Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations to Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland

DAWN
Disability Advisors Working Network

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Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

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Produced by the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) and the Disability Advisers Working Network (DAWN).

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Contents

Key to Abbreviations

AHEAD – Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

AT – Assistive Technology

DAWN – Disability Advisers Working Network

ESA – Emotional Support Animal

ESF – European Social Fund

ESW – European Social Fund

FE – Further Education

FSD – Fund for Students with Disabilities

HE – Higher Education

HEA – Higher Education Authority

HEI – Higher Education Institution

ISL – Irish Sign Language

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

NA – Needs Assessment

PA – Personal Assistant

RA – Reasonable Accommodation

RACE – Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations

RGAM – Recurrent Grant Allocation Model

UDL – Universal Design for Learning
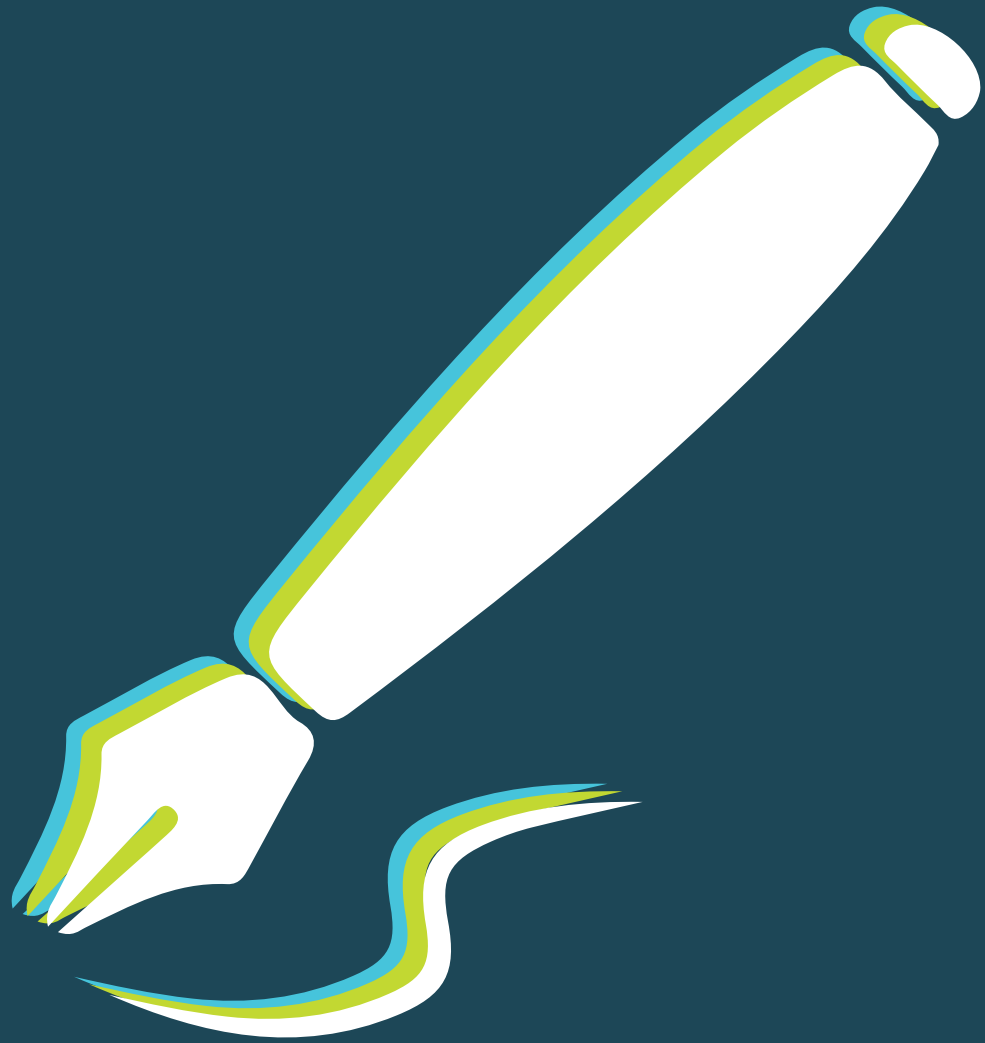
Executive Summary

This report has been produced by the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) and the Disability Advisers Working Network (DAWN). It is the culmination of two years of research and consultation in relation to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the development of inclusive practices in Higher Education.

This document is part of the AHEAD & DAWN Series on Inclusive Education & Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education:

1. Position Paper – A road Map for Disability Support in Higher Education in Ireland;

2. Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations to Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland;

3. The Role of the Disability Service in Higher Education in Ireland – a Vision for Future Developments;

4. Online resource/manual outlining good practices in Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland.

1. Position Paper - Inclusive Education: A Road Map for Higher Education in Ireland

This paper establishes the need for adopting an inclusive learning model throughout Irish Higher Education. This requires a move away from supporting specific groups of students through timed interventions and policies, towards an inclusive approach which is embedded in all teaching, learning, and assessment. Principally, this is in response to a continuing increase in the number of students with disabilities entering Higher Education in Ireland, juxtaposed with a decrease in available

funding to support such transitions. A key finding and recommendation from research commissioned by AHEAD and DAWN (Doyle, 2016), is that, in the long term, providing individualised supports to a large number of students through Reasonable Accommodations, is not sustainable.

A number of high level recommendations are made that will allow for inclusive learning principles and practices to be integrated in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). These are:

➲ The Higher Education Authority (HEA) should provide support for an inclusive/ mainstreamed approach to widening participation, and improved student success, through a series of programmes, associated research, publications, and events.

➲ Inclusive learning and mainstream practices should underpin the key objectives of the Higher Education System Performance Framework (HEA, 2014b) to promote access for disadvantaged groups and to promote excellence in teaching and learning. All HEIs should show evidence of this in their institutional reporting.

