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 1264 (12.4%) have a Mental Health Condition, 420 (4.1%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition, 1084 (10.6%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 622 (6.1%) have a Physical Disability, 4688 (45.9%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 116 (1.1%) were placed in the Other category.

Postgraduate Disability Breakdown

Of the 1031 postgraduate students with disabilities identified by the responding institutions, 37 (3.6%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 42 (4.1%) have ADD/ADHD, 32 (3.1%) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 33 (3.2%) are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, 29 (2.8%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 152 (14.7%) have a Mental Health Condition, 54 (5.2%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition, 109 (10.6%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 109 (10.6%) have a Physical Disability, 428 (41.5%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 6 (0.6%) were placed in the Other category.

Figure 4 - Disability profile of postgraduate and undergraduate students with disabilities 2015/16

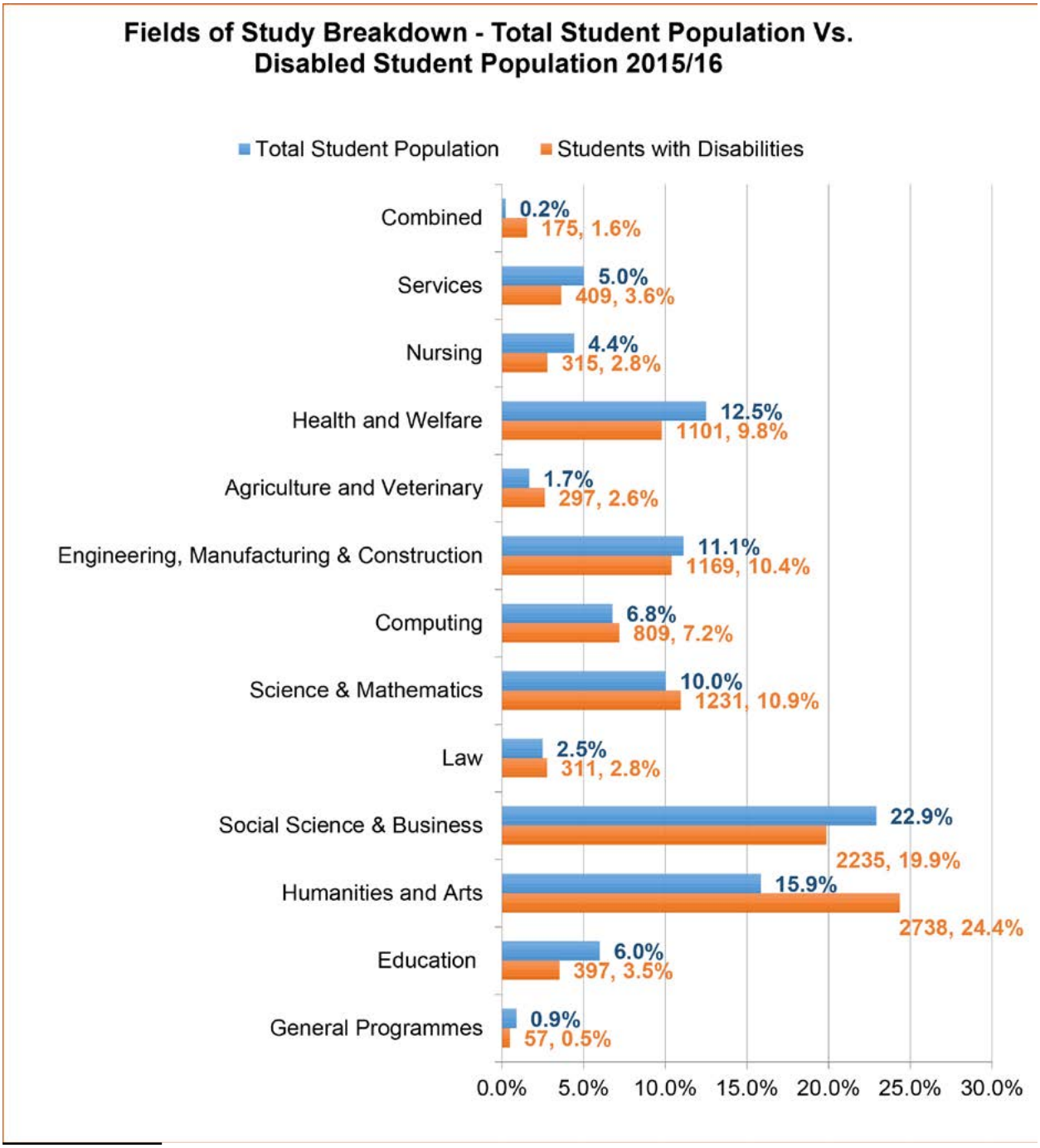


There are some differences to be found in the disability profile breakdown of postgraduate students to undergraduate students. Students with Specific Learning Difficulties make up 41.5% of the postgraduate breakdown compared to 45.9% of the undergraduate breakdown. Students with physical disabilities make up 10.6% of the postgraduate breakdown in comparison to 6.1% of the undergraduate breakdown. Students in the Blind/Visually impaired category make up 3.1% of the postgraduate breakdown in comparison to 1.7% of the undergraduate breakdown. The reasons behind these significant differences merit some further exploration.

Fields of Study of Students with Disabilities

The 25 responding institutions reported on the number of students with disabilities in each field of study in 2015/16. Each institution was given the subject breakdown as used by the HEA in their statistics but modified slightly*, each subject coming under one of 13 fields of study and were asked to report on the number of students with disabilities studying in each field. The data shown in Figure 5 represents the fields of study of 11244 students with disabilities across 25 institutions.

Figure 5 - Breakdown of fields of study of students with disabilities compared with breakdown for the total student population†



* HEA statistics collate subjects under 10 fields. In this survey AHEAD provided 13 fields putting Law, Computing & Nursing in fields of their own where in the HEA statistics they were included under more diverse fields.

† Higher Education Authority, "2015/16 Statistics", 2016, <www.hea.ie/en/statistics> [accessed Nov 20th 2016]

‘Humanities & Arts’ was again the most common field of study for students with disabilities in the responding institutions with 24.4% of the makeup, followed by ‘Social Science & Business’ with 19.9% and ‘Science & Mathematics’ with 10.4%. The least common fields of study for students with disabilities were ‘General Programmes’ with 0.5%, ‘Combined Studies’ with 1.6% and ‘Agriculture & Veterinary’ with 2.6%.

The most notable differences between the percentage breakdown for fields of study of students with disabilities and the breakdown for the total student population arise in the fields of ‘Humanities and Arts’ and ‘Health & Welfare’. 24.4% of students with disabilities study in the field of ‘Humanities and Arts’ in comparison to 15.9% of the total student population and 9.8% of all students with disabilities study in the area of ‘Health & Welfare’ in comparison to 12.5% of the total student population.

