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A Review of Inclusive Education & Employment Practices

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Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

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This electronic journal is not a newsletter nor is it an academic journal. It is a space for you working out there 'on the ground' to share innovations and your examples of good practices that deserve to be showcased.

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Let's Start the Conversation: Inclusion is Everyone's Job

from Ann Heelan, Executive Director AHEAD

Ireland has agreed to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This is an extraordinarily important, if long overdue development as Ireland was one of the first signatories back in 2007.

So what difference will it make? For a start it will not create any new rights for people with disabilities but it will explain how the fundamental human rights that we all enjoy, apply to people with disabilities. It gives us an international standard about involving people with disability and involving them as equal partners in key decisions about their lives. Ratification means that the state and its institutions promise to maintain these standards and what is more, will be held to account. The Department of Justice most likely will monitor progress.

The UNCRPD standard applies to all levels of education and states that people with disabilities have the right to mainstream education. To date this has been interpreted as access, as getting into the education system and in these terms, it has been successful. For example the numbers of students with disabilities getting into higher education has doubled since 2007 and now account for 6% of the student population.

The difficulty is that so far the approach taken to inclusion by institutions has been one of add-on supports, rather than an inclusive mainstream one. This is a sticking plaster approach which only works with small numbers and as numbers continue to increase such an approach is no longer workable and costly. It is also disrespectful and creates many barriers to inclusion for students with disabilities which are well documented.

There is a golden opportunity now with the signing of the UNCRPD to change all this and move from an add-on model to a fully inclusive one. The first step would be to explore with colleagues within the institutions what would mainstream education look like, how can they design their programmes for students with disabilities? What does it mean to them to be compliant with the UNCRPD standards? Fortunately this

is not a green field site; there has been considerable work done already and there is a policy framework already in place. The Higher Education National Access Plan has a strong objective to 'mainstream the delivery of equity of access to higher education'. All higher education institutions have articulated their commitment to equality and inclusion within their performance compacts. AHEAD in collaboration with DAWN have produced a position paper on Universal Design for Learning and have explored the challenges for the sector in designing a system around the inclusion of students with disabilities in the mainstream. So let's start the conversation, Inclusion is Everyone's Job.

Ann Heelan, Executive Director
May, 2018

From the Editor

Barbara Waters

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Journal. This is our seventh edition and we are really pleased that you find it interesting and thought provoking, and that so many of you are willing to submit articles to share with colleagues. As Ann has said, this is a very exciting time for those working in the area of disability equality and we are delighted that Eileen Daly has provided us with the plans for the disability movement. I hope you will spread the word and encourage people to get involved. We have two articles this time on student mental health which provide really helpful information from the student perspective. I hope you enjoy a good read.

Barbara Waters, Editor
May, 2018

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Making do with what we have: using the built in functions of a Learning Management System to implement UDL

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Introduction and Context

One of the great challenges in the increasingly rapid and systemic implementation of Universal Design for Leaning (UDL) in higher education is currently the perception instructors have that the demands on their time are already too great for them to be able to attempt a redesign of their content, teaching methods and evaluation formats (Jordan Anstead, 2016). Many of the implementation initiatives in North America and Europe focus on the social justice objectives of UDL and on the inclusive outcomes these can lead to. The post-secondary sector, however, is currently in a situation of such flux, under neoliberal pressures, that instructors feel justified in objecting to change even though they may not be rejecting these inclusive goals per se (Clark, Moran, Skolnik & Trick, 2009). It becomes essential therefore for UDL advocates to acknowledge this reality, and to perhaps shift the UDL discourse on campuses from the conceptual social justice agenda to a more pragmatic, and logistic, discussion around time and resources.

This practice brief suggests that the best way to achieve this change is to focus on tools and strategies that align with UDL and are already part of instructors' reality. It is argued that it will then be possible to establish a constructive dialogue around hands-on strategies that are sustainable while not appearing burdensome to teaching staff. One such tool is the Learning Management System (LMS) that most campuses in the Global North have already purchased and integrated into campus life and administrative structure, also known in the UK under the term 'virtual learning environment (VLE)'

(Bradley, Jadeski, Newton, Ritchie, Merrett, Bettger, 2013). This article will seek to highlight features that are contained in most LMSs that align with UDL principles and that allow for a quick and fairly effortless UDL integration in class. The LMS discussed in this paper is Moodle, but it is argued that many of the features discussed are present generically within most LMSs currently encountered in higher education, such as Canvas and Blackboard Collaborate.

Methodological Reflection

The methodology used for this brief is auto-ethnography since the author draws here on his own experience and reflection regarding the usefulness of the three UDL principles when attempting to create inclusive classroom conditions within undergraduate and graduate courses (Trahar, 2009; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010). The author's professional experience and trajectory are unusual and explain his keen interest in UDL within the higher education class. He has previously been a K-12 teacher working in the field of inclusion with students affected by social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD). Within this professional context he was relying heavily in UDL in his practice. He also, for the duration of this PhD, took on the position of unit manager within a Disability service provider on a large Canadian campus. During these four years, he was equally heavily involved in Disability Studies, and UDL again was a framework that provided support and clarity for much of his work. When first taking on a faculty position, applying UDL to the higher education classroom was very much a reflex. He has then become instrumental in advocating for UDL implementation with colleagues within his faculty.

The data presented here briefly is phenomenological in nature and does not purport to quantify the satisfaction of student with the UDL strategies implemented. In this respect further research is

required to evidence this angle. The phenomenological reflection of the author as an instructor, however, remains very pertinent as an indicator of the degree to which UDL implementation is able to reduce the tension felt by faculty within a climate of intense transformation of classroom culture and pedagogical shift.

The three UDL principles will be used as section headings below in order to roughly classify the observations the author made within his own practice on a Canadian campus, as well as the professional reflection he carried out through this time. Of course the UDL principles overlap in many ways and certain strategies and tools can be categorized under several of the UDL headings. It is used for convenience of presentation rather than as a strict and rigid classifying method.

Findings

Multiple Means of Representation

Posting Powerpoints (PPTs)

A wide variety of students may have difficulties taking notes during a class or lecture: second language learners, students with disabilities, students taking medication that affect focus and concentration, students with ADHD, etc. Posting the class PPTs on the LMS seamlessly allows learners to access the course content in a variety of ways and to go over their own notes in order to check their understanding and tackle weaknesses in their own understanding of the class content. There will always remain a debate as to the impact the posting of PPTs has on attendance and a UDL reflection allows instructors the relative freedom to adapt this strategy to their course in the way that best suits them. As long as the LMS is used in some way to offer quick and user friendly access to the PPT, UDL and design thinking are de facto embraced and multiple means of representation are offered.

Providing open access reading resources of various level of complexity

The LMS allows instructors to post open access reading resources with a varying level of complexity, which offers learners multiple angles of entry and access to the content. The author has learnt to systematically integrate in his Moodle posts for each topic covered two or three readings of various difficulty level which allows students to select the complexity that best suits their knowledge, understanding and ability.

Posting external audio visual materials that complement the course content

Lecture style delivery restricts the learner to two means of access to the content: auditory and written comprehension. LMS platforms now allow instructors to post video resources that complement the course content. Open access video resources widely shared on the Net are abundant and rich, and will not require the instructor to create their own material. The only task required to implement UDL in this way is simply a little bit of browsing. Collective Commons material is available in open source format and can be shared with students without copyright worries. There are also obviously numerous YouTube sources that will be able to complement most higher ed courses. Without necessarily shifting to a 'flipped classroom' model, something which on the other hand might well be very time consuming for a lecturer, the seamless integration of audio-visual material on the LMS allows for a modest but effective embedded form of differentiation.
The only remaining concern from a UDL perspective is to make instructors aware of the need to select open access sources with captions rather than those not subtitled, and this in itself is a very simple reflection to develop through professional development.

Podcast and videos summarizing essential concepts

Moodle, and many LMSs in similar ways, allows instructors to add videos and podcasts with ease. These can be very helpful when offering students brief highlights or recaps of the key points of a lecture. Creating a YouTube channel, for example, allows instructors to add videos with ease on Moodle as external hypertext links. These short videos can summarize the main concepts or themes of the class and serve as a helpful addition to traditional style lecturing. Similarly many instructors will use short videos on the LMS platform to highlight assignment directives and ensure students have gained a full understanding of expectations, through various formats of messaging, before the begin the tasks. There remains the issue of captions, but YouTube captions are particularly easy for lecturers to add autonomously without relying on external expertise. Many campuses have added to their LMS itself videos explaining to instructors how to caption their own audio-visual creations (Canvas, 2018).

Glossary

Moodle possesses a glossary function, and this feature is available on most LMS platforms. This can represent a useful complimentary platform for the class where key concepts are presented to the student in an alternative format, one that is sometimes clearer for students than the lecture notes. The glossary can be created by the instructor, by the students or even by the instructor and students collaborating as a team as part of a class exercise.

Multiple Means of Action and Expression

Chatrooms and forums

Moodle allows for the easy creation of chatrooms and forums where learners can exchange and dialogue. This offers students a radically different role from the passive listener stance they are traditionally limited to in lectures. Instructors report a widely different level of engagement on LMS forums than in class discussions (Mubarak, Rohde & Pakulski, 2009). Students with disabilities, but also second language learners or learners who are culturally diverse may find significant comfort at being offered an alternative way to engage, participate and contribute in class rather than be asked to raise their hand and take the floor.

Quizzes and polling

Moodle, like most LMSs, offers instructors the possibility to create forms, quizzes and polling tools with great ease directly on the platform itself. This is a form of engagement that is innovative for learners and allows them to express their opinion, check their understanding and enrich their mastery of the class content. What might have been time consuming when lecturers in the past relied on various external software and Apps to create these interactive tools, can now be produced at the click of a button within the LMS itself.

Accepting assignments in various formats

Moodle offers learners, not just instructors, the possibility of loading their own links. This, in turn, means that instructors have the opportunity to widen the format of submission for assessment: PPTs with voice over, videos, podcasts, and animations can all be loaded with ease and radically transform the learner's relationship to the assignment.

Live ongoing feedback on instruction

Moodle offers instructors the possibility of creating feedback forums, or of posting links to anonymous Google Forums, where learners can provide live feedback on classes and course delivery. This has the potential to radically transform the teacher-student relationship by putting an end to the passive role learners too often have in higher ed classes. The feedback is live and instantaneous, and LMS platforms allow the use of these tools to remain anonymous.

Pre-submission of assignments and formative assessment

The conventional submission of assignments in paper format was stressful both for the student and the instructor. Students would often have to rush to a particular location to physically produce the paper version of their work by the specified deadline. Similarly instructors were showered with voluminous piles of paper submissions that would be hard to carry and manage. Paper format submission of assignments can now be eliminated; electronic submission through an LMS platform not only eliminates these difficulties but it also offers instructors and students ease and speed that allow for feedback of a richness and quality that have never before been imagined. Many instructors are now able to allow pre-submission, and to offer virtual feedback and guidance in real-time, which in turns means students are able to fine-tune and resubmit their work, having gained a better understanding of the expectations. This represents true formative assessment, a pedagogical strategy often talked about but rarely genuinely achieved.

Multiple Means of Engagement

Curriculum co-creation opportunities

The forums and chatrooms that can be created on an LMS platform allow instructors to open a live, ongoing and truly reciprocal dialogue, which can transform itself rapidly into fully fledged curriculum co-creation (Chemi & Krogh, 2017). It can often be difficult to create winning conditions and the right climate for students to feel sufficiently comfortable in class to discuss their own expectations with regards to the course content. This climate is a lot easier to create virtually and Moodle serves a practical purpose in this respect.

Instructors traditionally invite guest speakers into their class. In the 21st century these guest appearances can be both more convenient and more fulfilling since we are no longer limited to local talent but offer the opportunity to bring speakers in virtually – through Skype or Collaborate. These virtual guest interactions can be recorded when they occur, at the click of a button, saved and archived as part of the course content on Moodle. Students can watch the segments over and over again, and as a result extract more from the guest appearances. In many ways the spatial limitations of the classroom have been eroded and the LMS platform serves as a gateway to this new global experience.