➲ The adoption of Inclusive Learning principles in HEI Teaching & Learning Strategies would ensure an inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment environment for all students.

➲ HEI Access Plans & Service Delivery Plans (required by the Fund for Students with a Disability (FSD)) should show a clear strategy for the mainstreaming of supports to ensure that a college-wide approach is taken to fostering inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment methods.

➲ Review of the core funding for access performance in the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) needs to take account of any changes to the Fund for Students with Disabilities and the data used to determine HEI allocations.

➲ | The Taskforce responsible for the design, development and implementation of a new model for allocating the Fund for Students with Disabilities should refer to this report on Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations to Students with Disabilities in Ireland for guidance on changes required to allow for improved efficiencies in the allocation of funding and the mainstreaming of some disability activities in all HEIs.

2. Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations to Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland

This report provides comprehensive guidelines on how Inclusive Learning can be implemented and outlines good practice in the provision of Reasonable Accommodations. A model for inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment is suggested with responsibilities outlined at a national, institutional, course, and Disability Service level. The model is supported by examples of good practice and case studies are taken from a range of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This model proposes the adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) supported by National Access Plans, teaching & learning policies, HEI strategic plans, and the provision of funding. It also explains inclusivity in four key areas: the physical environment, academic skills and support for student learning, technology, and student services.

Specific guidelines are provided for implementing inclusive practice and providing Reasonable Accommodations in all aspects of the curriculum and curriculum delivery, including work placements. Consideration is also given to confidentiality and disclosure, support to Erasmus and international students, and streamlined procedures for registering and assessing the needs of students with disabilities.

3. The Role of the Disability Service in Higher Education in Ireland: A Vision for Future Development

This document focuses on several key areas relating to the role of the Disability Service in Higher Education campuses. It seeks to clarify the role of practitioners in terms of management, collaboration, and relationships. It hopes to assist the sector to understand how the Disability Service not only works to support individual students with disabilities in terms of Reasonable Accommodations, but also on other activities including the promotion of inclusive education and the adoption of a philosophy underpinned by Universal Design for Learning (UDL). It outlines the role and communicates established standards, with the objective of improving the student experience not just for those with a disability, but for a diversity of learners. This publication seeks to develop a new vision for the professional role of the disability support practitioner.

4. Online Resources/Manual outlining good practice in Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland

The online resource documents cases of good practice and recommended approaches with respect to the provision of Reasonable Accommodations. It contains templates, suggested policies, and clear guidance for Disability Services with respect to the provision of Reasonable Accommodations as reflected in Irish legislation. It is envisioned that the online resource will evolve as new practices develop against a backdrop of increasing numbers of students with disabilities entering higher education, with funding and resources that are ever more challenged to support such transitions. The online resources were influenced by key findings and recommendations from a research programme commissioned by AHEAD and DAWN (Doyle, 2016), which concluded that, in the long term, providing individualised supports through Reasonable Accommodations, is not sustainable. Some individualised accommodations will always be required but there are also recommendations as to how the learning environment can be adapted to be more inclusive and responsive to a diverse student group.

Assurance and Accountability

Improved teaching and learning

Increased employment outcomes

Staff and student satisfaction

Improved recruitment & retention

Benefits of Inclusive Learning

Reputational benefit

Cost and time efficiency

International best practice embedded

Clarity of program objectives & delivery

Flexible taught courses, e-learning & research

Figure 1: Diagram outlining the benefits of Inclusive Learning

Part 1: Establishing the Need for an Inclusive Learning Model

Introduction

There is an increasing emphasis within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on developing inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment practices. There are a number of different terms used in different areas of the literature, and in different geographical regions e.g. inclusive learning or Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In this paper, to ensure an understanding by all stakeholders, the term inclusive learning is used. The emphasis on inclusive learning is due to a number of internal and external drivers including; educational policy, anti-discrimination legislation, increased diversity of the student population, and growing recognition that traditional methods of teaching, learning, and assessment require a thorough review. Ensuring that HEIs develop inclusive learning practices requires positive engagement in the process from all participants in the Higher Education (HE) sector, including statutory bodies such as the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and more specifically lecturers/teachers, teaching and learning developers, and access/disability support professionals within HEIs.

Enabling all students to participate fully and succeed within higher education represents a considerable challenge. It is fair to say that as teaching, learning, and assessment processes become inclusive and transparent, the more likely it is that all students, including those with disabilities, will be able to engage and participate at the highest level. However, even when inclusive learning environments are in place there will always be some students who require extra adaptations due to the impact of their disability. Reasonable Accommodations have been developed at all levels of the education system to ensure that students with disabilities are not educationally disadvantaged in comparison to their non-disabled peers

Policy Context

The aim of these guidelines is to promote the rebalancing of the source of support for students with disabilities through mainstreaming wherever possible the provision of supports and ensuring the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) is meeting the needs of those students who cannot be accommodated fully in an inclusive education environment. This approach will ensure that:

➡️ Access and participation is improved for all students through inclusive learning practices and where inclusive learning strategies are the norm,

➡️ HEIs are fulfilling the widening participation requirements stated in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 (HEA, 2015),

➡️ HEIs are complying with their legal obligations, in relation to equality and disability, to provide Reasonable Accommodations for students with disabilities, and

➡️ The Fund for Students with Disabilities and other HEI funding are targeted at those students that, due to the impact of their disability, require individualised supports.

Drivers for Inclusive Learning

Equality of opportunity in higher education is a national priority in Ireland, addressed through the work of the Higher Education Authority (HEA), and significant progress has been made in widening access and participation for students with disabilities through successive National Access Plans. The HEA reported the number of students with disabilities to be 6% of the overall student body (HEA, 2015b). Reasonable Accommodations are essential to the retention and progression of this specific student cohort, and should address barriers in all aspects of academic, professional practice, and workplace settings.