Fields of Study Breakdown by Disability

We asked the responding institutions to provide the fields of study breakdown of students with disabilities by category of disability. The responding institutions provided the fields of study of 11244 students with disabilities and the fields of study breakdown by primary disability. The following series of tables represent the fields of study of each disability category, each one containing a table and one or two salient points about the findings. Note that when discussing the preferred subjects of each disability category, we have omitted reference to the 'General Programmes' field and the 'Combined' field as they are, by far, the least popular fields selected by the total student population and given their broad nature, neither reveal a great deal about the students with disabilities studying them. Note the application of the terms 'underrepresented' and 'overrepresented' in this section are applied to highlight the fields of study that have a concentration or not of students with a particular disability in comparison to the average number of students/students with disabilities. There is no intention that the use of these terms impart any positive or negative inferences.

The results provide insights that may have implications for the design and implementation for teaching and learning within higher education as a whole and in particular on specific fields of study.

Aspergers/Autism – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 1 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Aspergers/Autism Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

Aspergers/Autism Field of Study Breakdown					
4.8% of all SWDs are in Aspergers/ Autism Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Aspergers/ Autism Category Studying Field**	**% of Students in Aspergers/ Autism Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Aspergers/ Autism Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	4	0.7%	7.0%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	5	0.9%	1.3%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	159	29.7%	5.8%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	67	12.5%	3.0%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	11	2.1%	3.5%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	78	14.6%	6.3%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	113	21.1%	14.0%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	51	9.5%	4.4%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	9	1.7%	3.0%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	20	3.7%	1.8%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	1	0.2%	0.3%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	8	1.5%	2.0%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	9	1.7%	5.1%
Total			**535**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Aspergers/Autism category are most underrepresented in the field of Nursing.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Aspergers/Autism category are most overrepresented in the fields of Computing & Science.
- The responding institutions reported just 1 student with Aspergers/Autism in the field of Nursing.
- Students in the Aspergers/Autism category are 3 times as likely to study in the Computing field as the average student or the average student with a disability.
- Students in the Aspergers/Autism category are one quarter as likely to study in the field of Education Science as the average student with a disability.
-

ADD/ADHD – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 2 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the ADD/ADHD Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

ADD/ADHD Field of Study Breakdown					
4.1% of all SWDs are in ADD/ADHD Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in ADD/ADHD Category Studying Field**	**% of Students in ADD/ ADHD Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in ADD/ADHD Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	6	1.3%	10.5%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	5	1.1%	1.3%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	124	26.9%	4.5%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	103	22.3%	4.6%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	13	2.8%	4.2%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	43	9.3%	3.5%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	32	6.9%	4.0%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	49	10.6%	4.2%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	12	2.6%	4.0%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	48	10.4%	4.4%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	8	1.7%	2.5%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	12	2.6%	2.9%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	6	1.3%	3.4%
Total			**461**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the ADD/ADHD category are most underrepresented in the fields of Education Science.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the ADD/ADHD category are most overrepresented in the fields of Social Science & Business and Humanities & Arts.
- The responding institutions reported just 5 students with ADD/ADHD in the field of Education Science.
- Students in the ADD/ADHD category are only one fifth as likely to study in the field of Education Science as the average student.
-

Blind/Visually Impaired – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 3 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Blind/Visually Impaired Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

Blind/Visually Impaired Field of Study Breakdown					
1.8% of all SWDs are in Blind/ Visually Impaired Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Blind/ Visually Impaired Studying Field**	**% of Students in Blind/ Visually Impaired Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Blind/ Visually Impaired Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	4	2.0%	7.0%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	6	2.9%	1.5%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	61	29.8%	2.2%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	45	22.0%	2.0%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	8	3.9%	2.6%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	21	10.2%	1.7%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	25	12.2%	3.1%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	9	4.4%	0.8%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	1	0.5%	0.3%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	15	7.3%	1.4%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	1	0.5%	0.3%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	3	1.5%	0.7%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	6	2.9%	3.4%
Total			**205**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are most underrepresented in the fields of Nursing and Agriculture & Veterinary.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are most overrepresented in the fields of Computing and Law.
- The responding institutions reported just 1 student in the Blind/Visually Impaired category in the fields of both Nursing and Agriculture & Veterinary.
- Students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are one and three quarters as likely to study in the Computing field as the average student.
- Students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are almost twice as likely to study in the Humanities & Arts field as the average student.
- Students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are one eighth as likely to study in the fields of Nursing as the average student or student with a disability.
-

Deaf/ Hearing Impaired – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 4 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

Deaf/Hearing Impaired Field of Study Breakdown					
2.8% of all SWDs are in Deaf/ Hearing Impaired Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Deaf/Hearing Impaired Category Studying Field**	**% of Students in Deaf/ Hearing Impaired Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Deaf/ Hearing Impaired Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	1	0.3%	1.8%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	13	4.2%	3.3%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	59	18.8%	2.2%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	74	23.6%	3.3%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	14	4.5%	4.5%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	33	10.5%	2.7%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	24	7.7%	3.0%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	22	7.0%	1.9%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	8	2.6%	2.7%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	48	15.3%	4.4%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	7	2.2%	2.2%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	4	1.3%	1.0%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	6	1.9%	3.4%
Total			**313**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired category are most underrepresented in the field of Services.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired category are most overrepresented in the fields of Law and Health & Welfare.
- Students in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired category are more than one and a half times as likely to study in the field of Law as the average student or student with a disability.
- Students in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired category are more than one and a half times as likely to study in the field of Health and Welfare as the average student with a disability.
- Students in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired category are one quarter as likely to study in the field of Services as the average student.
-

DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 5 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the DCD – Dyspraxia/ Dysgraphia Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

DCD - Dyspraxia Field of Study Breakdown					
6.0% of all SWDs are in DCD - Dyspraxia Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in DCD - Dyspraxia Studying Field**	**% of Students in DCD - Dyspraxia Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in DCD - Dyspraxia Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	2	0.3%	3.5%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	10	1.5%	2.5%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	173	25.5%	6.3%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	141	20.8%	6.3%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	30	4.4%	9.6%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	68	10.0%	5.5%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	69	10.2%	8.5%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	59	8.7%	5.0%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	10	1.5%	3.4%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	45	6.6%	4.1%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	21	3.1%	6.7%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	34	5.0%	8.3%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	16	2.4%	9.1%
Total			**678**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the DCD – Dyspraxia/ Dysgraphia category are most underrepresented in the fields of Education Science and Agriculture and Veterinary.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the DCD – Dyspraxia/ Dysgraphia category are most overrepresented in the fields of Law, Services and Computing.
- Students in the DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia category are more than one and a half times as likely as the average student or student with a disability to study in the field of Law.
- Students in the DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia category are almost one and a half times as likely as the average student or student with a disability to study in the field of Computing.
- Students in the DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia category are almost half as likely as the average student to study in the field of Health & Welfare.
-

Mental Health Condition – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 6 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Mental Health Condition Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