E-portfolios

Moodle allows students to post e-portfolios as hyperlinks with ease and convenience. They can thus be viewed by both peers and instructors; the ease with which e-portfolios can be shared virtually with peers on an LMS leads to the creation of a collaborative culture and to the tangible implementation of social constructivism in everyday classroom practices. This, in turn, allows for an integration of experiential learning and a hyper-personalization of the course tasks never before possible.

Interdisciplinary approaches to the course content

Moodle, because it is capable of offering instantaneous access to the students to their various courses, allows for a natural cross-disciplinary reflection which can easily translate into interdisciplinary exploration across courses: all it takes, technically, for a student to share the same resource in several of their courses is a few clicks of a key. Learners would traditionally have different binders, textbooks, etc. The LMS platforms have revolutionized this and now offer the learner an instantaneous, cross-course overview and interface. Instructors, once aware of the potential this represents, can encourage interdisciplinary reflection as part of the course experience and the LMS use.

Discussion

LMS platforms, also known as virtual learning environments in some European countries, have revolutionized pedagogy within higher education. The explicit focus for their adoption and use has been to shift classroom practices towards active learning. Convenience for the lecturer is another argument which is being used to encourage their integration within faculties. This practice brief, however, has highlighted, through the phenomenological reflection of an instructor who uses the features of the LMS with accessibility in mind, the extent to which many of the built-in tools within these platforms align perfectly with the UDL principles. This is a monumental realization as it may well enable UDL advocates to succeed in encouraging faculty to explore UDL where they might otherwise have had little incentive to do so. The initial personal investment in terms of time, planning and redesign is oftentimes considerable when a lecturer first explores UDL. If the tools and strategies sought within a UDL reflection are available and ready for the picking on an LMS platform, lecturer buy-in suddenly becomes much more likely and attainable. This in turn

simplifies the task of UDL advocates who otherwise might stall, in the current higher education landscape where cuts are increasing, workload expanding and time is scarce.

It is obvious that LMS platforms create their own inherent integration issues, as there is no doubt that technology in itself does create push back when instructors have fears or preconceptions around its use and potential (Matrosova Khalil, 2013). Technological integration however, despite this occasional resistance, benefits from wide faculty acceptance, administrative buy-in and institutional support on most campuses – unlike UDL. If UDL can succeed in presenting itself as aligned with tech integration and embedded in LMS development, it is likely to benefit from a natural momentum. This will also mean that the process of rolling out UDL across campuses can rely on resources beyond current natural allies such as Disability service providers, and can be embraced and carried out by other staff such as senior administration, tech support, instructional designers, teaching and learning units, etc.

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Student Central at Maynooth University: A Review

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Overview

This article provides an overview of the Student Central programme at Maynooth University, while also discussing how the service has advanced since its commencement in 2012. The report focuses on student engagement with the programme in the 2016/2017 academic year, while making comparisons to a previous Student Central evaluation by Gormley & McManus (2013). The report will also highlight the programme's growth and development since its inception in 2012.

Background

Figures from the Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD, 2018), gathered from 25 responding institutions in Ireland indicated that students with disabilities (SWDs) accounted for a total of 12,630 students, 5.7% of the total student population in the 2016/2017 academic year. This represents a substantial increase (12%) in the total SWD population from 2015/2016 (AHEAD, 2018). Of these, 11,619 were undergraduate students and 1,011 were postgraduate students (AHEAD, 2018). In Maynooth University, 702 students registered with the Disability Office in the 2016/2017 academic year, making up 5.7% of the total student population. This was an increase on the previous year (603, 5.5%) for the university.

This upward trend in participation of students with disabilities is very positive, but can present difficulties for support staff. Traditional learning support models do not always meet the requirements of students with diverse needs. The AHEAD (2016) report stated that higher education institutions should respond to diversity with a whole college approach whereby all functions and faculties are inclusive of all students. A recent national study supported by AHEAD and National Learning Network (NLN), which focused on the needs of higher education students with a mental health condition (MHC),

also recommended that institutions take a whole campus support approach, in combination with specialised supports (Murphy, 2016). One such specialised support is the Student Central programme at Maynooth University.

Maynooth University and Student Central

In 2012, the Maynooth Access Programme, in partnership with NLN, developed Student Central, an innovative support model for students registered with the Maynooth University Disability Office. Student Central is a psychology-led student support programme, which aims to assist third level students to develop and achieve their academic potential. Students who attend the Student Central programme have a range of complex support needs. It was initially set up to respond specifically to the fluctuating and individual needs of students with mental health conditions, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD) ('Student Central at NUI Maynooth', 2013). Originally, one assistant psychologist (AP), under the supervision of an NLN educational psychologist, delivered the programme. The service expanded in 2016 to include two APs in order to meet increasing service demand and a larger student caseload.

Student Central Supports

Student Central uses psychological knowledge, theory and practical techniques to assist students to overcome challenges they may face in developing their academic skills, social skills or maintaining well-being. A biopsychosocial model is used to inform the design and delivery of interventions. This ensures that students are supported in a holistic way. Students work collaboratively with the APs to guide the direction of interventions, and they have significant input into deciding the content of sessions, the frequency of appointments, and

the involvement of other university services or external professionals. This ensures a person-centred approach within the service. Student Central provides support to students in the following ways:

- Focused support across four key areas. These are study support, managing activities of daily living, wellness support, and social support.
  - **Study support** is provided in the form of tailored, goal oriented, one-to-one academic support, aiding development of key skills to succeed and progress at third level (Gormley & McManus, 2013).
  - **Managing activities of daily living** including supporting students with organisational strategies for getting to and from college and to lectures on time, managing timetables, study time and personal interests, and signposting to other services in relation to financial advice, grants, fees etc.
  - **Support to maintain personal wellbeing** through the provision of sessions on relaxation techniques, stress management, time management, taking care of self, and teaching evidence-based wellness strategies.
  - **Support meeting the social demands of university**, including developing self-advocacy skills, conversational skills or knowledge of relationship boundaries.
- Acting as a link between other support services such as the Maynooth Student Health Centre, Maynooth Student Counselling Service and the student's own external support services.
- Liaising with academic departments concerning difficulties that students may be facing in their course of study, as a direct result of their disability. This creates a whole college approach, whereby students receive support from both specialised disability services, and from University faculties.

In the 2016/2017 academic year, Student Central APs took on an additional Disability Advisor role, expanding their responsibilities to include evidence of disability reviews, needs assessments, coordinating exam accommodations and disability supports, and managing the Maynooth University student database in relation to the Student Central caseload.

Today, Student Central supports students with a variety of disabilities in addition to the above, including students with neurological disorders, physical disabilities, specific learning difficulties (SLDs), significant ongoing illnesses (SOIs), speech and language disorders, students who are blind/visually impaired, and students who are deaf/hard of hearing. Students with all types of disabilities can avail of the educational psychological support that Student Central offers, and other Disability Advisors in Maynooth University can refer them to the service.

Student Central Engagement 2016/2017

Attendance

In the 2016/2017 academic year, of the 702 students registered with the Maynooth University Disability Office at the time of analysis, 178 students (25.4%) attended Student Central at least once. In comparison, in 2012/2013, 67 (16.6%) of the 404 students registered with the Disability Office attended Student Central (Gormley & McManus, 2013). Overall, there is a 165.7% increase in the number of individual students attending the programme when the two academic years are compared, explaining the necessity for the addition of a second AP to the service in 2016.

Gender

There was no significant gender difference in 2016/2017, with males accounting for 49.4% of Student Central attendees. This indicates an

almost 50:50 gender split. In contrast, Gormley and McManus (2013) reported that 66.7% of students who requested Student Central support in 2012/2013 were female, and the study attributed this to lower help-seeking behavior in males. The current findings suggest that gender differences in help-seeking behavior, at least when it relates to academic support, may be decreasing. Various factors could explain the more even gender split in help-seeking behaviour seen in Student Central in 2016/2017. It may simply be that the 2016/2017 academic year was unique in terms of help-seeking behaviour among students with disabilities at Maynooth University. However, Mitchell, McMillan and Hagan (2017) highlighted prior experience of help-seeking, and involvement of parents and other adults in the help-seeking process as important facilitators of help-seeking in young people. Students must provide evidence of disability as part of their registration with the Maynooth University Disability Office. Therefore, all students who avail of Student Central have had prior experience of help-seeking and service use. Many of the students have been using other services from a young age. Central to facilitating this is support from family, and often their schools. Research also indicates that young people prefer less formal community based supports (Mitchell, McMillan & Hagan, 2017). Student Central provides an informal support service, embedded within the Maynooth University community. Additional research may shed more light on student help-seeking behaviour.

As expected for a university campus, the majority (76%) of students who attended Student Central in 2016/17 were in the 18-22 age range. Mature students (aged 23 and above when entering undergraduate programme) made up 11.8% of attendees. In the 2012/2013 academic year, 58% of students were aged between 18 and 22, while 42% were mature students, indicating that fewer mature students availed of the service in 2016/17, than when the programme began. It should be noted however that in recent years, the number of mature students in higher education has fallen across the board. While mature

students with disabilities represented 12% of the total population of students with disabilities in 2016/2017 (AHEAD, 2018), the Higher Education Authority (2016) reported a 5% overall drop in full-time mature students, and a 7% decrease in part-time mature students in the period between 2010/2011 and 2015/2016. This may explain the reduction in the number of mature students who sought Student Central support in 2016/2017.

Number of Student Central Attendees by Age Range - 2016/2017

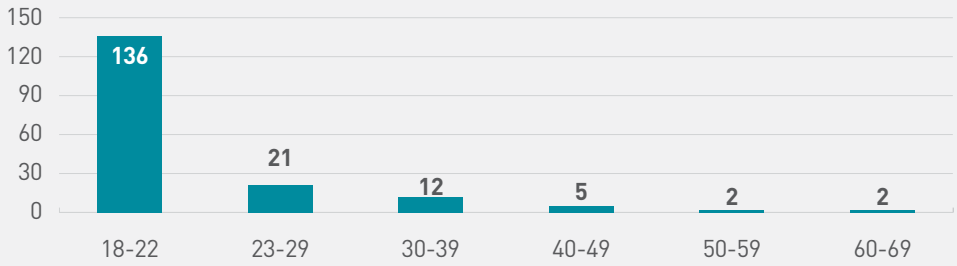

Figure 1: Age Range of Students

Academic Year

Of note is that first year undergraduate students made up 57.3% of Student Central attendees in 2016/2017, compared to 35.8% of students in 2012/2013. The remaining students in both academic years comprised of returning undergraduate students as well as postgraduate students.

Number of Students by Academic Year - 2016/2017

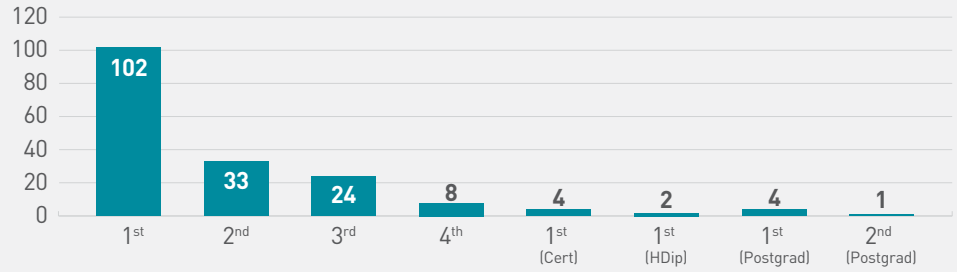

Figure 2: Academic Year of Students. Note that many Maynooth University undergraduate programmes run for 3 rather than 4 years

Student Enrolment by Faculty

In terms of overall faculty representation, 2.6% of all Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy'students in Maynooth University attended Student Central in 2016/2017, compared to 2.4% and 1.9% of Science and Engineering and Social Sciences students respectively. The data indicated no significant difference between faculty representation and Student Central attendance. Although not directly comparable, the Gormley and McManus (2013) study reported similar trends, i.e., 62% of Student Central users were attending an Arts programme in 2012/2013, while the second largest cohort were those studying a Science degree.

Admissions Entry Route

The highest percentage (28.3%) of Student Central attendees in 2016/2017 were those students who disclosed a disability post-entry into Maynooth University. This cohort was followed by Disability Access Route To Education (DARE) students who had On/Above Points Offers (24.3%), and students who were offered DARE Reduced Points places (17.9%) respectively. In 2012/2013 however, DARE Reduced Points students accounted for the largest cohort of first year Student Central attendees (41%), while DARE On/Above Points students only accounted for 17%. Gormley and McManus (2013) also reported that first year Mature students made up 17% of attendees in 2012/2013.