The HEA's National Access Plan 2015 - 2019 is underpinned by an overarching vision 'to ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population' (HEA, 2015b). Two goals identified in the National Access Plan speak directly to Inclusive Learning and the provision of Reasonable Accommodations in higher education: (a) to mainstream the delivery of equity of access in HEIs, and (b) to assess the impact of current initiatives to support equity of access to higher education (including an examination of institutional funding and its impact on participation by people from under-represented groups). Future outcomes would suggest a significant increase in students with disabilities requiring Reasonable Accommodations with no capacity nationally to increase the overall budget as the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) per capita allocation continues to reduce. It seems timely, therefore, to examine the purpose and efficacy of inclusive learning strategies and Reasonable Accommodations and to consider how these might function within the future landscape of higher education.

Development of the Inclusive Learning and Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines

Implementing inclusive learning practices represents the first line of accessibility for students with disabilities rather than the application of specialist supports and Reasonable Accommodations to overcome barriers found within traditional teaching learning and assessment methodologies. These guidelines were developed over five distinct stages:

Stage 1: Research

In September 2015, the Disability Advisers Working Network (DAWN) (See Appendix 1 for list of DAWN members) and the Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD) commissioned a research programme to investigate current practices in the provision of Reasonable Accommodations within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. The purpose of this research was to: (a) determine current and future needs in the light of increased participation rates, (b) identify models of good practice that could be shared on a national level, and (c) to inform the development of national guidelines on inclusive practice and to ensure consistent disability service provision across the sector. The resulting report, A Review of Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland (Doyle, 2016), examined the provision of Reasonable Accommodations across all HEIs represented by DAWN members.

Key recommendations from this research were:

DAWN institutions must ensure that national guidelines for provision of Reasonable Accommodations ensure equity of access to supports, and that where individual Disability Services policies differ from such guidelines, that this is communicated clearly to prospective students so that they may make an informed decision about their choice of HEI.

Third level institutions need to fulfil longstanding recommendations from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and equality obligations, by committing to a planned programme for inclusive learning. There is an urgent need, particularly in light of increased participation rates of students with disabilities and decreased funding, to provide teaching and learning opportunities in a diversity of modes to reflect our diverse student populations.

Funding bodies need to address the requirement for greater flexibility in financing Reasonable Accommodations for students whose status means that they do not meet funding criteria, but whose needs are no less important. This includes students who are pursuing part-time programmes.

Policymakers need to acknowledge and respond to the difficulties experienced by HEIs in meeting participation targets without matched funding to support this initiative. They should uphold and progress the principles outlined in the National Access Plan 2015 – 2019 (HEA, 2015b) which advocate for adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by HEIs.

Most of the recommendations below have been addressed in these guidelines and the remaining recommendations will be worked upon by AHEAD, DAWN, and other appropriate partners:

Evidence of Disability

1. A policy for acceptable evidence of disability documentation should be agreed across the sector, and where a HEI does not adhere to this policy, it should be made clear to prospective students so that they may make an informed choice in their selection of HEI. This is recognized internationally as good practice (AHEAD, 2012).

Needs Assessment Process and Disclosure

2. A policy for the provision of written confirmation of Reasonable Accommodations to students, and to HEI staff where appropriate, should be agreed across the sector. This should incorporate a customised format of Needs Assessment and/or Reasonable Accommodation documentation. This policy should include recommended procedures for reviewing the Needs Assessment and Reasonable Accommodations.

Funding Reasonable Accommodations

3. Amendments to acceptable evidence of disability criteria for applications to the Fund for Students with a Disability (FSD) should be discussed with the National Access Office, together with the implications of an increase in eligible applicants juxtaposed with a decrease in available per capita funding.

Human and Technological Support

4. HEIs should collaborate on the design of a strategy to progress adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approaches to accessing the curriculum using Assistive Technology (AT).

5. An AT policy should be developed in relation to sourcing or creating of alternative formats, and robust guidelines implemented for alternative formatting requests and procedures.

6. A national AT strategy should be investigated via the Assistive Technology Officer network in relation to the creation of equipment banks, networked software solutions, testing and recommending software applications, and an effective method of disseminating this information to students at a national level.

Academic and Learning Support

7. Reasonable Accommodation guidelines should define the meaning and parameters of academic tuition and learning support, as they should be used across the sector.

8. HEIs should collaborate on the design of a strategy to progress mainstreaming of academic and learning support to students with disabilities by:

- ✦ The development and delivery of a suite of high quality training programmes to institutional student learning services, to increase expertise and strategies for supporting all types of learners and learning styles.

- ✦ Promoting the embedding of academic skills into all first year programmes, and contributing expertise to the development of content.

Support for Specific Student Cohorts

9. HEIs should review the circumstances which would require separate policies and guidelines for particular student cohorts, given that the ethos and principles of Reasonable Accommodations focus on person-centred provision, which should be established on a case-by-case basis.

10. Where different policies or policy provisions exist for particular student cohorts this should be made clear to prospective students so that they may make an informed choice in their selection of HEI.

11. HEIs should investigate the profile and circumstances of current part-time students registered with Disability Services, and utilize such findings to progress discussion of improved access to Reasonable Accommodations through institutional or national funding.

12. Policy guidelines should establish the parameters of support for ERASMUS and International students, the procedures for initiating such support, clarification on funding, and customised documentation for activating Reasonable Accommodations.

Accommodating Work and Professional Placements

13. National guidelines for Reasonable Accommodations in work and professional practice placement settings should be adapted from existing policies. Where appropriate, these may be differentiated between general work place and clinical placement settings.

14. A bank of illustrative case studies and working examples should be provided in a repository hosted on the DAWN website.