Mental Health Condition Field of Study Breakdown					
12.6% of all SWDs are in Mental Health Condition Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Mental Health Condition Category Studying Field**	**% of Students in Mental Health Condition Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Mental Health Condition Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	8	0.6%	14.0%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	47	3.3%	11.8%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	496	35.0%	18.1%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	239	16.9%	10.7%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	59	4.2%	19.0%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	145	10.2%	11.8%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	87	6.1%	10.8%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	56	4.0%	4.8%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	18	1.3%	6.1%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	153	10.8%	13.9%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	36	2.5%	11.4%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	18	1.3%	4.4%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	54	3.8%	30.9%
Total			**1416**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Mental Health Condition category are most underrepresented in the fields of Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction, Agriculture & Veterinary and Services.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Mental Health Condition category are most overrepresented in the fields of Humanities & Arts and Law.
- Students in the Mental Health Condition category are more than twice as likely to study in the Humanities & Arts field as the average student.
- Students in the Mental Health Condition category are more than one and a half times as likely to study in the Field of Law as the average student or student with a disability.
- Students in the Mental Health Condition category are one quarter as likely as the average student to study in the field of Services.
-

Neurological/Speech and Language – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 7 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Neurological/Speech and Language Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

Neurological/Speech and Language Field of Study Breakdown					
4.2% of all SWDs are in Neurological/ Speech and Language Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Neurological/ Speech and Language Studying Field**	**% of Students in Neurological/ Speech and Language Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Neurological/ Speech and Language Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	2	0.4%	3.5%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	20	4.2%	5.0%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	113	23.8%	4.1%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	89	18.8%	4.0%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	15	3.2%	4.8%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	58	12.2%	4.7%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	33	7.0%	4.1%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	41	8.6%	3.5%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	8	1.7%	2.7%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	52	11.0%	4.7%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	16	3.4%	5.1%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	18	3.8%	4.4%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	9	1.9%	5.1%
Total			**474**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Neurological/Speech and Language category are most underrepresented in the field of Agriculture & Veterinary.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Neurological/Speech and Language category are most overrepresented in the field of Nursing and Education Science.
- The responding institutions reported just 8 students in the Neurological/Speech and Language category in the field of Agriculture & Veterinary.
-

Significant Ongoing Illness – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 8 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Significant Ongoing Illness Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

Significant Ongoing Illness Field of Study Breakdown					
10.6% of all SWDs are in Significant Ongoing Illness Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Significant Ongoing Illness Category Studying Field**	**% of Students in Significant Ongoing Illness Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Significant Ongoing Illness Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	6	0.5%	10.5%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	70	5.9%	17.6%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	314	26.3%	11.5%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	187	15.7%	8.4%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	51	4.3%	16.4%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	165	13.8%	13.4%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	63	5.3%	7.8%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	82	6.9%	7.0%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	22	1.8%	7.4%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	149	12.5%	13.5%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	43	3.6%	13.7%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	25	2.1%	6.1%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	16	1.3%	9.1%
Total			**1193**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Significant Ongoing Illness category are most underrepresented in the field of Services and Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Significant Ongoing Illness category are most overrepresented in the fields of Education Science and Law.
- Students in the Significant Ongoing Illness category are more than one and a half times as likely to study in the fields of Education Science and Law as the average student with a disability.
-

Physical Disability – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 9 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Physical Disability Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

Physical Disability Field of Study Breakdown					
6.5% of all SWDs are in Physical Disability Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Physical Disability Studying Field**	**% of Students in Physical Disability Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Physical Disability Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	6	0.8%	10.5%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	42	5.7%	10.6%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	206	28.2%	7.5%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	134	18.3%	6.0%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	20	2.7%	6.4%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	78	10.7%	6.3%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	59	8.1%	7.3%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	51	7.0%	4.4%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	12	1.6%	4.0%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	83	11.4%	7.5%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	18	2.5%	5.7%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	14	1.9%	3.4%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	8	1.1%	4.6%
Total			**731**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Physical Disability category are most underrepresented in the fields of Services, Agriculture & Veterinary and Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Physical Disability category are most overrepresented in the field of Education Science.
- Students in the Physical Disability category are more than one and a half times as likely to study in the Field of Education Science as the average student with a disability.
- Students in the Physical Disability category are almost half as likely to study in the field of Nursing as the average student.
-

Specific Learning Difficulty – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 10 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Specific Learning Difficulty Category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

Specific Learning Difficulty Field of Study Breakdown					
45.5% of all SWDs are in Specific Learning Difficulty Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Specific Learning Difficulty Category Studying Field**	**% of Students in Specific Learning Difficulty Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Specific Learning Difficulty Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	18	0.4%	31.6%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	177	3.5%	44.6%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	1021	20.0%	37.3%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	1113	21.8%	49.8%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	89	1.7%	28.6%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	534	10.4%	43.4%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	295	5.8%	36.5%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	742	14.5%	63.5%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	190	3.7%	64.0%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	472	9.2%	42.9%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	163	3.2%	51.7%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	257	5.0%	62.8%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	45	0.9%	25.7%
Total			**5116**	**100.0%**	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Specific Learning Difficulty category are most underrepresented in the field of Law.
- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Specific Learning Difficulty category are most overrepresented in the fields of Services, Agriculture & Veterinary and Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction.
- Students in the Specific Learning Difficulty Category are more than twice as likely to study in the field of Agriculture & Veterinary as the average student.
-

Other – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 11 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Other compared to the breakdown by field of study for all SWDs and for the student population in general

Other Field of Study Breakdown					
1.1% of all SWDs are in Other Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Other Studying Field**	**% of Students in Other Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Other Category**
Broad Programmes	0.9%	0.5%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Education Science	6.0%	3.5%	2	1.6%	0.5%
Humanities & Arts	15.9%	24.4%	12	9.8%	0.4%
Social Science & Business	22.9%	19.9%	43	35.2%	1.9%
Law	2.5%	2.8%	1	0.8%	0.3%
Science	10.0%	10.9%	8	6.6%	0.6%
Computing	6.8%	7.2%	9	7.4%	1.1%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.1%	10.4%	7	5.7%	0.6%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.7%	2.6%	7	5.7%	2.4%
Health & Welfare	12.5%	9.8%	16	13.1%	1.5%
Nursing	4.4%	2.8%	1	0.8%	0.3%
Services	5.0%	3.6%	16	13.1%	3.9%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Total			**122**	**100.0%**	

There is no further breakdown due to the varied nature of the ‘Other’ category.