Number of Students by Entry Route - 2016/2017

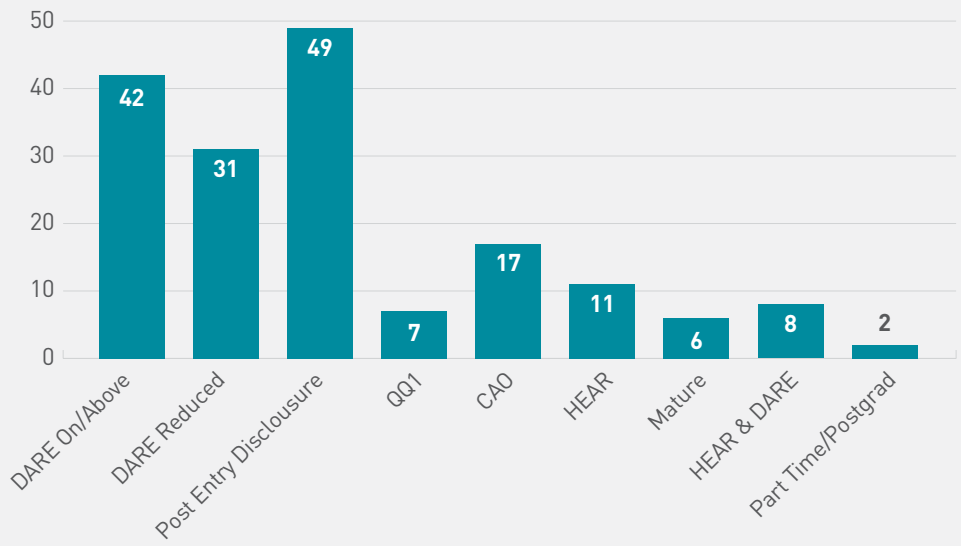

Figure 3: Entry Route of Students

Disability

Primary Disability

As with their DARE application, when students register with the Maynooth University Disability Office, they are asked to indicate their primary disability. Where students have more than one disability, they are asked to consider their primary disability as the one that has had the greatest impact on their educational experience.

Students who registered with a primary disability of ASD made up the largest cohort of Student Central service users in 2016/2017, at 20.8%. Students with a primary disability of depression and anxiety accounted for 19.1% and 12.9% of Student Central attendees respectively, followed by students with ADD/ADHD (9.6%). Although the number of students with ASD in higher education has steadily increased from 3.4% in 2012/2013 (AHEAD, 2013) to 5.4% in 2016/2017 (AHEAD, 2018), this student cohort was still over-represented in Student Central in 2016/2017. However, given that the primary function of Student Central is to support students with mental health conditions, ASD, and ADD/ADHD, we would expect these students to use the service disproportionately compared to other students with disabilities. A breakdown of students by primary disability was not recorded in the first year of Student Central (2012/2013) so a comparison is not possible.

Student Central Attendees by Primary Disability (5 Most Prevalent) - 2016/2017

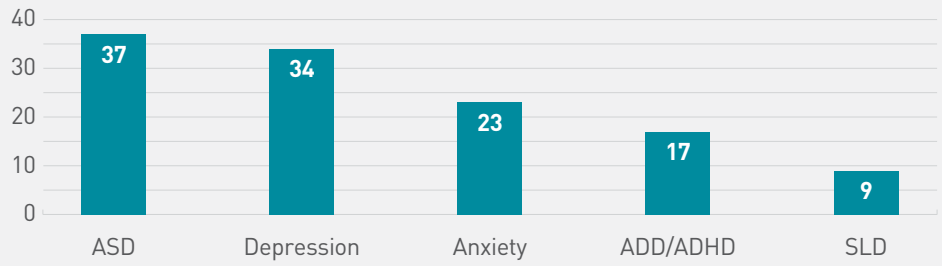

Figure 4: Students and Primary Disability

Disability by Category

After grouping related primary disabilities into disability categories where possible (for example, anxiety and depression can both be categorised as a mental health condition), analysis revealed that almost half (47.8%) of students who used Student Central in 2016/2017 had a mental health condition. Students with ASD still represented 20.8% of attendees, followed by those with ADD/ADHD (9.6%) and those with an SLD (5.1%).

% Students by Primary Disability Category

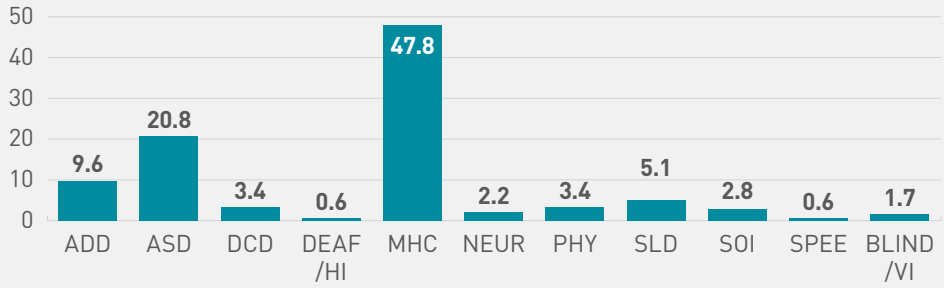

Figure 5: Students and Primary Disability Category. Please refer to Appendix A for list of abbreviations and definitions.

Multiple Disabilities

Fifty-eight percent of students who used Student Central in 2012/2013 had multiple (i.e., two or more) disabilities (Gormley & McManus, 2013). In 2016/2017, 95 students (53.4%) had multiple disabilities. After grouping students by registered primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary disability (where applicable), the data indicated that students disclosed 63 distinct multiple disability combinations in 2016/2017. This highlights the need for an individualised support service such as Student Central.

Number of Students by Number of Disabilities - 2016/2017

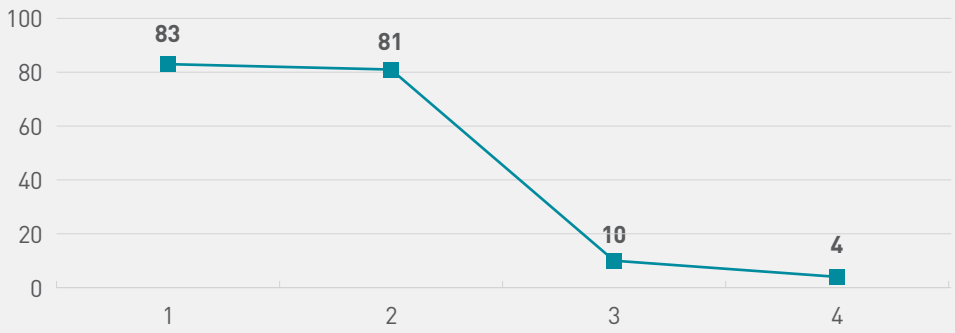

Figure 6: Students and Number of Disabilities

Appointments and Cancellations

The total number of Student Central appointments offered to students in 2016/2017 was 860. Of these, students attended 678 appointments. November 2016 had the highest number of appointments, while January 2017 had the lowest. The average number of appointments attended by students was 3.8, but this mean was significantly skewed by active engagers of the service. Over half (54.5%) of students had 1 to 2 appointments across the academic year. Interestingly, 6 students had 16+ appointments over the year, accounting for 17.0% of all appointments, and each had either a diagnosis of ASD or Borderline Personality Disorder.

There were 569 appointments offered to students in 2012/2013, with students attending an average of 8.5 appointments, and the majority of students having 5 to 10 appointments (Gormley & McManus, 2013). Three students had only 1 appointment, while 3 others had 20+ appointments (Gormley & McManus, 2013).

The above figures indicate a change in student engagement with Student Central. A higher proportion of students had only 1 or 2 appointments in 2016/2017, which may reflect the fact that many students did not return for academic support following their needs assessment (13% of all appointments). APs conducted needs assessments for the first time in 2016/2017 as part of the disability advisor role.

Number of Appointments and Students by Month - 2016/2017

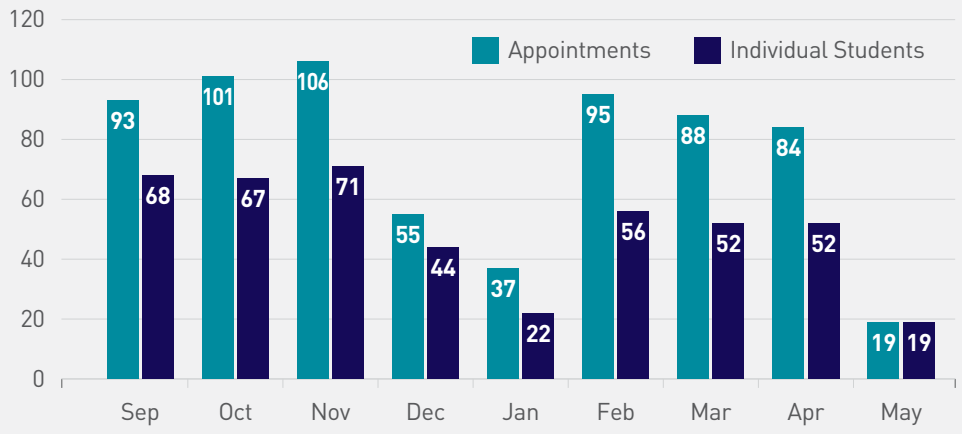

Figure 7: Students and Number of Appointments. Note that May includes data from May 1st to 5th only as this was the end of the academic year.

Types of Support Provided

The most prevalent support session types in 2012/2013 were assignment planning, essay writing skills, time management, exam preparation, and initial meetings. These support types accounted for 58% of all Student Central meetings (Gormley & McManus, 2013).

Study support sessions accounted for the highest number of appointments (38.2%) in 2016/2017. The number of students who requested support with managing activities of daily living was also high (19.3% of sessions), largely because time management and organisation fall under this category. The authors included a category of 'Other' to highlight the support session types that did not fall under the traditional Student Central categories, and to indicate again how service provision has expanded. Support sessions under the category of 'Other' included academic/semester reviews, referrals to internal and external supports, initial meetings, registration advice, and linking students to other university departments. It is also important to note that although wellness support sessions only accounted for 9.4% (see Figure 8) of the total Student Central appointments in 2016/2017, the majority of all appointments had a wellness support

element, ranging from wellness self-reports to safety checks with students. This was not reflected in the data because only the primary support session type was recorded by APs for each student meeting in 2016/2017. By recording all elements of a support session, Student Central APs hope to rectify this issue in future academic years.

Number of Appointments by Support Session -2016/2017

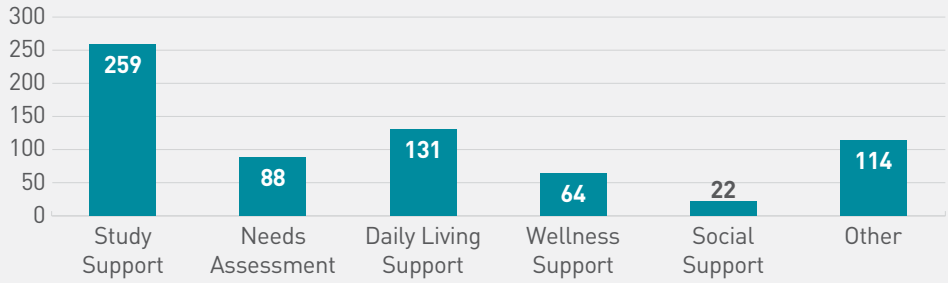

Figure 8: Support Session Types

Student Central Survey

At the end of the 2016/2017 academic year, students had the opportunity to review the Student Central service by completing a survey. There was a 20.5% response rate. In terms of service accessibility, 93.3% of students found it readily accessible. In addition to the support sessions offered, students also highlighted the importance of 'having someone to talk to about college life', which may explain why 73.1% of respondents stated that Student Central helped them reconsider withdrawing from Maynooth University. Overall, 93.0 % of students gave Student Central an overall rating of Excellent, Very Good, or Good.

I think student central is excellent already. I would improve it by making it more well known so that other students can benefit from the services offered.