15. HEIs should collaborate on the design of a suite of customised, high quality, staff awareness and training programmes to Disability Service, academic, and placement staff, to increase expertise and confidence in supporting students with disabilities in completion of work-based learning.

Developing Policies and Guidelines

16. HEIs should investigate the efficacy of creating a DAWN 'portal' for dissemination of information relating to Needs Assessment and Reasonable Accommodations.

17. DAWN should consider merging and adapting existing examples of good practice policy and procedures connected to specific activities, into a customised format for use across the sector.

18. Disability Services should clearly indicate whether documents published or made available on their HEI websites represent formal institutional policy, whether they are guidelines for benchmarking practice, or if they are for information purposes.

19. Guidelines should be developed for the provision of Reasonable Accommodations across the sector to ensure consistency in delivery of same, and where individual HEI practice diverts from this policy, this should be communicated clearly to prospective students so that they may make an informed decision about choice of HEI.

Stage 2: Constructing the Inclusive Learning and Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines.

Based on the research findings outlined above, the DAWN Working Group developed the Inclusive Learning and Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines, and the first draft was completed in May 2016. DAWN then sought a legal opinion to determine if the guidelines were compliant with relevant legislation, and to identify any aspects that could potentially initiate a legal challenge. The stated objective of the guidelines provided to the legal personnel was to provide advice for Disability Service staff in HEIs when making decisions on Reasonable Accommodations for students with disabilities, and to bring consistency to how students with disabilities are supported via mainstreaming and practices in accordance with Universal Design for Learning (UDL). A legal opinion was provided by Katie Ridge, Barrister at Law and academic in the National College of Ireland, and this advice has informed the development of these guidelines.

Stage 3: Inclusive Learning and Reasonable Accommodations Guidelines - Pilot Stage.

The purpose of the pilot stage was to test the Reasonable Accommodation guidelines provided in Part 2 of this report. A field trial was conducted during the first term of the academic year 2016-2017. Training was provided to Disability Service staff from the following HEIs; Dublin Institute of Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Tralee, Maynooth University, National University of Ireland Galway, Trinity College Dublin, and University College Cork. Pilot participants submitted feedback on a monthly basis and identified any difficulties encountered in implementing the guidelines. Detailed responses were received from each HEI that engaged in the pilot and their feedback was incorporated into the final version of the guidelines.

Stage 4: Development and adoption of AHEAD & DAWN Series on Inclusive Education & Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education.

Based on findings from the research and feedback from the pilot stage, the Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines were amended, and the final version was presented to the DAWN meeting in February 2017 for agreement and implementation.

A document outlining the role of the Disability Service in HEIs, a position paper and a bank of online resources were also developed to assist the higher education sector to understand how Disability Services not only provide Reasonable Accommodations but also have an additional responsibility to assist in the development of inclusive teaching and learning practices. The AHEAD & DAWN Series on Inclusive Education & Reasonable Accommodations for Student with Disabilities in Higher Education was finalised at this stage.
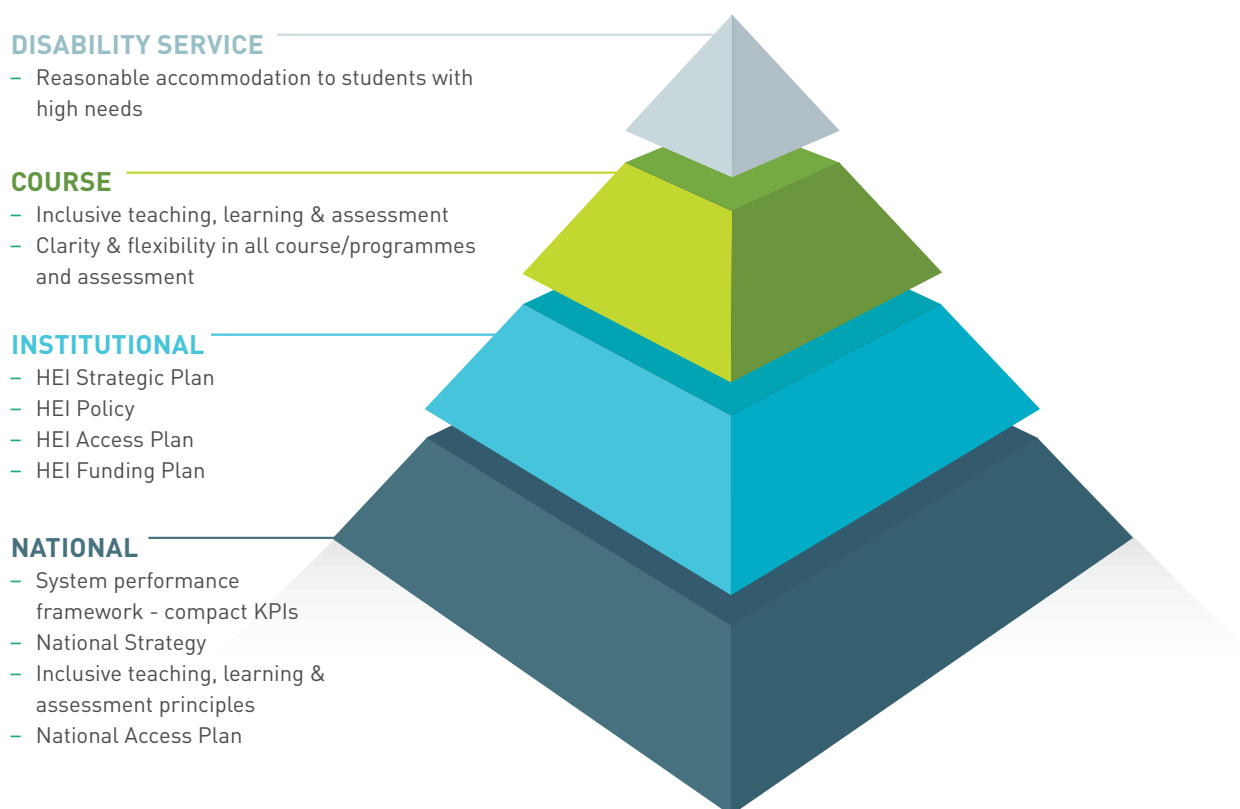
Stage 5: Implementation and dissemination of Inclusive Learning and Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines

The series on Inclusive Education & Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education was accepted by DAWN and AHEAD at the DAWN meeting in June 2017 and work began gathering and updating the extensive resources contained in the appendix of this document. A national dissemination and implementation plan was agreed to explain the various steps that HEIs should take to implement inclusive learning practices and national standards for the provision of Reasonable Accommodations.