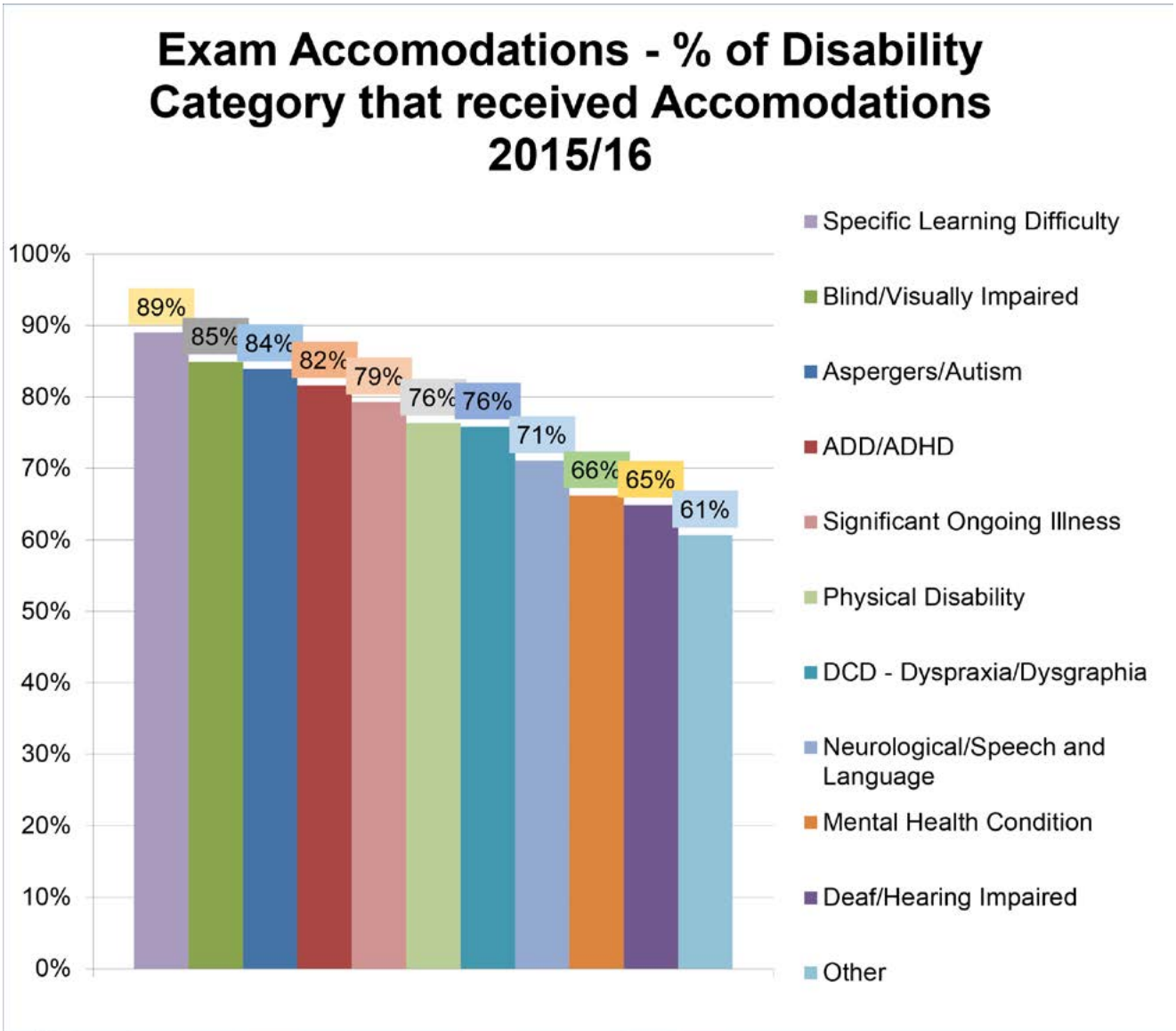
Examination Accommodations

Responding institutions were asked to supply the number of students with disabilities receiving one or more exam accommodations and the type of accommodations provided. 9266 students with disabilities receiving one or more exam accommodations in the academic year 2015/16 were identified in the responding institutions, representing 82% of the disabled student population in these institutions, up from 79% in 2014/15.

Exam Accommodations – Disability Profile

Pro rata, the group most likely to receive an exam accommodation were students with Specific Learning Difficulty, of whom 89% received one or more exam accommodations in the academic year 2015/16. They were followed closely by the Blind/Visual Impairment group (85%) and the Aspergers/Autism group (84%). The groups least likely to be receiving an accommodation were the Deaf/Hearing Impairment group (65%), those with a Mental Health Condition (66%) and those in the Neurological/Speech and Language Disorder group (71%).

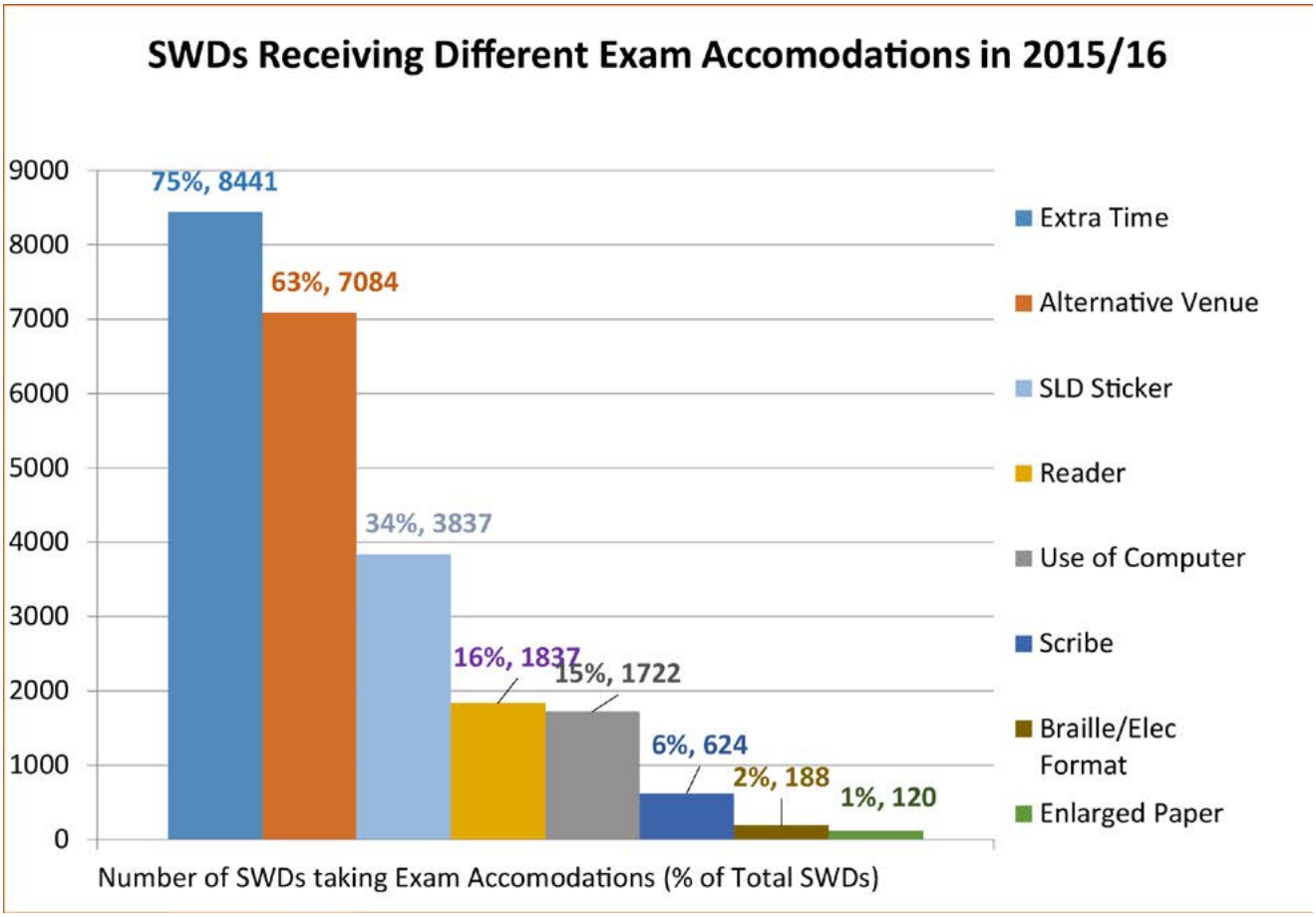
Figure 6 - Percentage of students in different disability categories receiving one or more exam accommodations