Student Central is an excellent service. It really is great having the support there and it has made a big difference in my learning experience in MU over the past number of years.

I wish I availed of the services more...

Make meetings a little less formal

I think most students don't know it exists and how easy it is to get help so maybe put the word out there more

Having longer drop-in hours

Figure 9: Qualitative feedback from Student Central Survey 2016/2017

Conclusion

The aim of this report was to provide an overview of the Student Central programme, and to highlight the importance of this specialised support service to students with disabilities at Maynooth University. Accessible student engagement data from over the course of the 2016/2017 academic year was provided, to illustrate who is using the service and why. Engagement data from 2016/2017 was contextualised by comparing it to 2012/2013, when the service first commenced. This comparison illustrates the extent to which the service has diversified and expanded in just five years. The number of students with ASD availing of the service continues to grow, with these students now representing the largest primary disability cohort availing of the service. The report also suggests an upward trend in males seeking academic support in third level, which is very positive. Figures from this report also provide further evidence for the nationwide decrease in mature students enrolling in third

level, and that many students do not register with a disability until after commencing their course at Maynooth University. Student experience of the service has been extremely positive overall, with Student Central contributing to the retention of students. The Student Central programme continues to grow, and is now an integral part of Maynooth University, providing an essential specialised support service for students with disabilities.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Abbreviations

ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
AHEAD	Association For Higher Education And Disability
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
DARE	Disability Access Route To Education
DCD	Developmental Coordination Disorder
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HI	Hearing Impairment
MHC	Mental Health Condition
NEUR	Neurological Condition
NLN	National Learning Network
PHY	Physical Disability
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SLD	Specific Learning Difficulty
SOI	Significant Ongoing Illness
SWD	Student With Disability
SPEE	Speech And Language Communication Disorder
VI	Visual Impairment

Mental health at third level: What are the issues facing students and what can we do about them?

Aoife Price – Mental Health Project Manager, Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

Aoife Price is Mental Health Project Manager with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). Her role involves working with students, partners and third level institutions to examine, improve and promote mental health in third level. Aoife has been advocating the area of youth mental health for over 10 years. She was Welfare and Equality officer for the Irish Second Level Students Union from 2007-2009; sat on the Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Advisory group from 2011-2013; contributed to the establishment of the Youth Empowerment Service, an advocacy service for young people in St. Patrick's Hospital, 2012- 2013; and was a member of Jigsaw's Youth Advisory Panel from 2011-2016. During this time, she has worked, and continues to work to drive change in the area of youth mental health.

Introduction

Levels of mental illness, mental distress and low wellbeing among students in higher education is increasing (IPPR 2017). 75% of adults with mental illness first experience symptoms before the age of 25. With peak onset from 18-25 (Kessler and Wang 2008). This high-risk period coincides with entrance into and time spent in third level education. A new report by AHEAD, which examines the numbers of students with disabilities in higher education in the academic year 2016/17, found a 46% rise in the number of new students registering with a mental health condition. This cohort now represents 14% of all new students registering with a disability in 16/17. In total there are 11,224 students who have disclosed a disability making up 5% of the student population (AHEAD 2018).

The primary purpose of disclosure is to ensure that students are able to access additional support while studying. The vast majority of students disclose during their first year however students can choose to disclose at any point throughout their time at the institution. Students may choose not to disclose if they feel that their relationship with peers or university staff, as well as other opportunities to succeed while at university or after graduating, might be adversely affected as a result. Among students with experience of mental health distress,

the main reason for not talking to other students about their mental health was 'not wanting students to think less of them'. They may also opt not to disclose if they believe there may be institutional stigma towards them and that they may receive 'unfair treatment' (ECU 2014). For students registered with the disability services, support is available to them. These supports are intended to correct the potential for mental illness to affect academic performance. However, for a significant number of students who choose not to disclose these formal supports are not available to them.

While mental illness, mental distress and low wellbeing can affect all kinds of people, they are more common among those from deprived socioeconomic backgrounds (Stansfeld et al 2016). Widening participation to students from deprived socioeconomic backgrounds may account for some of the increase in prevalence among students. This along with the reduction of stigma is likely to contribute to more students disclosing mental health conditions (IPPR 2017).

Impact on Higher Education participation

As well as an increase in the number of students who formally declare a mental health condition to their HEI, there are a high number who have self-reported mental distress. While not always meeting the threshold for mental illness, the distress is likely to have a significant effect on their ability to thrive both academically and personally and lead to an increase of demand for services including the counselling services. (IPPR 2017)

Academic demands and studying have been found to be likely to trigger mental distress (NUS 2013). In general higher education courses require a degree of self-directed learning which can be a major shift/change to what student is used to coming from school. This has the potential to affect a student's ability to cope. There appears to be increased pressure to gain a high class degree in recent

times. There is a wide discrepancy in the proportion of students who receive a First, compared to the number who expect to achieve one when beginning their course (Brown 2016). Finding a job after college has also been noted as a stressful experience/thought for students. This is particularly significant in today's competitive graduate jobs market (YouGov 2016). The graduate job market has failed to keep up with the supply of new graduates. In the UK the proportion of younger workers in non-professional/managerial jobs doubled from 7 to 13 percent. Young graduates in jobs for which they are overqualified are more likely to experience mental health problems (Thorley and Cook 2017). There is also a social pressure associated with college. Many can feel pressure to establish and fit in with a new group of friends; the pressure associated with living in such close proximity in halls or shared flats; the ability to cope while outside traditional support structures; and increased pressure associated with drugs and alcohol (NUS 2013). Financial pressure can also be worrisome for students. When entering higher education, many people will for the first time take on responsibility for budgeting and managing their own income and expenditure. Many also choose to work part time in order to support themselves, which can bring additional pressure. One in four students identified their job as a main cause of stress in the YouGov (2016) study.

Experience of mental health difficulties while at third level can have a number of adverse effects on students' lives. According to the Royal College of Psychiatrists (UK)

> Early adult life is a crucial stage in the transition from adolescence to independence as an adult. Underachievement or failure at this stage can have long term effects on self-esteem and the progress of someone's life (RCP 2011).

An associated risk with poor mental health is the effect on students' grades. They may receive lower grades than expected or may be required to repeat an academic year. Some services are restricted

to repeat students further disadvantaging them at this crucial time. Poor mental health is associated with an added risk of dropping out of college, particularly when support is unavailable or not sought. Consideration of dropping out from university is stronger for those with poor mental health, with 4 in 10 considering dropping out (Unite 2016). Students with mental health difficulties are more vulnerable to withdrawal than any other category of student with disability. However, once supported appropriately they are more successful in higher education (Twomey et al. 2010).

A whole campus approach

The central function of a 'whole campus approach' must be to promote positive mental health and wellbeing among students and prevent the emergence of mental illness and distress as well. The second function of a 'whole campus approach' must be to ensure that students experiencing mental illness, distress or low wellbeing are able to access support, care and treatment. This is particularly important for students experiencing mental illness. For this HEI's must be equipped to manage risk, respond to crisis, and refer students to appropriate external services. HEI's must also ensure that these students thrive and meet their potential (IPPR 2017).

Examples of a whole campus approach include the University of Cumbria who have made training available for all staff in suicide prevention and awareness. It has proved very popular with over 12 percent of all staff been trained. The course's popularity is thought to be due to its condensed length – it is delivered via a one day half session and based on the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (CSSRS) screening tool. Arts University of Bournemouth is a small college with 3500 students. This HEIs size allows for routes from academic staff referring directly to student services. At Brunel University London, security officers have been trained by the disability and counselling services in responding to mental health crisis. This

forms one part of the security services wider remit to ensure 'safer campus communities' (IPPR 2017).

While HEI's are primarily education providers, they also have a responsibility for protecting and promoting students' mental health and wellbeing. It is recognised that a joined up strategy between higher education and health service authorities is essential in supporting students with mental health difficulties in higher education (HEFCE 2015). There needs to be clarity around who holds responsibility for students' mental health. This is needed between internal support services and also critically between external agencies (AHEAD 2016). In Ireland mental health services have been criticised for not being organised to support a model of continuing integrated care through adolescence into young adulthood (AHEAD 2016).

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has provided funding to the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) to carry out mental health related activities.

Current and completed projects

Current projects

- In order to respond effectively with evidence-based interventions we must first have a clear understanding of mental health and wellbeing among our students. To meet this need USI is currently conducting a study into mental health on third level campuses across Ireland to examine services, help seeking behaviours and student mental health.
- We are currently piloting a peer education programme in partnership with Jigsaw – The National Centre for Youth Mental Health. It involves implementing a peer education model across third level colleges (starting with DIT and ITB). The focus of

the workshop is on the 5 a day for mental health. We are all familiar with the importance of eating 5 pieces of fruit and veg a day for our physical health, this idea has been borrowed to create a 5 a day for good mental health which we can use to improve our own mental health.

The 5 a day are as follows:

- Connect
- Be Active
- Take Notice
- Keep Learning
- Give

In 2008 the New Economics Foundation (NEF) was commissioned by the UK Government's Foresight project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing to develop a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing. The actions identified were ones that individuals could carry out on a daily basis to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

- Funding was applied for and granted from ESB Energy for Generations Fund for the creation of an app. The project will create a student mental health crisis support and educational app as part of the Student Mental Health Project. The app will have three main functions:

  1. Emergency button allowing students helping students or the user themselves to get advice and quickly access emergency contacts like the Gardaí or local helplines.
  2. Education/literacy on mental health and suicide.
  3. Services on-campus and off-campus.

Completed projects

- Chats for Change is USI's national campaign to get students talking about mental health. It encourages students to have that chat for change. There was a roadshow where officers and staff travelled around to campuses promoting the campaign. Packs were given to students that included a reusable cup, tea bag/coffee, and a student support card with information of national helplines should they need to talk to someone.
- USI launched 20,000 student support cards, encouraging students to seek help when needed. The card highlights helpline supports including Aware, Pieta House, Walk in my Shoes, Samaritans and the LGBT Helpline. The card also highlights the Jigsaw, ReachOut.com, Please Talk and **yourmentalhealth.ie** services.
- USI facilitated students to undertake SafeTALK (60), ASIST (40) and Mental Health First Aid training (80). Students trained in these programmes are better able to respond to students who may be going through a difficult time.

USI have a number of planned projects in the pipeline including campaigns, training and research. USI will continue to work to ensure that the needs of students with mental health difficulties are met and work towards a whole campus and integrated care approach.

Contact – **mentalhealth@usi.ie**

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GetAHEAD Student Mental Health Project: Capturing the Student Voice and Engagement

Hannah Kelly, GetAHEAD Coordinator, AHEAD

Hannah works on the GetAHEAD programme as part of AHEAD. The programme was established in 2005 and is a network of students and graduates with disabilities currently making the transition from third-level education to full time employment.

GetAHEAD works to up-skill graduates with disabilities by providing training events and valuable information covering a wide range of topics and resources.

Mental health is the topic on everyone's lips, and students are right out in front leading the conversation. This year, AHEAD's research, which examines the numbers of students with disabilities in higher education in the academic year 2016/17, found an increase in the number of students registering with disability support services with a mental health condition. For a number of different reasons, the inclusion of students with mental health conditions in higher education is on the rise. Although central to the discussion, the student voice can often be left behind when it comes to mental health. GetAHEAD wanted to change this and really listen to what students are saying and experiencing in an ever-changing and unpredictable economic and political climate.

GetAHEAD: Student Mental Health Video

With the help of PleaseTalk, a student-led organisation that works within the mental health movement, we reached out to students and graduates asking them a simple question. What is mental health like on campus?. We used social media platforms to send a call out to students and graduates to have their say. Our aim was to start a conversation, identify areas of concern for students and allow students to lead the conversation. To capture this best, we asked for entries to be a photo or short video clip, accompanied by a caption the student felt summed up a challenge or barrier to good mental health on campus.

To accompany the photos and captions, GetAHEAD invited student ambassadors from PleaseTalk and ReachOut, an online youth mental health service,to be part of an interview, the audio part would be used in the video. We based the interview with the ambassadors around three broad questions:

- What unique pressures do students experience?
- Is there a difference in being a student now than in the past?
- What are the top pressures on student mental health?