DAWN proposes a model of inclusive practice (Figure 2) to illustrate how HEIs should organise and deliver support to students with disabilities.

DISABILITY SERVICE
– Reasonable accommodation to students with high needs

COURSE
– Inclusive teaching, learning & assessment
– Clarity & flexibility in all course/programmes and assessment

INSTITUTIONAL
– HEI Strategic Plan
– HEI Policy
– HEI Access Plan
– HEI Funding Plan

NATIONAL
– System performance framework - compact KPIs
– National Strategy
– Inclusive teaching, learning & assessment principles
– National Access Plan

Figure 2: Proposed model of inclusive practice in Irish Higher Education.

This model allows for a "whole-of-HEI" approach, as outlined in the National Access Plan 2015-19, to ensure the prioritisation of under-represented groups across all faculties (HEA, 2015b). Working at four distinct levels, its purpose is to ensure that all stakeholders are identified and the key areas that they need to work upon are outlined.

National Level – Future outcomes would suggest a significant increase in students with disabilities requiring inclusive learning strategies and Reasonable Accommodations, juxtaposed with a significant decrease in the financial wherewithal to do so. As the HEA have committed to the mainstreaming of access policies and an assessment of the impact of current initiatives (including funding) to support equity of access to higher education it seems timely to also examine the purpose and efficacy of Inclusive Learning and the provision of Reasonable Accommodations and to consider how these might function within the future landscape of higher education. It is hoped that the HEA will act as an influencer to ensure changes lead to a more inclusive learning environment through the System Performance Framework and other funding measures within the HEA.

Institutional level -The benefits for HEIs in developing and embedding a comprehensive approach to inclusive practice are significant, making a long and lasting difference to opportunities for all students including those with disabilities. There is a need for strong, effective, and committed leadership as the pace of progress will be determined by the level of engagement and leadership provided by senior teams. They must drive and deliver change to remove the many and varied barriers still encountered by students with disabilities.

Course level – It is inequitable and unsustainable to only support students through provision of specialist supports that sit outside mainstream provision. The HEA emphasises the need to implement a more holistic approach in the National Access Plan and specifically states that 'Equity of access policies should be mainstreamed into the everyday life of higher education institutions to enhance the quality of the learning experience and progression outcomes for all students'. (HEA, 2015b)

The challenge of designing educational environments that are accessible to all students and in which all students can participate equally, is a complex one. This requires the design of curricula, teaching practices, assessment methods, services and physical environments that can accommodate the range of needs within a diverse student body. A diverse student body leads to diverse student teaching, learning, and assessment requirements. Implementing inclusive practices should represent the first line of accessibility rather than the application of specialist supports and Reasonable Accommodations designed to overcome barriers found within traditional teaching and learning methodologies.

Disability Service level - The role of Disability Service clearly sits in the provision of Reasonable Accommodations to students with disabilities who seek support whilst participating in higher education. The pyramid approach shows clearly that the Disability Service should work at the apex providing specialist supports to the few students who require them. The majority of students should be able to manage their disability in the educational environment, provided inclusive practices are implemented. This will enhance their educational experience.

Disability Service staff have a role in promoting inclusive practices, and should provide guidance on what these are. The provision of Reasonable Accommodations is based upon a Needs Assessment process where the needs of the individual are considered. It is essential that guidelines adhere to this principle, and recognise the individuality of Reasonable Accommodations.

Part 2 of this report sets out guidelines for the implementation of inclusive learning practices and providing Reasonable Accommodations to students with disabilities in higher education.