Exam Accommodation Types

Responding institutions were asked to provide data on the types of exam accommodations received by students with disabilities. The responses identified three major categories of exam accommodations – the provision of extra time, alternative venues provided to undertake exams and other accommodations such as the use of a computer.

Figure 7 - Numbers of students with disabilities receiving exam accommodations in 2015/16 and the percentage they represent of total students with disabilities

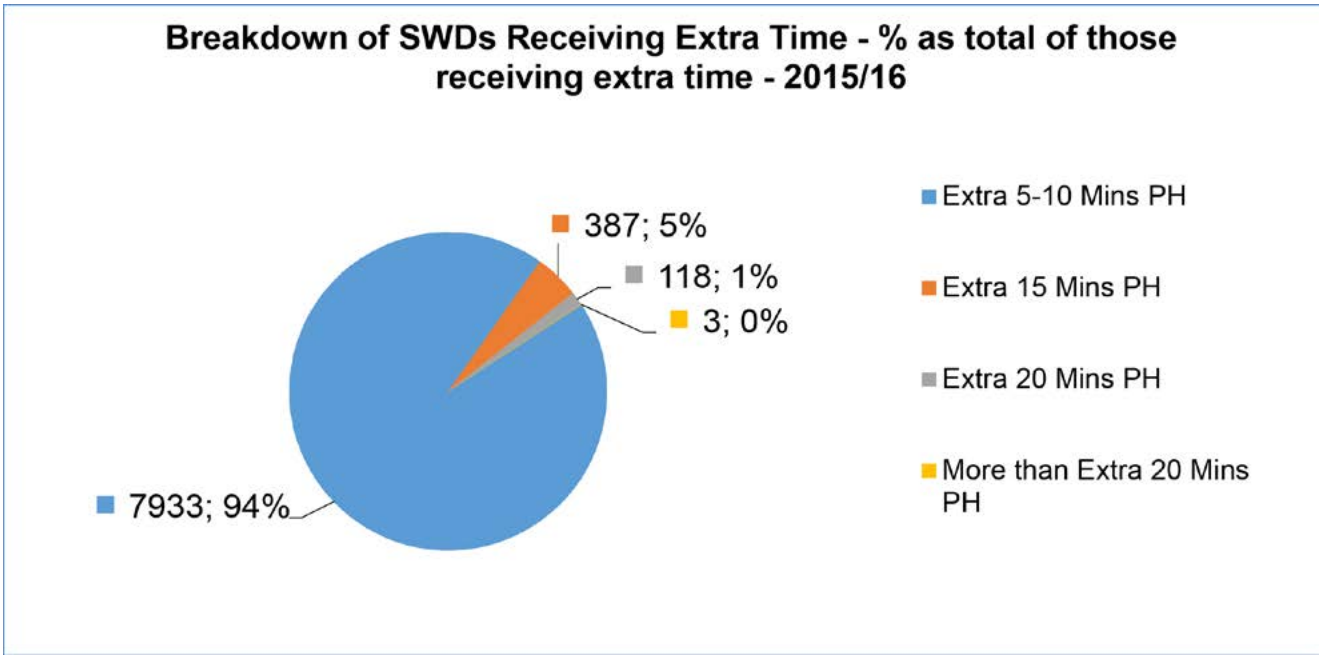


Extra time given to complete an examination proved to be the most popular exam accommodation with 75% (8441) (up from 71%% in 14/15) of all students with disabilities in the responding institutions receiving extra time in examinations in 2014/15, representing 93% of all SWDs that received one or more exam accommodations. 63% (7084) of students with disabilities took their examinations in an alternative venue (up from 62% in 14/15); 34% (3837) had a sticker placed on their exam paper to notify their marker that they had a specific learning difficulty (no change from 34% in 14/15); 16% (1837) had a reader to read exam papers aloud to them (down from 17% in 14/15); 15% (1722) had the use of a computer to aid them in writing their answers (up from 13% in 14/15); 6% (624) had a scribe present to aid them in writing their answers (no change from 6% in 14/15); 2% (188) had their examination provided in Braille or an electronic format (no change from 2% in 14/15) and 1% (120) had their paper in an enlarged format (also 1% in 14/15).

Extra Time Breakdown

Of the 8441 students with disabilities who received extra time to complete their examinations, 7933 (94% of those who received extra time) received an extra five to ten minutes per hour; 387 (5% of those who received extra time) received an extra 15 minutes per hour; 118 (1% of those who received extra time) received an extra 20 minutes per hour; and 3 (0% of those who received extra time) received more than an extra 20 minutes per hour.