Unsurprisingly, the interview and the photo entries had the same theme running throughout and we were able to identify 6 major issues on mental health that students were concerned about:

1. Competition: Students identified a constant feeling of competition, both with their peers and from an increasingly globalised marketplace which meant the world was in competition for the graduate jobs they aspired to.
2. Isolation: Students discussed a feeling of isolation during college years as all around them are busy setting up their own careers.
3. Finance: Students felt there were under unique financial strain with limited time for part time work alongside the need for college materials.
4. Stress: Often the financial pressure puts stress on students to hold down a part time job alongside studying, which creates a time pressure that causes stress while also trying to manage exams, assessments and projects throughout the academic year.
5. Expectation: Almost all entries and the interview with ambassadors highlighted the pressure of being 'the perfect student'. They felt employers wanted to see a graduate who as a student was able to achieve high grades, hold down a part time job, excel in extracurricular activities and have experience

in the field they were looking to make a career in. This meant they had to live up to this expectation from employers while in college.

6. Uncertainty: Underneath all of the other pressures mentioned above, it is important to mention modern students are now dealing with an uncertain economic climate. They study often not sure there will be a job in their field of study for them once they leave college. This heightens the feeling of pressure to perform in college and only increases the feeling of competition with peers.

Having noticed a common theme running through both the photo and caption entries and the ambassador interviews, GetAHEAD focused on these 6 themes and produced a three and a half minute video which showcased these struggles, spoken in the students' own voice. The resulting video aimed to display a powerful message about the pressure students are facing and to shed some light on the increasing numbers of students with mental health conditions being represented in third level education.

WAM

On the 7th December 2017 in the Aviva Stadium, Dublin, the WAM programme of AHEAD, with the support of ESB, organised a conference on mental health, 'Mental Health on the Move, from College to Work: Staying AHEAD of the Stress'. Employers, disability support staff and students gathered to discuss mental health in college and work. The video created by GetAHEAD was played to the room to open the discussion. This served as an important opportunity for employers to hear directly from students what they are concerned about. From that, the conversation was opened to projects and initiatives in place in colleges and businesses around the country which aimed to tackle the growing numbers experiencing poor mental health in Ireland.

Partnership working: USI and GetAHEAD

Both USI and GetAHEAD have been working on this issue in their own capacities, but have decided to work together to start creating a space where students can continue to have their voice heard. Having worked together in presenting their work to date on this topic at the AHEAD annual conference in March 2018, USI and AHEAD partnered to provide a National Conference for Students with Disabilities at the end of March 2018. The aim of this conference was to give students the floor, let them voice their options and to lead GetAHEAD and USI on their next steps.

GetAHEAD are committed to establishing a student network, where students can find training, peer support and a group environment in which to continuously have their voice heard and acted upon. To get involved with the network of students please contact **hannah.kelly@ahead.ie.**

New Horizons – Re-energizing the Disability Movement in Ireland

Interview by **Lorraine Gallagher,** Information and Training Officer, AHEAD with **Eileen Daly,** Disability Rights Activist

Eileen lives and works in Dublin. A graduate of UCD, Eileen is a career guidance practitioner and career coach and a passionate disability rights activist. She currently works with the Rehab Group in a partnership service with the City of Dublin Education & Training Board supporting people with disabilities in Further Education. She has also worked in Trinity College on the Career Pathways project which supported students & graduates with disabilities to prepare for the transition to the workplace. She is chairperson of Greater Dublin Independent Living. GDIL is part of the wider independent living movement in Ireland and it aims to ensure that all people with disabilities have the right to experience independent living and have maximum choice and control in their lives.

Lorraine Gallagher has a Masters in Fine Art. She has worked in the area of disability equality for many years and is currently the Information & Training Officer for AHEAD. Prior to working for AHEAD Lorraine worked as research assistant and co-facilitator to Peter Kearns at The Workhouse. She also worked as the disability equality trainer on Music Map, a music management course run by the City Arts Centre.

On the 23rd of September 2017 I, along with approximately 200 people with disabilities and their advocates, attended an event in the Round Room at the Mansion House in Dublin to celebrate the lives and achievements of a number of disabled activists who recently passed away and to explore the possibility of re-igniting a disability-lead movement in Ireland. The event was spearheaded by a group of disability activists, including Eileen Daly who for many years has been a strong advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.

After the celebration I had the pleasure of meeting with Eileen to discuss the event in more detail and what it hoped to achieve. Eileen outlined the purpose of the event was twofold.

Firstly, it was a chance to meet in friendship and affection – both in memory of those disabled activists who have died in recent times:

Martin Naughton

Donal Toolan

Joe T, Mooney

Florence Dougall

Ursula Hegarty

Michael Corbett

Dermot Walsh

recognising the achievements of these individuals whose legacy will live on, and to bring consciousness to our responsibilities both to ourselves and each other as we endeavour to reawaken a people's disability movement suited to current times. It was hoped that the experience of meeting in this manner might spark a new form of dialogue and relationship across the disability spectrum.

Secondly, it was to recognise that despite the introduction of the various legislative Acts over the last decade or so purporting to protect the rights of people with disabilities, as a community many people with disabilities are still largely unseen, poorly organised and poorly represented at all levels of Irish life and not least within the formal disability sector. The result is that the human rights and living circumstances of people with disabilities are a cause of deep concern. Daly argues, that the core challenge is

> How do people with disabilities overcome discrimination and achieve full equality as citizens, when the Irish State continually fails to respect and work with us to recognise our rights as human beings to live our lives as we choose in the same way as other Irish citizens?

Daly asserts

> We have our history to consider and our current reality that Ireland was the last country in the EU to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as recently as March 2018.

Although the event in the Mansion House was in part to reinvigorate the disability movement here in Ireland, Eileen stresses it was very much a stand-alone event. Activists Donal Toolan and Martin Naughton and others have left hugely influential legacies. Eileen together with her peers and fellow activists will bring her own ideas, approach and style to the table. Everyone has a highly valuable contribution to make. We also need to guide and most importantly learn from the next generation of disabled activists.

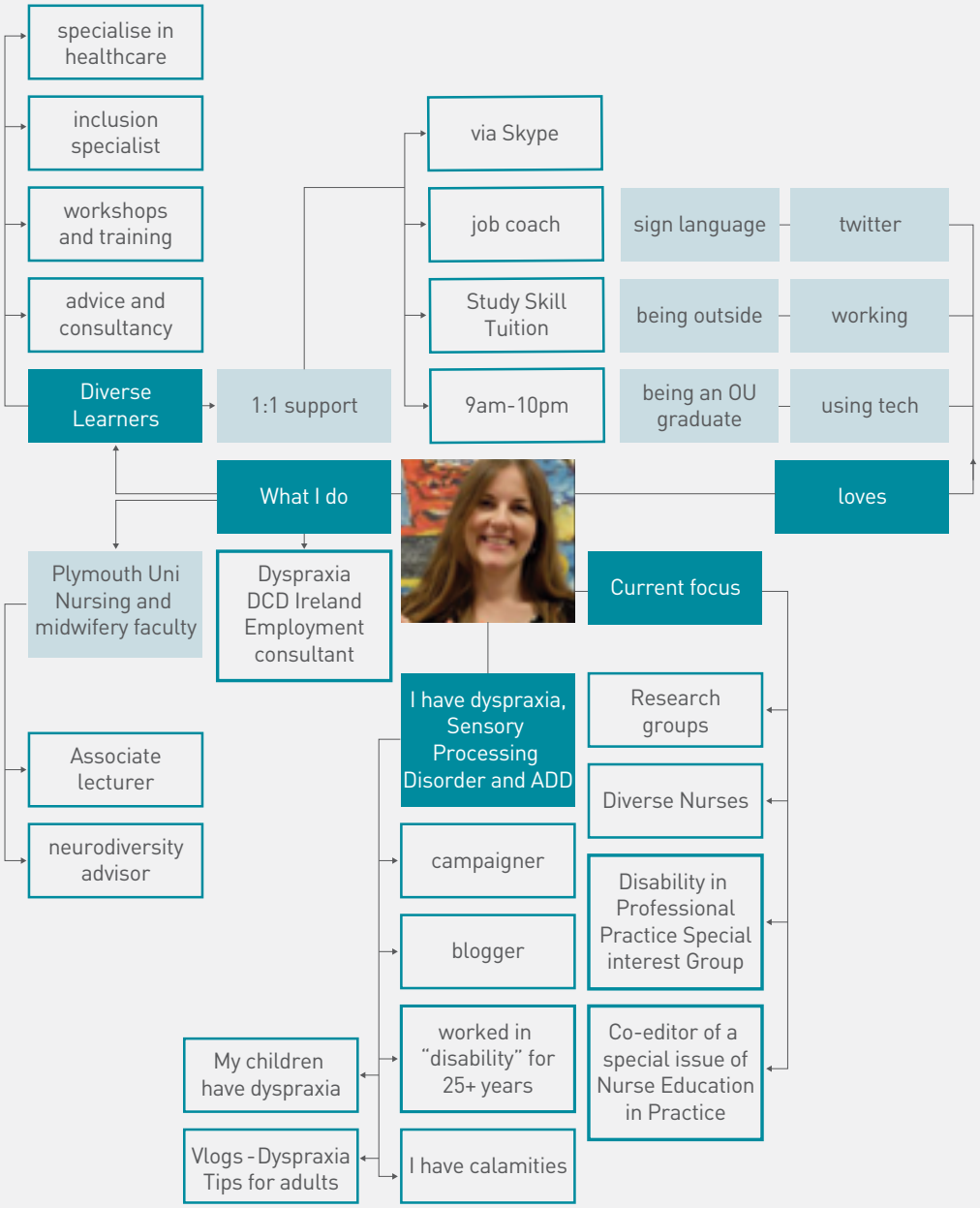
Moving forward Eileen says there needs to be a two pronged approach, the first one being activism and for many that involves building capacity through training and peer support. There is also a need to understand the political process and how to bring about policy change. In Ireland when an individual has a problem they tend to go to their local TD and then get referred back to the relevant department. This might solve a problem for an individual but it doesn't bring about change for everyone. It's about understanding change takes time, through working with others and Eileen feels we are in many ways only at the beginning of this process. There needs to be a strategy around effective lobbying with a revitalised peer support network. There might even be opportunities to develop a course where people can get an accreditation in activism and peer support.

The second approach, which is only in its infancy, has been the setting up of a disability-lead organisation - Disabled People of Ireland (DPoI) which will reach across impairment types, not just focused on the needs of one particular group but rather a driving force for change for all people with disabilities. This means recognising people with disabilities and their advocates as the experts so that we stop working in silos, competing for funding. There has been an entire industry built up around disability in which, Daly argues, people with disabilities have had little or no say on how services are developed, managed and delivered. Daly argues that there's a need to look beyond the requirements of the individual and become part of the collective.

DPoI is currently in the final stages of becoming incorporated, and a management group is in place. During the planning for the development of the group, it was decided to invite a group of people from across all types of impairments, who have been activists promoting rights for disabled people, to become an Advisory Group. Organisations who wish to become involved must have 50%+ members who are people with disabilities, and be managed and directed by people with disabilities. Individuals will be able to join the organisation but this process still has to be scoped out. As a movement, people with disabilities are now tasked with the responsibility of regenerating a new form of leadership capable of advancing our call for true equality in 21st century Ireland.

For more information about DPoI **https://www.dpoi.ie/**

Agile working - exploring the potential of your bed as a working space for those who have a disability



This article was finally captured today on my iPad mini using the notes function whilst in bed. It has been bubbling away for a while and almost been captured a couple of times but fear of repercussions / scorn / ridicule had been the barrier that has prevented me from expressing these thoughts in the written form. Somehow once written down, for me they have a scary permanency that conversation, presentations, speaking events, vlogs don't have. It's like the written word can be used against me whereas the spoken can't. I think it is also to do with the effort I have to use to write something down and the lack of confidence in my ability to

write in the 'right way'. It is also to do with the content. It's personal yet something I talk about with students and clients and promote on social media every day.

This is my reflection on conversations and learning events that have taken place over the last 3 months about learning, use of devices and working environments with lots of different people via many different mediums in many different locations. It is a personal account exploring a term that is relatively new to me - agile working - though the practice is very familiar. My message and aim of this article is to embrace the real idea of agile working and so destigmatise, celebrate, and promote the importance of your bed as part of the agile working concept, exploring the potential of bed as a working space for those who have a disability.