DISABILITY SERVICE

COURSE

INSTITUTIONAL

NATIONAL
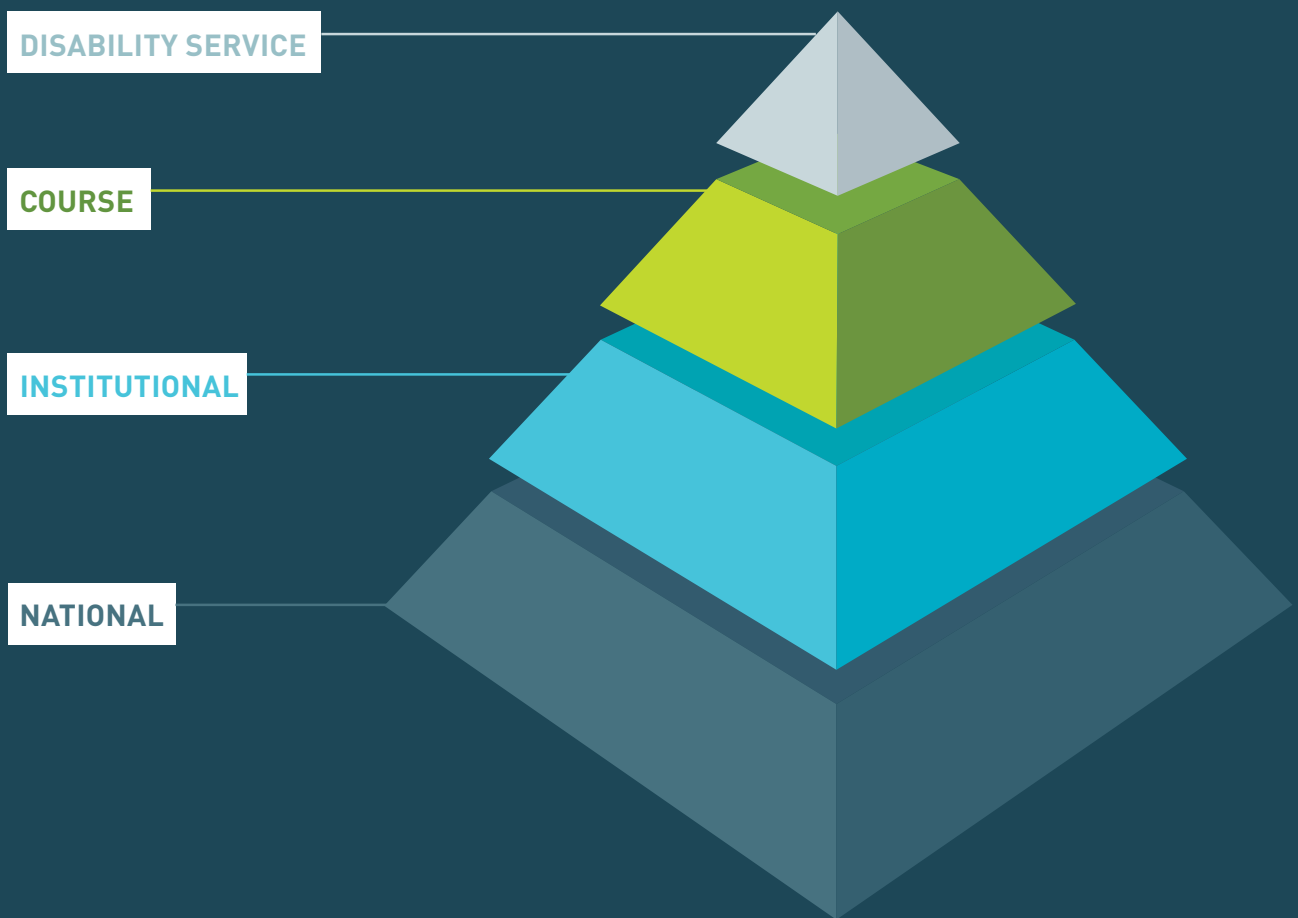
Figure 3: Proposed model of inclusive practice in Irish Higher Education.

Part 2: Implementing Inclusive Learning Practices and providing Reasonable Accommodations

Introduction

This section of the report provides information relating to the four levels associated with the delivery of an inclusive learning environment: National, Institutional, Course, and Disability Service.

Implementation at National Level: Higher Education Authority
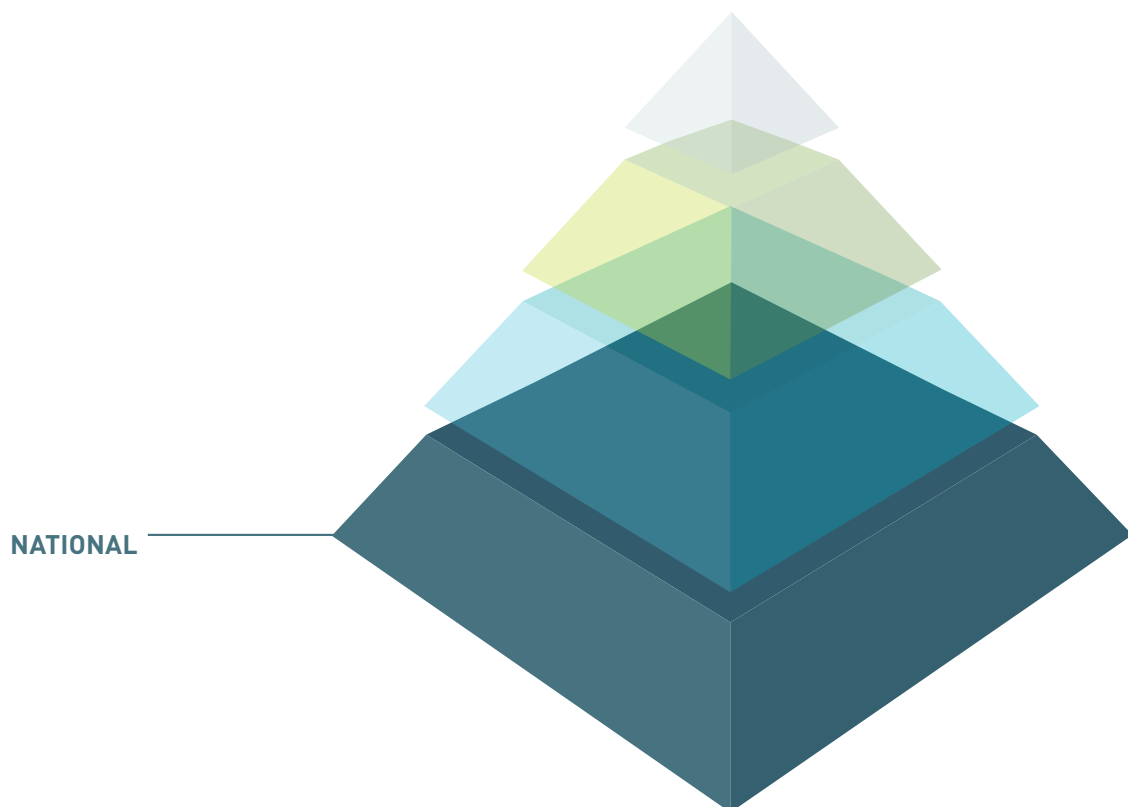
NATIONAL

National Strategy Influencing Inclusive Practice in Higher Education Institutions.