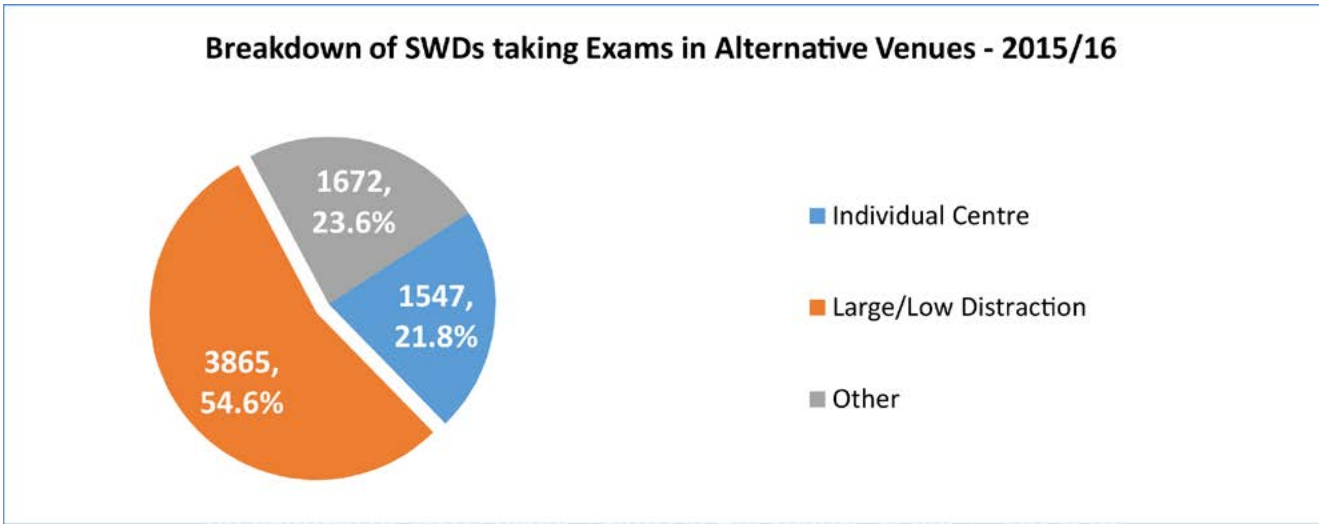
Figure 8 - Number of students with disabilities receiving varying amounts of extra time per hour in examinations in 2015/16



Alternative Venue Breakdown

Of the 7084 students with disabilities who took their examinations in an alternative venue; 3865 (55%) sat their exams in a Large or Low Distraction Venue; 1547 (22%) sat their exam in an individual centre and 1672 (24%) sat their exam in another type of alternative venue.

Figure 9 - Number of students with disabilities who undertook examinations in different types of alternative venue in 2015/16



Inside the Service

AHEAD asked responding institutions to provide information about the numbers of staff with responsibility for supporting students with disabilities and the number of learning support staff employed by the responding institutions. Responses were delivered as a decimal number where one full time (5 days a week) staff member = 1, and part-time staff members were included as a pro rata fraction of 1. For example, a college with one full time staff member working 5 days a week and one part time staff member working 2 days a week would report 1.4 staff members. Where staff members had shared responsibility over students with disabilities as well as other student groups, they were asked to estimate how much of their remit was dedicated to students with disabilities.

The responding institutions reported an average of 166 students per disability support staff member with responsibility for students with disabilities (down from 169 in 14/15) and 462 students per learning support staff member (up from 379 in 14/15). If we combine these figures, we get an average of 122 students per staff member (up from 117 in 14/15). In the combined figure, the University sector report an average of 135 students per staff member and the IT sector report an average of 107 students per staff member.

Key Point: The number of students with a disability per staff member (disability and learning support staff) has risen 26% in the past two years. Institutions should consider the impact of these rises on the quality of the educational experience they deliver and ensure that sufficient resources are provided to maintain good levels of service provision.

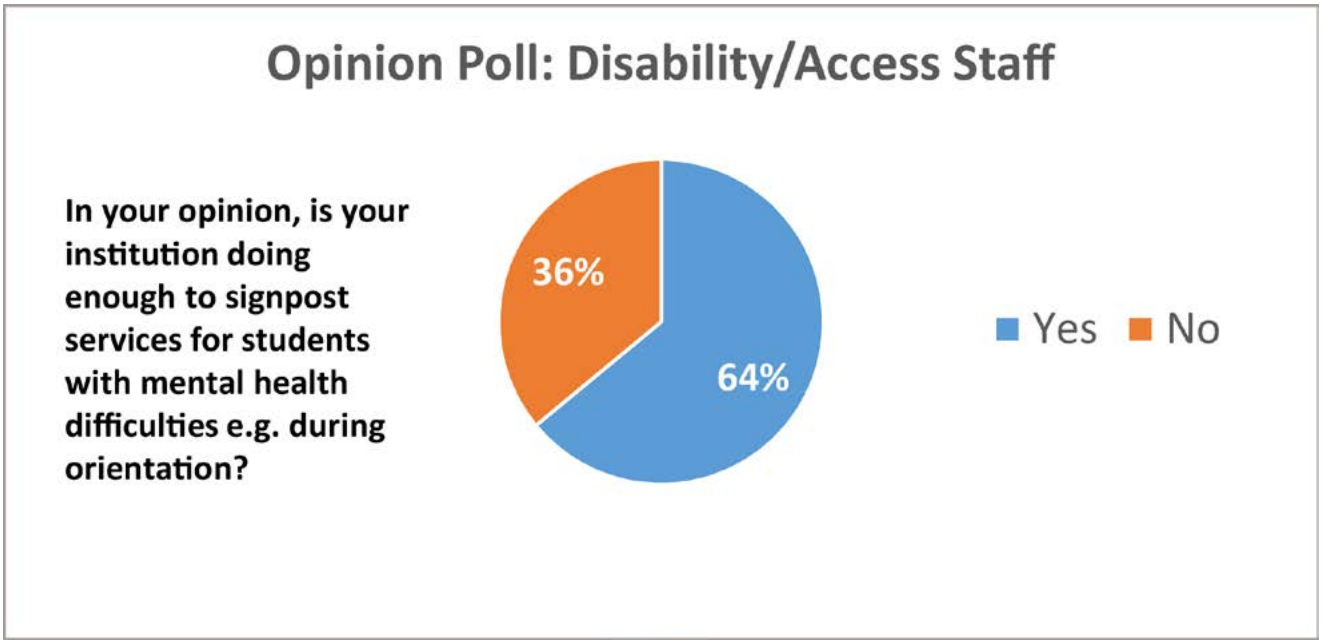
Dyslexia Screenings

AHEAD also tried to gauge the number of students referred for specific learning difficulty screenings by the responding institutions and the diagnosis rate resulting from these screenings. The responding institutions reported that 424 students were referred for dyslexia screening in 2015/16 (down from 492 in 14/15), of which 234 received a positive diagnosis, representing an overall 55% positive diagnosis rate.

On the Ground

The questionnaire sent to institutions also contained a question designed to gauge the opinion of Disability/Access Staff in the responding institutions on whether or not their institutions were doing enough to signpost services for students with mental health difficulties e.g. during the orientation phase. Each respondent was asked to give a yes or no response and given the opportunity to elaborate. The question is transcribed below, along with details of the responses and a representative selection of the comments provided.

Figure 10 - Percentage breakdown of the answers received



Question: All colleges have support services in place for students who experience mental health difficulties and this includes disability support services, counselling services and other more specialised services such as Unilink. However, research indicates that students who experience mental health difficulties find it hard to navigate and locate these services and often lack awareness of them. In your opinion, is your college doing enough to signpost these services to its students (e.g. as part of the induction programme for all students)?