Agile working in my head means being able to work where I need to, in all different sorts of spaces, when I want and how I need to, often using mind mapping and dictation software in my trusty iPad mini in order to produce my best work in the time available.

The location is secondary - after all my whole business concept uses Skype - but the service delivery and quality content is key.

The NHS Employers definition

> Agile working is a way of working in which an organisation empowers its people to work where, when and how they choose – with maximum flexibility and minimum constraints – to optimise their performance and deliver 'best in class' value and customer service. It uses communications and information technology to enable.

I love the words 'empowers' and 'flexibility' and the concept of choice in that definition and the recognition technology may play a part. Flexibility is the essence of inclusion / inclusive practice; maximising potential and minimising constraints or barriers.

I'm an agile worker in every sense of the NHS definition above.

People Skype me from their beds a lot. It happened yesterday. It's all very decent. Their bed is being used as a glorified chair but which is more supportive for them, is more comfortable, using less energy. Saving this energy contributes to being able to continue on their course or maintain their job. Sometimes they Skype me from bed as they are feeling unwell due to a cold or a disability- related illness, unwell enough to be in bed and not to travel but not too ill to a have a 1:1 study skills, mentoring, job coaching session, or discuss the next steps in a project. For some students living in one room it is their only place to study undisturbed in a shared house or parental home. For others their bed it is their safe space when feeling overwhelmed. Accessing their specialist support from their bed in this instance can make the difference between continuing on a course. Not accessing support from their bed limits access to the support they need often at a crucial time.

Being enabled to access support aids their motivation, reduces their anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed, and improves learning working on an assignment.

The bed is used by many as a working space but not talked about openly.

I am an agile worker, often having project meetings on the beach, I've planned and written many a paper with others eating a picnic on the beach whilst kids play in the sea. It is always done quickly and effectively, often using tech but sometimes paper, whilst sitting in the open air, boosting our well-being, saving costs on childcare. Even contributing to our 10,000 steps a day.

Anyone who has come to visit me at my place of work will be whisked to the beach or occasionally a park or coffee shop. Most end up on the beach fossil hunting with me whilst we walk the dog, stopping

for chips or an ice cream on the prom at some point. The ideas often come all at once as we talk about ideas and solutions and changing the world. Ideas that are often drawn in the sand on those days are then incorporated into projects, papers, blogs, conferences and tweetchats.

I am agile worker, it helps me manage the impact of my disability. I am productive and at my best when I am empowered to work flexibly manage where, when and how I work.

My agile workspace this morning and most mornings is my bed. A new different concept of the word agile.

From my bed this morning I have:

- Checked Twitter, encouraged, sent some DMs about my availability for a tweetchat.
- Had breakfast.
- Had a cuddle with my youngest before they went to school - checking they had everything.
- Booked a student a study skills session.
- Chat with my husband about his Masters - with my critical friend hat on - advising on aspects of Skype for his proposed project on loneliness.
- Phoned a job coaching client to give them a boost before going into a meeting they are worried about.
- Replied to a text from a client requesting an urgent session today giving times I am available.
- Accepted an invite from someone on LinkedIn and started an interested conversation - then adds them to my peer support network
- Set up a Skype group call for a future Peer Supervision group
- Set up a Doodle Poll for the team meeting.

- Replied to a comment left on Researchgate about a paper on there. We're meeting up for a chat via Skype later in the month.
- Contributed via email to a project based in Ireland but with contributors from all over Europe regarding accessibility of the project website and Twitter account.
- Replied to a video message left for
- me in the early hours of today on Skype by a student feeling overwhelmed. (Crisis averted, confidence boosted).
- Read a paper contributed for the special issue for Nurse Education in Practice on Learning Diversity
- Edited a mind map
- Spoken this audio blog to my iPad mini which simultaneously
- reflected on Twitter conversations prior to and discussions during the Royal College of Occupational Therapy learning party I took part in last week where the theme of the importance of being outside when learning was identified by many Occupational therapists as a key or magic ingredient to learning. (That can be searched using the #RCOTlearning18 hashtag on Twitter or using the same hashtag on Periscope to view the recording).
- Tweeted to those I added to my personal learning network during this year's Bring Your Own Device for Learning (@byod4l) event in January to let them know I have finally done that piece on agile learning that was sparked by conversation on the BYOD4L Google forum and by the positive feedback to my first audio blog recorded during that week with their encouragement.

There you are I work in bed most mornings. A lot. By working from bed I can be 'at work' when not physically at work. I am less likely to get ill as I save my energy rather that spend it on the physical exertion of getting ready for work and travelling to work and other constraints

of that can be removed. I can spend my energy in generating income, networking, planning, answering calls, preparing meetings, contributing to giving best value to customers and 'maximising my potential'.

As a person who has multiple disabilities my bed is an ideal agile working space. My wheeled tilted table props up my devices in line with ergonomic guidelines and my orthopaedic pillow and daylight adjustable swivel light adjust the environment to my needs as well as meet health and safety guidelines.

Working from my bed meets the agile working definition in every way. As it becomes more common for people to work from home and with remote working and flexible working on the rise, and in some industries seeping into the mainstream, I hope more employers will embrace / explore the concept of agile working, seeing it as valid, legitimate and valuable in maximising the potential of employees. I hope those in positions to make such decisions see the potential benefits for all and I hope I've made a case for the bed to be seen as an element of agile working for those who need it and as a way to support employees who have a disability to remain productive.

I am productive and at my best when I am empowered to work flexibly manage where, when and how I work. That space is often my bed.

International literature on the retention of students with disabilities

Dr. Declan Reilly - Disability Officer, Trinity College, Dublin

Declan has been working as a disability officer in Trinity since 2005. Declan has a BA in Psychoanalytic Studies and an MA in Psychotherapy. He completed the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (Disability Needs Assessment) at Trinity and the Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (BPS). Declan produced a Guide for Students with Disabilities on Placement to support students with disabilities on professional courses. In 2017, Declan completed a PhD in the School of Education exploring if reasonable accommodations provided to third level students with disabilities succeed in removing barriers and impact on the student experience.

Introduction

This paper is presented as a summary of the international literature on the retention of students with disabilities. It is taken from a literature review section of my doctoral thesis completed in 2017. I have an ongoing interest in this area and time allowing, will seek to share findings on the retention of students with disabilities in an Irish context. Readers in HEIs in Ireland and elsewhere may find this paper useful in reflecting on how students with disabilities are doing in terms of progression and completion in their HEIs. Data collection on retention generally omits details on students with disabilities as a category and this is unfortunate as it offers an objective indicator of the value and effectiveness of reasonable accommodations and universal design.

Disability is a very small sub-category within the main body of research on student retention. The majority of authors in the area rarely mention disability, let alone identify it as a sub-category worthy of consideration. The literature that does focus on the retention of students with disabilities is dominated by research from the US and the UK. Collectively this paper presents a range of findings from different settings that do not easily concur or reach definitive conclusions. A brief discussion on how best to track retention and what factors may make a difference to retention will be left to the end of this paper.

Assumptions about students with disabilities

While there is general consensus that supports are needed and what HEIs do does matter, it is less clear which supports work best and to what extent they are effective. Alternative assumptions persist about whether or not students with disabilities in higher education are more or less likely to persist and complete their courses compared to their non-disabled peers.

One well supported view is that students with disabilities are less likely to persist in higher education compared to their non-disabled peers (Covington-Smith, 2008; Crosling et al., 2009; deFur et al., 1996; Jones, 2008; Wessel et al., 2009). In an exploration of minority student retention in the US, Swail et al., (2003) refer to students with disabilities among those who have always 'lagged behind' in terms of 'access and completion rates.

> Access and completion rates for African American, Hispanic, and Native American students have always lagged behind white and Asian students, as have those for low-income students and students with disabilities (Swail et al., 2003: v).

In the US, in 2013, national data on high school graduation rates showed that as a group, those with disabilities were falling significantly behind their non-disabled peers:

> In 2013, the national average graduation rate for students with disabilities hit 61.9 percent – nearly 20 points lower than the average graduation rate for all students (DePaoli et al., 2015: 48).

However several studies have shown that this phenomenon does not necessarily transfer to higher education. For example, Blake (as cited in Paul, 2000) found no such tendency. Huger (2009) found from a national sample of 22,180 students with learning difficulties at 4 year institutions in the US that 75.2% of these students had persisted two years later compared to 68.8% of students with no disability. However,

just because students with disabilities persist for longer (beyond the first or second year) compared to their non-disabled peers, this does not necessarily mean that they are more likely to complete their degrees. Instead, it could mean that the decision to withdraw is being delayed.

In Australia, van Stolk et al., (2007) found that the retention rates for all equity groups measured nationally (including students with disabilities) between 1997 and 2004 'did not differ considerably from the average retention rate for all other groups' (van Stolk et al., 2007: 12). However, Barnes et al., (2015) found that students with disabilities were among the more likely students to leave early from the University of Sydney

As research into the retention of students with disabilities in higher education is carried out with a variety of different methods and over different time scales within the higher education system, these alternative assumptions persist about whether or not students with disabilities in higher education are more or less likely to complete their courses compared to their non-disabled peers. Some reports in the UK indicate that those students with disabilities who are in receipt of DSA do better in terms of retention than those who are not funded.

> We found that students receiving an Allowance are much more likely to continue their course than other students self-declaring a disability and, indeed, than students who are not disabled (National Audit Office, 2007: 12).

> ...both full and part-time students who declare a disability are slightly more likely to continue than those without a (declared) disability when all other factors are held constant (National Audit Office, 2007: 20).

However, HESA statistics indicate DSA receipt as an indicator for higher risk of withdrawal (Brown, 2011) and in the US students with disabilities are marked out as more likely to withdraw from education:

> Students with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable populations for school dropout and are twice as likely to drop out as compared to their non-disabled peers. The highest dropout rates for students with disabilities exist among students with learning disabilities and emotional disturbance (Covington Smith, 2008: 3).

Research at a national level indicates that the completion rate for students with disabilities in higher education in the US is lower in comparison with non-disabled students (Jones, 2008; Wessel et al., 2009). As one study summarised, 'the likelihood of earning a degree is decreased by the presence of a disability' (deFur et al., 1996: 232). In 2012 the United States Department of Education reported that 58% of students without disabilities attained a degree while Newman et al., (2010) found that only 34% of students with disabilities completed their degrees. Also, some single institution research found that the graduate rate for both disabled and non-disabled students was similar (Jorgensen et al., 2005).

Within the variety of these findings and perhaps going some way to explain them, are a number of issues which make accurate comparisons difficult. Firstly, US legislation prohibits universities from gathering data on disability among applicants. This means data collection is entirely dependent on individual disclosure at a local level, where typically Disability Services categorise disability in many different ways (Tarnai et al, 2009). Therefore any attempt at accurate data accumulation at state or national level is fraught with problems.

Secondly, these problems are evident in the persistent methodological issues that arise with research which seeks to make comparisons between one cohort of students with disabilities and other groups. For example, 'students with learning difficulties' are often assumed to be synonymous with 'students with disabilities' and students registered with a Disability Service (who have provided a certain standard of documentation) have been compared to those who sought unsuccessfully to register for support (Herbert et al., 2014).

Thirdly, writing in the Journal of College Student Retention, Belch (2004) identified several factors associated with affecting the retention of students with disabilities in higher education in the US. These factors include initiatives and programs that specifically target students with disabilities in key areas of success, such as: transition planning, fostering belonging, involvement, purpose and self-determination. The importance of universal design principles is also emphasised. Examples of promising practices are provided from three universities which attempt to apply these principles in targeted programmes. Belch (2004: 17) concludes:

> The influx of students with disabilities and the diversity among them mandates a broader view of learning and development on college campuses. These students enhance the diversity of the college population and challenge practitioners and faculty to re-examine teaching and learning strategies and techniques.