National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 (HEA, 2015b):

Goal 1: To mainstream the delivery of equity of access in the HEIs. Objectives and actions include:

1.1 - To embed whole of HEI approaches to institutional access strategies so that access for under-represented groups is prioritised across all faculties.

1.2 - To address issues that may arise for students from the target groups within mainstream supports and services.

Targets for increased participation: 2015-2019:

➲ Students with disabilities as a percentage of all new entrants to higher education:

  ✸ Current: 6%

  ✸ Target: 8%

➲ Targets have also been set to increase the participation of other under-represented groups:

  ✸ Entrants from socio-economic groups that have low participation rates in higher education.

  ✸ First time, mature student entrants.

  ✸ Part-time/flexible learners.

  ✸ Further education award holders.

  ✸ Irish Travellers.

The development of inclusive practices will benefit all under-represented groups participating in higher education.

The HEA requires each HEI to have a strategy in place for equity of access to higher education and requires that they show the steps they are taking towards the national priority for equity of access. They must also demonstrate how they are contributing to the goals, objectives, and targets outlined in the National Access Plan. (HEA, 2015b)

An increasingly diverse student population and the increasing demands for access to higher education will increase the necessity for HEIs to deliver cost effective strategies to ensure they deliver on the targets outlined above. Through an inclusive approach to curriculum development and delivery, HEIs can provide an efficient and effective method of support to the greatest number of students and can use this to evidence the HEI's commitment to equity of access.

Including inclusive practice as the norm in a HEI also provides flexibility in its approach, as it works across taught courses, e-learning and research. Delivering curricula that has been designed to support the broadest range of students will improve outcomes and enhance institutional reputation.

Recommendation

The HEA should provide support for an inclusive/ mainstreamed approach to widening participation and improved student success, through a series of programmes, associated research, publications, and events.

Higher Education System Performance Framework Influencing Inclusive Practice in Higher Education.

Each HEI has a performance-based compact with the HEA with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) reflecting their contribution to the overall system objectives for higher education in Ireland (HEA, 2014b).

Key system objectives for 2014-16 include:

➲ To promote access for disadvantaged groups and to put in place coherent pathways from second-level education, from further education and other non-traditional entry routes.

➲ To promote excellence in teaching and learning to underpin a high quality student experience.

➲ To reform practices and restructure the system for quality and diversity (HEA, 2014b)

The HEA engages with institutions on their performance in relation to these objectives through both strategic dialogue and performance funding. The HEA have classified institutional performance as follows clearly demonstrating the importance for HEIs in meeting the system objectives:

➲ Category 1 comprises HEIs which, overall, have performed well against their objectives and have demonstrated excellence in some mission-critical domains.

➲ Category 2 comprises HEIs whose performance against their objectives is satisfactory overall, with some areas of strong performance. The institution's attention, however, is drawn to issues(s) that need to be addressed to ensure release of performance funding in future cycles.

➲ Category 3 comprises HEIs whose performance is inadequate to justify drawing down of conditional funding and who must submit a revised plan if they are to "win back" the withheld funding (HEA, 2015a).

Recommendation:

Inclusive learning and mainstream practices should underpin the key objectives of the Higher Education System Performance Framework (HEA, 2014b) to promote access for disadvantaged groups and to promote excellence in teaching and learning and all HEIs should show evidence of this in their institutional reporting.

Implementation at Institutional Level

INSTITUTIONAL
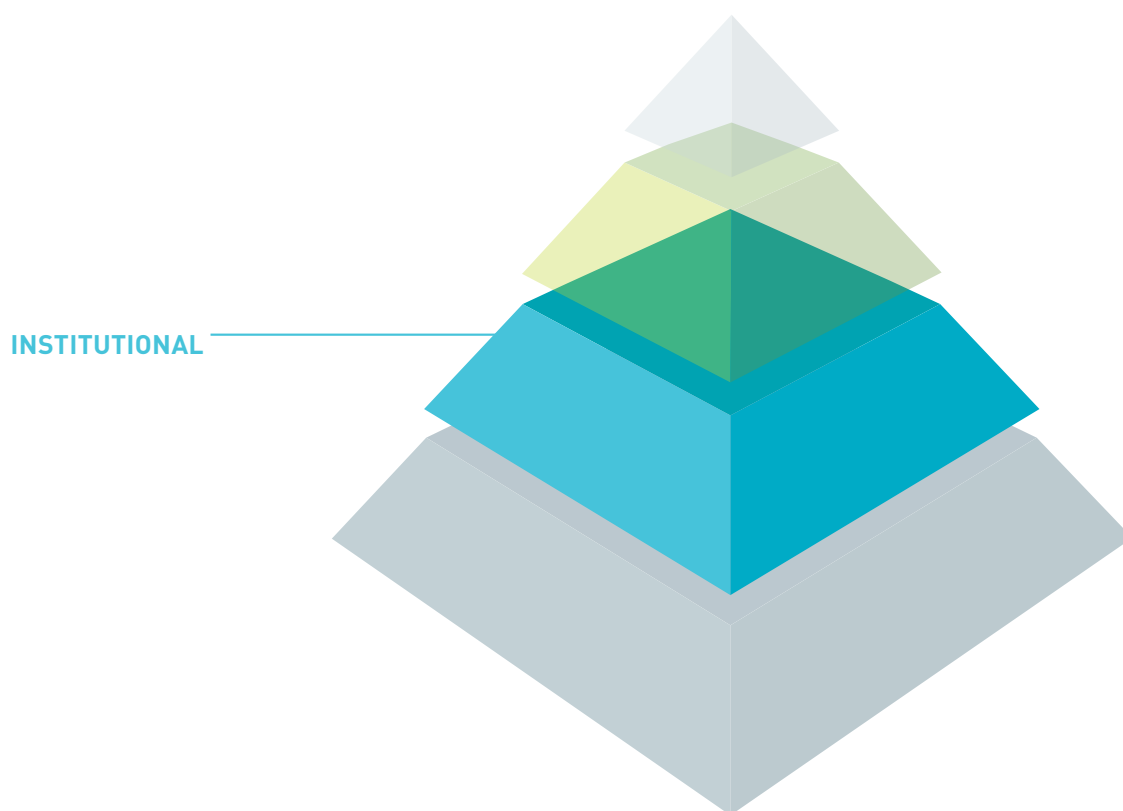
HEI Policies

Policies provide a framework for consistency and fairness throughout HEIs. Policies are linked to the strategy of the HEI and show how the HEI commits to delivering on its strategic goals. HEIs have policies on many issues for example: Equality Policy, Accessible Information Policy, Dignity and Respect Policy.