Answer options: Yes or No

Responses:

64% - Yes

36% - No

On the Ground - Respondents Comments:

The following is a sample of representative comments which accompanied answers:

"Students are made aware of supports available at induction. They are also made aware of services available when they register with the Disability Service. Counselling service, health centre, student's union and lecturers will also inform students of what services are available to their students."

"Current discussions around induction/orientation indicate that there is too much information given to the students at the start of the year, therefore the availability of counselling and promotion of wellbeing needs to be reinforced during the year to all students, not just first years. However, Counselling for example is a limited resource and there is often a waiting list and the student can only access a limited number of sessions. The development of a Mental Health policy has stalled this year and I was impressed by UCD's new mental health and wellbeing policy and would like to see the college embrace it while investing in more resources and training for staff to support students, as this is a growing area and is becoming an increasingly complex area to support students in. In our experience students with mental health difficulties don't link in with the Disability Service unless they need extensions or exam accommodations and we may need to look at how we support students more - the word 'disability' often puts people off coming to the Disability Service for supports"

"I think we have to be mindful of categorising all students in the Mental health category, as there are many students in our experience who reach a blip in their lives and who just need some minor direction and not long term supports."

"Yes, the college is doing it's very best to signpost services. For example, I write to every student who has indicated in their CAO application that they have mental health issues at their home address in advance of entry to invite them to register with me and provide information on our health and counselling services, in the hopes that if the student does not read the information at least a significant other will! However, these are one of the groups with lowest levels of engagement with our service. Often a mental health difficulty is a time of crisis for students and their families at that time, they can find it difficult to navigate any supports available to them. This is the crucial junction to link with the students, and their peers, lecturers and other support staff have a significant role to play in getting information to students so that support can follow."

"With their consent, students are referred internally to appropriate services where required. Furthermore, students experiencing mental health difficulties and who have registered with the Disability Service can be referred to an Educational Support Worker for daily/weekly/ biweekly follow-up as needed."

"We have a lot of supports in place for students with a mental health difficulty but we could certainly do more to advertise them and reduce waiting times, especially within the

counselling service. There is a project underway to better advertise our health supports amongst academic staff so they can direct students to appropriate services."

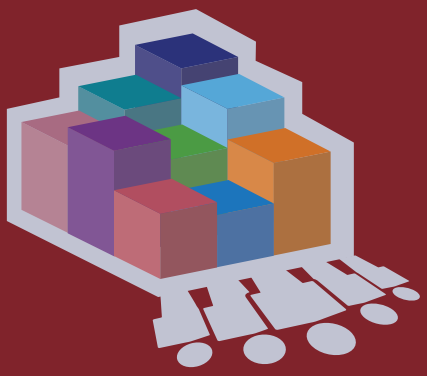
"I sent out a survey recently to discover how much the students are aware of the counselling service. I discovered that I need to promote it much more widely."

"We sometimes hear feedback that students are told too much about supports particularly for mental health and that this creates the expectation that most students are going to encounter problems and be unwell. This is not a message they like to hear."

"While the advertisement of the supports has become increasingly effective, those supports are over-subscribed and under-resourced."

"Students who require mental health services usually have no difficulty finding them, some may initially go to a medical centre first. Some students do not use college services and stay within private services or HSE."

Summary of Key Findings



Summary of Key Findings

In order to ascertain the number of students with disabilities in the Irish higher education system for the academic year 2015/16 AHEAD surveyed all HEA funded Higher Education Institutions plus one non HEA funded institution (with a large volume of students and thereby considered too significant to omit). A structured questionnaire was sent out and responses were received from 25 institutions. Following data collation and analysis, the following represent the most salient findings emerging from the research process concerning students with disabilities in higher education for the academic year 2015/2016:

- Students with disabilities now represent **5.2%** of the total student population in higher education in Ireland, up from 5.1% in last year's report.
- 25 HEI's in Ireland identified a total of **11,244** students with disabilities enrolled. This represents a **4% rise** in the numbers year on year.
- **3,075** of these were new entrants, representing 30% of the disabled undergraduate student population. **2,539** of these were final year undergraduates, representing 25% of the disabled student population.
- The number of students with a disability per staff member (disability and learning support staff) has risen **26%** in the past 2 years to an average of 122 students per staff member. The data suggests that the continuing rise in the numbers of students with disabilities in higher education (**16%** increase in the corresponding two-year period) is not being met with a similar increase in staffing levels across the sector.
- When compared with the general student population, a significantly lower proportion of students with disabilities study in the fields of 'Health & Welfare' and 'Education Science'. Interestingly a significantly higher percentage of students with disabilities are studying in the fields of 'Humanities & Arts' in comparison to their non-disabled peers.
- The participation rate of Students with Disabilities in full time courses (**6.1%**) is more than 5 times the participation rate in part time courses (**1.2%**).
- In terms of disability profile, the vast majority of students with disabilities have a specific learning difficulty (**45.5%**). However, this cohort has fallen as a percentage of total students with disabilities every year for the last 5, from 60.5% in 2010/11, to 45.5% in the current survey.
- While the total numbers of students with disabilities has risen **4%** year on year, the number of students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category actually fell by **10%** to just **205**. They now make up just **1.8%** of students with disabilities (down from **2.1%** last year) and represent the smallest single grouping of students with disabilities. In the last 5 years, the growth rate of Blind/Visually impaired students in higher education has been 3 times slower than that of the general disabled student population.

- Responding institutions reported a **14%** increase in the number of Deaf/Hearing Impaired new entrants in 2015/16. Previous reports up to 2013/14 identified a trend toward negative growth in the number of new entrants in this category but following an upward swing in this category in last year's report, we can now say that a positive trend is emerging showing this cohort now growing at a faster rate than the general disabled student population.
- **81%** of the disabled student population received an examination accommodation in the academic year 2015/16. Extra time was by far the most common support provided with 75% of students with disabilities receiving extra time in their examinations in 2015/16.
- When asked their opinion on whether they thought their college was doing enough to signpost mental health services to its students (e.g. as part of the induction programme for all students), **64%** of responding college staff said 'Yes' and **36%** said 'No'.
- Almost a quarter (**24%**) of all new registrations (i.e. students who registered for the first time) with disability services in higher education institutions in 2015/16 were not in their first year of study.
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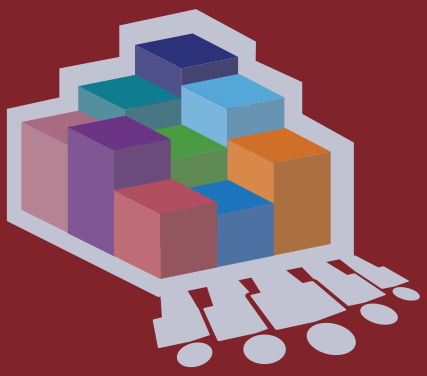
Recommendations



Recommendations

1. Institutions should, through their performance compacts, deepen their engagement with students with disabilities and set targets for their inclusion across all faculties. Given the continuing upward trend in the number of students with disabilities entering higher education year on year, it is recommended that higher education institutions do not rely solely upon the disability support services to cater for the growing number of students with disabilities. While support through the Disability Support Services is essential to the retention and completion of students with disabilities, nevertheless a whole institutional approach is required.