Getzel (2008) looked at the areas that students with disabilities should focus on if they are to successfully deal with all the challenges of higher education. These areas are self-determination skills, self-management skills, exposure to assistive technology and the promotion of career development. Getzel argues that these personal skills must be developed by students with disabilities if they are to narrow the gap in completion rates (Getzel 2008: 207). Academic staff can also assist this process by increasing their awareness about the needs of students with disabilities and incorporate principles of universal design into their teaching practices. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a growing area of research (Bruner, 2016; Martyn and Gibberd, 2016) and is a key theme in Ireland where Ahead (2015) state that UDL is a central anchor of their strategic plan for 2015-2018.

Research by disability type

There is a general absence of research material on the retention rates of students based on disability type. Green & Rabiner (2012) looked at rates of participation, diagnosis and treatment of students with ADHD and acknowledged the lack of data available on graduation rates. One study on predictors of graduation among students with disabilities states:

> students with a cognitive disability were only one half as likely to graduate as a student with a physical disability, and students with a mental disability were only one third as likely to graduate as a student with a physical disability (Pingry O'Neil et al., 2012: 29).

The numbers of students making up these ratios were not provided and the remaining data in the study provided coefficients based on the outcome of graduation success linked to student factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, programme level and types of supports received.

Lichiello (2012) acknowledged that the literature on retention and graduation rates for students with disabilities in higher education is limited. In her literature review she also identifies some contradictions in previous studies, citing deFur et al., (1996: 232) where 'the likelihood of earning a degree is decreased by the presence of a disability' and contrasting it with the longitudinal study carried out by Wessel et al., (2009) at one college where out of 11,317 students comparable retention and graduation rates were experienced by students with and without disabilities. Herbert et al., (2014) found in a 10 year tracking of 545 students with disabilities in one large university in the US that 66.5% of students with disabilities graduated compared with 86.7% of the general student population. The study also found that students with disabilities who registered for support took longer to complete their degrees. However, the study

also revealed that gender, race/ethnicity, disability and living on or off campus were not significant factors in degree completion.

While some of the research from the US on the retention of students with disabilities shows that having a disability lowers the chance of completion, the UK based research identifies more qualified findings, differentiating between students with disabilities on the basis of receipt of financial assistance and finding that students with disabilities are in fact more likely to continue on their courses than those not declaring a disability. In Ireland, where the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) is accessed and managed by the Access or Disability Service, the completion rates of students with disabilities who entered higher education in 2005 was recorded at 85.4% compared to the general student population nationally with a completion rate of 83% (based on a 2004 intake) (Pathways to Education, 2010). Since 2010, there has been no large scale research following up on the retention of students with disabilities in higher education in Ireland.

Final comments

Those of us working in the area know that supports do work. The best supports are those that most closely meet the needs of particular students in specific situations. But HEIs need to be able to show this via reliable data. Students with disabilities should be included in annual data collection in HEIs on retention and completion.
For Access and Disability Support Offices, data on retention and completion can help to guide the use of funded supports and other resources. In an Irish context, cohort analysis is a useful starting place as students can be easily tracked and monitored based on year of entry and entry route until completion, for example, CAO/DARE/HEAR/Mature. Course and disability type are two additional areas worth monitoring as supports are relevant to these.

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The WAM Programme - Key Facts & Figures from AHEAD

Caroline McGrotty – WAM Programme Co-ordinator, AHEAD

Caroline McGrotty holds a Bachelor degree in Deaf Studies from Trinity College Dublin and a diploma in Irish Sign Language Teaching (TCD). She also has a higher certificate in Equality Studies from UCD. Caroline has over ten years' experience of working and volunteering with various organisations within the Deaf community. She is currently Vice Chair on the board of Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) and the WAM Programme Coordinator for AHEAD.

The WAM Programme is the transition to employment initiative of AHEAD. It offers graduates with disabilities the benefit of a minimum 6 month, paid and mentored work placement (internship) with high profile employers. In addition to providing graduates with valuable work experience, WAM works alongside employers to upskill them in best practices in recruitment of people with disabilities.

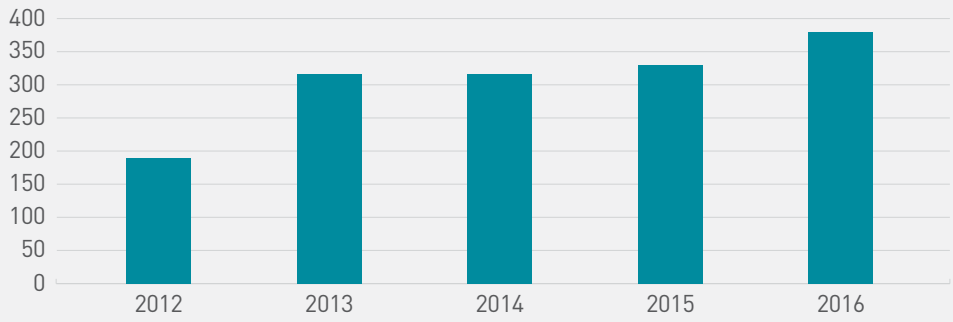
WAM was established in 2005 and to date has placed over 350 graduates with both private and public sector employers.

We are currently carrying out research into the last 5 years of the WAM Programme from 2012 - 2016. This research is due to be published in the next few months and this article provides a brief overview of some of the key facts and figures from the research.

Applications

Over the last 5 years, WAM have processed a total of 1,525 applications.

Number of Applications to the WAM Programme



When a graduate applies for a WAM placement, they inform us of any interview accommodations they may have, however we found that 79% of applicants did not require accommodations at interview.

4 out of 5 applicants did not require any accommodations at **interview**

The most common type of interview accommodations were a request for an accessible room and format (12%) with the next highest being an Irish Sign Language Interpreter (4%).

Workplace Supports

When a graduate is successfully placed, a systematic needs assessment is carried out by one of the WAM team. The needs assessment makes recommendations to the employer of any supports to be put in place including any health and safety requirements and additional information.

WAM carried out an analysis of all needs assessments conducted from 2012 – 2016. In this analysis, we categorised supports into five sections;

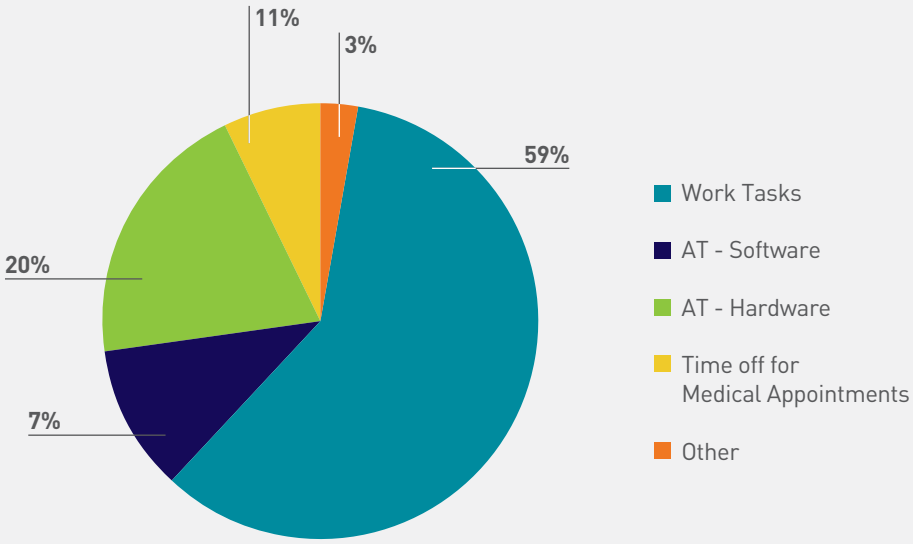
- Work Tasks – this covered many different elements such as training, feedback, guidance, how instructions are given, extra time, alternative formats etc.

- Assistive Technology Software – this covered various software applications such as screen-readers, dictation software and spelling and grammar applications.
- Assistive Technology Hardware – this covered things from basic office equipment such as a headset, a chair or a scanner to building modifications or re-arranging the desk location.
- Time off for Medical Appointments
- Other – this included Irish Sign Language interpreters, car parking spaces etc.

We also conducted a review of whether there was an additional cost in hiring a person with a disability in terms of purchasing additional equipment and found that two-thirds of the needs assessments analysed did not incur any cost to the employer.

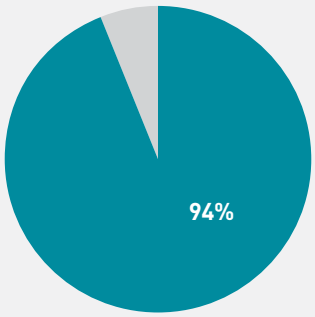
Two-thirds of accommodations do not incur a cost to the **employer**

Workplace Accomodations

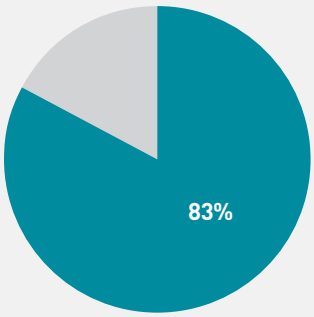


Graduates' Experiences

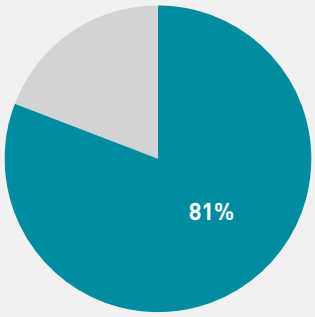
In addition to analysing applications and needs assessments over a five year period, we also carried out a survey with graduates who completed a WAM placement. We had an 89% response rate to the survey.



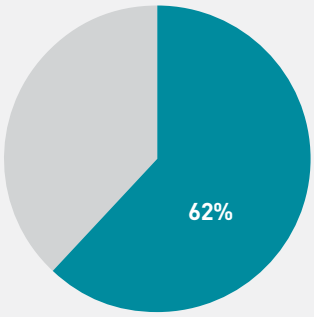
94% of graduates gained confidence in their ability to work in a mainstream environment



83% had a better under-standing of what supports they need in the workplace



81% benefited from having a dedicated in-house trained WAM Mentor



62% felt more confident to disclose their disability to employers

What happened after their WAM Placement?

We asked those who responded to tell us if they secured employment after their WAM placement. 77% of graduates who completed a WAM placement secured employment either by remaining within the company, getting a job elsewhere or securing a contract extension. Only 11% were still looking for work opportunities while 10% went back to study.

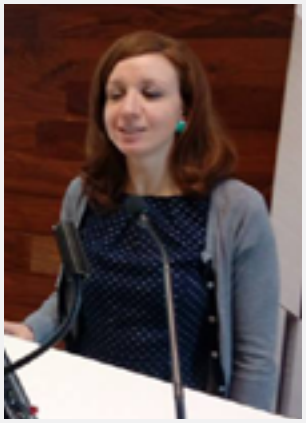
77% of WAM placed graduates secured employment as a **direct** result of their WAM placement

Conclusion

This is only a preview of what to expect from our research, the released publication will have more in-depth analysis and more key findings from the survey which we carried out.

If you have any questions in the interim, you can contact The WAM Programme by emailing **wam@ahead.ie** or visit our website – **www.ahead.ie/wam**.

Don't Stop at the First Hurdle – an interview with a Deaf student on placement



Lucia Venturi - Support Service Coordinator, Bridge Interpreting

Lucia Venturi holds a Bachelor in Deaf Studies (hons) from Trinity College. After graduating, she worked as a research assistant at the Centre for Deaf Studies (TCD) and contributed to a number of papers and publications. She has also been working as a sign language coordinator/peer support for Bridge Interpreting based in Dublin. This professional role allowed her to apply for the Irish Research Council's (IRC) scholarship 'Employment Based Programme' which was awarded in May 2017. Since then, she has been carried out a research master (M. Litt) about the development of a peer support service for Irish Sign Language/English Interpreters.

John Braga is a Deaf student in his third year at ITB working within the company until the end of April.

(Deaf with a capital D is used in this article to represent those who are Deaf and use sign language as their language and their preferred means of communication.)

I first became aware that Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) were offering work placement to students in the Creative Digital Media degree programme upon talking to a lecturer in January. This programme is designed to equip students with a good combination of technical and creative skills relevant to the Digital Media industry in Ireland. As part of their third year studies, students can undertake a professional project during their second semester. This project normally takes place over 12 weeks.

