The Impact of Psychology-Led Supports and Evidence Based Interventions in a Third Level Institution

Rose Ryan, Director of Access Office Maynooth University
Suzanne McCarthy, Educational Psychologist
Overview of Presentation

- Context for Development of Student Central
- Benefits of a collaborative model

- Overview of Student Central
- Psychology led service and Evidence-Based Interventions

- Trends in Engagement over a 4 year period

- Conclusion and looking ahead
Access: Students with mental health conditions are more vulnerable to withdrawal and are more successful once supported appropriately.

Complexity: Students presenting with overlapping diagnoses and complex learning needs.

Numbers: Significant increase in the number of students with mental health conditions and autism spectrum disorders at Maynooth University.
Previous models had not been successful

Student Central was established in September 2012 to address weaknesses of previous models.

Psychology-led programme of academic support tailored to meet the individual needs of students.

Students with mental health conditions, students with autism spectrum disorders and students with ADHD.

Supports to be designed to be enabling, helping students acquire the necessary skills to transition from school to college and college to career.
What is the Student Central Model?

Students are identified as part of the Needs Assessment process.

Students work with an AP to identify the academic impact of their diagnosis and their needs within the university environment.

Supervised by an Educational Psychologist with access to a multidisciplinary team.

Ongoing personal and academic support.

Monthly review meetings and monthly case management meetings.

Student Central
What is the Student Central Model?

STUDY
- Academic writing
- Time Management
- Mind – Mapping
- Learning Styles
- Memory Techniques
- Presentation Skills
- Critical Thinking

SOCIAL
- Self- Advocacy
- Reading other People
- Building Friendships
- Assertiveness
- Conversation skills

WELLNESS
- Psycho education
- Managing Anxiety
- Mindfulness
- Maintaining wellness
- Self-esteem building
Student Central and the University

- Student Plus
- Academic Writing Centre
- Maths Support Centre
- LIST
- Academic Advisory Office
- Counselling Service
- Student Health Centre
Student Central – what is the science?


- **Seeks to develop a profile of the students’ strengths** and to further their understanding the behavioural/emotional/learning difficulties.

- **Gathers data from a diverse range of areas** and uses this information to problem-solve.

- **Puts forward a specific intervention** for each problem dimension.

- **Signposts student** to other internal or external services
Student Central – what is the science?

Constructivists
- Student actively involved in process of learning

Humanist
- Learning is student centred and personalised. Sense of belonging

Behaviourist –
- Self monitor, rewards, goals, targets, CBT, DBT

Social Learning Theory
- Controlling behaviours through self regulation.
Who are students who use Student Central?
In 2012 more likely to be Female.

In 2016 equal numbers of Male and Female.
More likely to be between 18 - 25
Student Central Student Characteristics

More likely to be 1st Years

Arts Students
More likely to have more than one diagnosis
Most commonly requested supports: Time management, self-advocacy, exam preparation & wellness supports
What are the outcomes for students who use Student Central?
Outcomes for Students who use Student Central

- Prepare students for post college
- Empowerment
- Self-manage difficulties
- Promote students’ independence
- Skill development
- Academic achievement
Qualitative Results

- 61% of students stated that ‘having someone to talk to about my college life’ was one of the most useful aspects of the programme.

- 46% of students stated that ‘support from a professional who understood my diagnosis’ was one of the most useful aspects of the programme.

“The Psychologist has cool tricks for studying. I have ADHD and she showed me how to train myself to study and focus.”

“”Given that I have an anxiety disorder, the various techniques and coping mechanisms I was given helped me get through this year”

“I have study plans and see assignments not as one scary whole but realise you work on it step by step”
Qualitative Results

Some students indicated that they may have dropped out of university if they did not avail of support through Student Central.

“’f I’d not been meeting with someone weekly, some days I would not have gotten out of bed.....’

‘It was a good place to go if you were so behind that you felt like packing the whole thing in... “

‘I felt completely overwhelmed in semester one....... I actually wanted to drop out. The psychologist taught me how to set goals and do work stage by stage with daily and weekly targets....’
**Where now for Student Central?**

- Expanded the programme to provide two Assistant Psychologists in 2016

- Student Central team contribute to orientation and pre entry supports

- Evaluation completed by Edgehill University UK – published early 2017

- Develop stronger engagement and seek opportunities to expand to full student population
Learning from Student Central?

**PARTNERSHIP**
- Relationship with NLN has been key

**EXPERTISE**
- Psychology-led programme of academic support tailored to meet the individual needs of students

**CONTINUM**
- Targeted at students with mental health conditions, students with autism spectrum disorders and students with ADHD, meets their needs at different points

**OUTCOME**
- Students have much better outcomes and are more effectively supported. Sustainable, cost effective and could be replicated contexts/sectors.
Thank you for listening!