2. The inclusion of students with disabilities is aided by policies that improve the quality of the learning experience for all students. Institutions can create a learning environment that is flexible yet maintains robust standards and high expectations for all its students. AHEAD is promoting a model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a framework to support professional and academic staff to broaden their professional practices and teaching skills to be responsive to the needs of a diverse student body.

3. Further investigation should be conducted into the transition of blind and visually impaired students to higher education to determine why the numbers participating are decreasing. Robust evidence is needed to inform decisions about improving the transition for these students from second level education to higher/further education and training.

4. AHEAD recommends the professional development of guidance counsellors at second level to build capacity to provide a well-informed, quality service to students with disabilities, including those with sensory disabilities.

5. The Higher Education Authority should consider allowing colleges access to the Fund for Students with Disabilities to support students studying on part time courses.

6. The data suggests that the progression rate of students with disabilities to post graduate studies continues to be low in comparison to their non-disabled peers. While non registration with disability support services at this level may partly explain this outcome it is recommended that HEIs review their policies and practices in relation to the progression for students with disabilities on to post graduate programmes.

7. This report highlights a reliance on the provision of additional time and alternative locations for students with disabilities in examinations as a means to combat the impact of a student's disability on their exam performance. Higher education institutions should consider embracing a broader suite of valid assessment instruments and incorporate assessment as an indicator within the periodic review of programmes.

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Appendix

Table 12 - List of subjects which are contained within each Field of Study. This breakdown is taken from the student statistics found on the Higher Education Authority website and modified to allow a greater insight into the numbers studying in key areas such as Law and Nursing - www.hea.ie.

Field of Study

General Programmes

(010) Basic / broad general programmes

(080) Literacy and numeracy

(090) Personal skills

Education

(140) Teacher training and education science (Broad programmes)

(142) Education science

(143) Training for pre-school teachers

(144) Training for teachers at basic levels

(145) Training for teachers with subject specialisation

(146) Training for teachers of vocational subjects

Humanities and Arts

(200) Combined Arts & Humanities

(210) Combined Arts

(211) Fine arts

(212) Music and performing arts

(213) Audio0visual techniques and media production

(214) Design

(215) Craft skills

(220) Combined Humanities

(221) Religion

(222) Foreign languages

(223) Mother tongue

(225) History and archaeology

(226) Philosophy and ethics

Social Science, Business and Law

(300) Combined Social Science, Business and Law

(310) Combined Social and behavioural science

(311) Psychology

(312) Sociology and cultural studies

(313) Political Science and civics

(314) Economics

(320) Combined Journalism and Information

(321) Journalism and reporting

(322)Library, information, archive

(340) Combined Business and Administration

(341) Wholesale and retail sales

(342) Marketing and advertising

(343) Finance, banking, insurance

(344) Accounting and taxation

(345) Management and administration

(346) Secretarial and office work

(347) Working life

Law

Science

(400) Combined Science, Mathematics and Computing

(420) Combined Life Science

(421) Biology and biochemistry

(422) Environmental Science

(440) Combined Physical Science

(441) Physics

(442) Chemistry

(443) Earth Science

(460) Combined Maths and Statistics

(461) Mathematics

(462) Statistics

Computing

(481) Computer Science

(482) Computer Use

Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction

(500) Combined Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction

(520) Combined Engineering & Engineering Trades

(521) Mechanics and metal work

(522) Electricity and energy

(523) Electronics and automation

(524) Chemical and process

(525) Motor vehicles, ships and aircraft

(540) Combined Manufacturing and Processing

(541) Food processing

(542) Textiles, clothes, footwear, leather

(543) Materials (wood, paper, plastic, glass)

(544) Mining and extraction

(580) Combined Architecture and building

(581) Architecture and town planning

(582) Building and civil engineering

Agriculture and Veterinary

(600) Combined Agriculture & Veterinary

(620) Combined Agriculture, forestry and fishery

(621) Crop and livestock production

(622) Horticulture

(623) Forestry

(624) Fisheries

(641) Veterinary

Health and Welfare

(700) Combined Health and Welfare

(720) Combined Health

(721) Medicine

(724) Dental Studies

(725) Medical diagnostic and treatment technology

(726) Therapy and Rehabilitation

(727) Pharmacy

(760) Combined Social Services

(761) Child Care and youth services

(762) Social work and counselling

Nursing

Services

(800) Combined Services

(810) Combined Personal Services

(811) Hotel, restaurant and catering

(812) Travel, tourism and leisure

(813) Sports

(814) Domestic services

(815) Hair and beauty services

(840) Transport services

(850) Combined Environmental Protection

(851) Environmental protection technology

(852) Natural environments and wildlife

(853) Community sanitation services

(860) Combined Security Services

(861) Protection of persons and property

(862) Occupational health and safety

(863) Military and defence

Combined

(900) Balanced Combination across difference Fields of Education

(910) Balanced Combination of 'Humanities/Arts' and 'Social Sciences Business/Law'

Table 13 - Numbers of students with disabilities registered with the disability/access service in each responding institution

Institution	Total Students with Disabilities	SWDs as % of Total Student Population
UCD	1124	4.0%
UCC	1224	6.4%
NUIG	688	3.7%
TCD	1299	7.4%
MU	603	5.5%
DCU	652	5.6%
UL	622	4.2%
MIC	78	2.1%
MIE	35	4.4%
NCAD	118	8.5%
RCSI	42	1.2%
St Angela's	44	4.0%
AIT	296	5.7%
CIT	643	6.7%
DIT	1074	5.6%
DLIADT	233	10.2%
DKIT	237	4.6%
ITB	183	5.1%
ITC	228	3.3%
ITS	288	5.4%
ITT	159	2.5%
ITTRA	288	9.7%
LIT	473	8.3%
NCI	201	4.0%
WIT	412	5.1%
University Total	**6529**	**5.0%**
Other Total	**4715**	**5.5%**
Overall total	**11244**	**5.2%**

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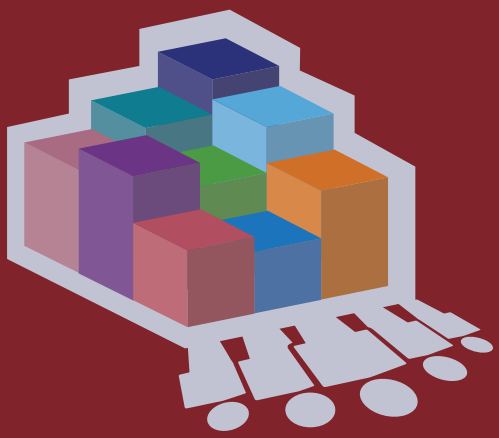

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