Society is constantly changing, and the deaf community is no different. Last December, Irish Sign Language (ISL) was recognised as the third official language of Ireland, a few weeks ago the UNCRP made it through the Dáil and on a personal level, I was awarded by the Irish Research Council (IRC) to carry out a research with the aim to develop and set up a support service for ISL/English interpreters. Due to all these positive changes, we felt that there was no more pertinent a time to reinvigorate and adapt our company, Bridge Interpreting, so we decided to submit a professional proposal project to ITB with the aim of finding a student interested in working on the development of Bridge Interpreting's new website.

In January, we received the good news; one of the students from ITB was interested in working with us for 12 weeks. John Braga is a Deaf student in his third year at ITB and he will be working within the company until the end of April. John kindly accepted to be interviewed and talked about his experience with us.

Interview between Lucia and John

Why did you select Bridge Interpreting?

I read the project and after the conversation I had with you through Skype, I really wanted to do my work placement at Bridge Interpreting. I had a look at the current website and I really wanted to undertake the challenge. When I read on the proposal, I appreciated that you wanted to make a website accessible to everyone, hearing and deaf people. I thought this would help me to develop many more skills like filming videos in ISL, subtitling videos, building up a blog and many other tasks. I knew this was a goal with which I could challenge myself.

Did you know about the business of the company?

I knew Bridge Interpreting as I have been in ITB for the last three years, and since then I have been in contact with the staff from Bridge Interpreting, as they provide ISL/English interpreters for my classes. I knew that the business provided professional, qualified sign language interpreters to hearing and Deaf clients within the deaf community.

How do you find your work experience?

My work experience has been very positive so far, I am really happy and I am learning so much. I would say overall it has been a very productive experience. It can be challenging sometimes but with very good results, I would say a learning curve.

Irish Sign Language is your first language, how do you find the communication with the staff?

The communication was not a barrier, there was no communication breakdown. You sign, the director of the company signs and when we need a meeting with the rest of the hearing staff, I was accommodated extremely well. An interpreter has been booked every time we had

a staff meeting. At the end of the day, once I know what you want from your project, I can work independently; I can keep working on the website and then every time I needed to ask a question, you were there so it was fine. Here in Bridge Interpreting the communication was not an issue, it is probably a lot easier rather than if I had been in a company with hearing people only. If there is even only one person signing it is sufficient. I would say it made it easier.

Are you learning and is it what you were expecting?

I am learning a lot more than I was expecting, about diverse topics. There were a few things I had in mind I wanted to learn about, for example when we were talking about the live chat, it gave me something to focus on. The placement has been fantastic, it is really enjoyable and the progress we have already made is great, chatting with everyone in the office has been good. It was interesting to work with external professional people like the person responsible of the IT department within the company, having staff meetings, and working within a team.

I normally meet to discuss the website every Friday with my supervisor. We discuss what I need to do, how to amend details and many other aspects related to the project. For example, you asked me a few questions today, now I can go back and check with my supervisor. He always gives me good advice and he is very supportive. Any good ideas I never thought of before, I can bring them back and ask my supervisor.

What about theory into practice?

It is a little bit different compared to class. Coming here it was different compared to college. In college you go to class and you attend your lectures. In a working environment, you can put your learning into practice, it gave me an idea what to expect when I leave college, a small window into the future. In the work placement, there

is an employer telling you the goals that need to be achieved and you do your best to achieve them. You are not only working for yourself but you are working with other people involved in one project. I also appreciate when the staff ask me for my opinion or specific technical questions I can answer and collaborate. I was able to give input, definitely. I have been really happy here, it was great.

What do you want to achieve at the end of the placement?

At the end of my placement, I really hope to produce a website that you are happy with and a website that everybody can use and access.

We would like to thank John Braga from ITB for his fantastic contribution to Bridge Interpreting and wish him well for a bright future.

Book Review by Alan Hurst

Alan Hurst was formerly Professor, School of Education, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK. He has published books and articles, lectured, and led workshops in many countries, been a member of several significant and influential policy groups, and been the recipient of a number of awards for his work on the creation of inclusive education for disabled students in universities; his best known publication being a staff training handbook. Currently he chairs the Disabled Students Stakeholder Group for the Student Loans Company and is guest editor for the AHEAD (USA) Journal of Post-Secondary Education and Development.

Radical Inclusive Education, Greenstein, Anat (2016)

Hove, East Sussex: Routledge pp154 ISBN 978-0-415-70925-5 paperback £29-99

Within post-school education, the terms Inclusive Education appear to have become synonymous with the development and application of the principles of universal design to the curriculum and to methods of teaching, learning and assessment. So, when I saw the title of this book I wondered what form a 'radical' approach might take and to evaluate the extent to which current efforts might bring about educational and social change. Then, on reading more about the book, I discovered that it claimed to make use of the work of Paolo Freire. This encouraged me to read the book for another reason. During my early years as a teacher in the late 1960s and early 1970s I had been inspired by reading books such as John Holt's 'How Children Fail', Ivan Illich's 'Deschooling Society, the School of Barbiana's 'Letter to a Teacher' - and by Paolo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'. I wondered if I would experience the same feelings of excitement and exhilaration as I did then and feel a desire to change contemporary policies and practices relating to the enhancement of inclusion of disabled students in third level/higher education. I recognised that the pioneers mentioned above had their focus on what happens in schools but I think it is good practice to read widely and to draw upon a wide range of sources to gain new ideas, and to see if they are adaptable and applicable to my own work.

The book has two parts. The first is called Setting the Scene: politicising education and disability and exploring the need for radical inclusive pedagogy. The introduction presents the author's personal situation as a speech and language therapist and the impact on her of encountering the social model of disability. She also describes the history of school provision in England for children with 'special needs'. The importance of the disabled people's movement and the need to draw upon it and work with it are recognised. Having set the scene and outlined the structure of the book, Chapter One is about recognising disability as a political phenomenon and the rooting of policies towards disabled people in medical, psychological and deficit models. These resulted in the marginalisation of disabled people and the neglect of recognising what is defined as 'the norm' as a social and political construct. Greenstein suggests that a strategy to overcome this is to conceptualise people as positioned on a continuum from dis(ability) - ability which links to a subsequent notion of interdependence instead of independence. A simple illustrative example of this from the context of third level/higher education is the role of personal assistant (PA) and disabled students where the student depends on the PA for certain activities whilst the PA depends on the student for employment and income. I was also struck by a quotation from Reeve (2008) on page 29 '....people who require state funding .....have to satisfy strict conditions to prove their 'inabilities'. Isn't this what students experience when applying for Disabled Students Allowances in the UK?

Having suggested the dis – ability continuum, in Chapter Two, this is applied to schools with particular attention given to segregated provision for learners with disabilities. Even in the most recent policies in the UK the underlying assumptions of such policies 'continue to privilege ideas of competition rather than co-operation, independence rather than interdependence and personal accountability rather than social failure' (page 37). Greenstein moves on to consider school failure as an individual pathology and for me

this serves to emphasise my conviction that there is a need to move away from using the term learning disabilities. Replacing this with learning differences should demonstrate a significant shift from an individual/deficit model to a social/educational one. The consequence is that the responsibility lies with the trained professional to organise and structure learning so that it is effective in meeting the needs of a variety of learning differences. This contributes to the old notion that good teaching for those who have different needs is usually good teaching for all. The chapter ends with a discussion of the distinction between 'employment' and 'employability, the latter having a focus on individual deficiencies in the author's view. She is also concerned by the attention given to literacy and numeracy at the expense of other important social skills

Chapter Three looks at the disabled people's movement and its links to radical inclusive pedagogy. It is here that the work of Freire comes into focus. Freire is critical of what can be described as 'the banking model of education' in which the teacher is the source of what counts as knowledge and her/his role is to pass on this to the learners. Instead, Freire advocates concentrating on facilitating the learners' critical thinking, a process he calls conscientisation. Once this has taken place, individuals can reflect on their own social setting and to try to bring about change if they think it necessary, a stage Freire calls praxis which is about having the power and the knowledge on which to act. It is interesting to apply this approach to the position of disabled students in third level/higher education. One question is the extent to which the introduction of universal design for learning is likely to result in the two outcomes Freire desires. How does UDL work to promote conscientisation and praxis? Is the concern still with the same blocks of subject-based knowledge?

In the later sections of this chapter, Greenstein outlines three types of knowledge (page 58 onwards) and considers the ways in which these are useful in analysing the work of the disabled people's

movement in involving as many disabled people as possible in the struggle for change. This has to mean ensuring that the movement is accessible and as inclusive as possible so that people with all types of impairment can become involved (e.g. facilitating the participation of those with intellectual and behavioural impairments).

The second part of the book is called Envisaging Radical Inclusive Pedagogy: knowledge, relationships and power. Chapter Four explores the need to rethink what constitutes 'knowledge' if radical inclusive pedagogy is to become effective. The underlying assumption is that knowledge is a social construct and that this has implications for power and control. Who defines what counts as 'knowledge' and what are the consequences of this? Putting this differently, what is being urged is a questioning of the 'taken-for-granted', a stance whose consequences are outlined so well by Alfred Schutz in a short paper called 'The Stranger'. Why is it that certain subjects are included in the school curriculum for example? What are the implications for subjects not included? Does subject content not matter and what education is about is preserving that status quo, a process achieved by what has been referred to as 'the hidden curriculum'? (e.g. the social learning that takes place such as obeying the teacher – and subsequently the manager in the context of employment). Schutz's 'Stranger' also raises questions about what is seen as 'recipe knowledge'. Using an example from third level/ higher education, the approach to academic assessment for students with specific learning disabilities (differences?) seems to be based on the allocation of additional time, usually in a formulaic way allowing an additional fifteen minutes per allocated hour of examination irrespective of individual variations and needs - but is this the only alternative?

Chapter Five called Relations of Belonging: identity, difference and the ethics of care looks at how community feelings can be developed and how this can be accomplished via inclusion. This connects

easily with the final section, Chapter Six, which is about changing power relations. In particular, the focus is on resisting domination and seeking horizontal power relations. This returns to the theme of sustaining and promoting individual autonomy whilst recognising the importance of interdependence as expressed by the dis-ability continuum. Towards its close, Greenstein reminds us again what radical inclusive pedagogy is:

> Radical inclusive pedagogy that starts from a dis-ability perspective is not about creating educational provision for disabled students, but about a diverse range of services, relations and support that can benefit different people at different times of their lives. It is about the freedom to move between services and change roles and relations. It is about being supported to impact, shape and change educational provision and relations (page 133).

That's the book summarised so what are my conclusions and recommendations?

The issues covered might seem to be intellectually challenging but Greenstein tries to support readers by her comprehensive introduction and by the summary of key points at the start of each chapter. For those readers coming new to the topics covered, it might be necessary to re-read sections and/or chapters – but there is no law against reading things more than once! The points I hope that readers would take away from the book are the concepts of the dis - ability continuum and of interdependence and how they might be applied in their situations. Also, I think it would be interesting to consider knowledge as a social construct and the challenges associated with questioning 'the taken-for-granted'. Is there a hierarchy in the study programmes in higher education? Certainly, at least in the past in the UK, academic subjects have been accorded greater status than those with a more practical focus.

Would I recommend that colleagues working to support disabled students in third level/higher education read this book? My answer is yes. It will not tell you how to undertake the tasks and responsibilities associated with your role and position – it is not a series of practical tips. However, what it will do is to cause you to stop and think about what you are doing and why you are doing it in the way you have chosen. Having done so, you might continue with your action unchanged – but at least you have stopped to reflect and think. Many years ago I was a tutor for the Open University in the UK. A key aim of the OU in all its modules and courses was the development of 'intelligent, informed sceptics'. Reading Greenstein's book could be an important step towards achieving this amongst staff working with disabled students in third level/higher education and thus contribute to their greater professionalization and professionalism.

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Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

THE AHEAD JOURNAL - No. 7
A Review of Inclusive Education & Employment Practices

AHEAD, the Association for higher education Access and Disability, is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation.

AHEAD provides information to students and graduates with disabilities, teachers, guidance counsellors and parents on disability issues in education.

AHEAD works with graduates and employers through the GET AHEAD Graduate Forum and the WAM Mentored Work Placement Programme.

AHEAD coordinates LINK, a worldwide network of professionals promoting the inclusion of students & graduates with disabilities in higher education managed by 6 European partner organisations.

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