HEIs may strengthen their commitment to a particular issue by having it formally approved as a policy. An example of this is where the HEI has a Teaching & Learning Strategy that has a clear statement or principle on inclusive teaching, learning and assessment that is then formally adopted by the HEI as a policy. By doing this, it is declaring its commitment to supporting students with disabilities and other under-represented groups and assigning responsibility for its implementation.

Policies provide information as to whom the policy applies, and the roles and responsibilities of the HEI and relevant stakeholders. It provides information on how non-compliance will be addressed, and how/who will monitor and review the policy. It contains information on where comments and queries will be addressed and to whom complaints may be raised. There is a need to have a specific policy for students with disabilities that clearly outlines supports and the provision of Reasonable Accommodations within the HEI. A Code of Practice has been drafted by DAWN (Appendix 4) for use as a template by all HEIs affiliated with DAWN (see Appendix 1 for a list of DAWN Members).

Recommendation:

The adoption of the Inclusive Learning principles in an HEI Teaching Strategy would ensure an inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment environment for all students.

Four dimensions in relation to developing and implementing inclusive learning need to be considered:

1. Institutional commitment to and management of inclusive learning practice;

2. Curriculum design and contents;

3. Pedagogy and curriculum delivery; and

4. Student assessment and feedback.

HEI Access Plan

The Education Act 1998 states that HEIs are required "to promote equality of access to and participation in education and to promote the means whereby students may benefit from education" (Education Act, 1998). The objective of this is to increase participation from under-represented groups, including those with disabilities, which can be evidenced through the institutions implementation of their access plan.

The following goal is stated in the current National Access Plan 2015-19:

> To assess the impact of current initiatives to support equity of access to higher education.

An objective under this goal is "...to review how the HEA's Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) supports an access infrastructure in each HEI" (HEA, 2015b) This will be implemented by considering the access infrastructure in each HEI (including the extent to which the access functions are reflected across the institution); and to determine if core funding is being applied appropriately to support an access infrastructure in HEIs.

The HEA is currently undertaking a review of the model for allocating recurrent grant funding to HEIs. A further objective and action was to commission an independent review of the FSD which will make recommendations for the future policy and operation of the fund. This review process is complete and a report was published in October 2017.

HEI access plans and strategies are required to be aligned with the policy and targets set out in the National Access Plan 2015-2019. Including equity of access as part of the HEI's overall strategy should ensure that an implementation plan with actions, responsibilities, and KPIs is in place.

Recommendation

HEI Access Plans & Service Delivery Plans (required by the Fund for Students with Disabilities) should show a clear strategy for the mainstreaming supports to ensure that a college wide approach is taken to fostering inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment methods.

Access Funding

HEI funding to support students with disabilities comes from a variety of sources including the HEI Core Grant and the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD).

The HEA provides a block grant to HEIs with internal budgeting for this funding determined by the HEIs themselves. This includes a core recurrent grant which is based on student numbers with additional funding provided for access performance. This involves an additional weighting of 33% on top of the normal student weighting to take account of the additional costs involved in recruiting and retaining students from under-represented backgrounds. The access allocation for students with disabilities is determined by the returns submitted through the Fund for Students with Disabilities rather than the Equal Access Survey which provides data for the other under-represented groups.

> Weighted Student Numbers x Core Grant Base Price Per Student x 1.333

This means that an additional 0.333 weighting is received for each student in the three categories qualifying for access funding. Mature New Entrants and Target Socio-Economic Group student numbers are collected via the Equal Access Survey filled out by students at the time they register in HEI. They are funded for the first two years of their degree only. For students with disabilities, the HEA takes student numbers from the returns submitted through the ESF-FSD, and then weights these students by a factor of 2.0.

> ### Recommendation
>
> Review of the core funding for access performance in the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) needs to take account of any changes to the Fund for Students with Disabilities and the data used to determine HEI allocations.

Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)

The HEA allocates funding to Further Education and Higher Education Institutions for the provision of services and supports to full-time students with disabilities. The FSD aims to ensure that students can participate fully in their academic programmes and are not disadvantaged by reason of a disability. Funding is allocated to the HEI, not to the student. The HEI has full discretion in decisions on the allocation of the Fund at a local level. Applications are made annually and the administration of this process is complex and time-consuming.

Overall, there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of students with disabilities supported by the FSD with the numbers being supported increasing by 27.3% (n=2,153) from 7,897 in 2012/13 to 10,050 in 2014/15. Irish HEIs account for more than 80% of all students supported by the fund each year, from 2012/14 to 2014/15 (85.5%, 84.2%, and 84.8% respectively). (HEA RGAM funding model)

Across the period 2012/13 to 2015/16 (to March 2016), €41,663,638 of funding has been allocated by the FSD, of this:

➲ 34 Irish Higher Education Institutions were allocated €30,624,080 (73.5% of allocation);

➲ in 2015/16 (to March) – 31 Irish HEIs were allocated €7.59m (73.3% of total allocated).

Overall the largest amount of expenditure has occurred for:

➲ Study Skills/learning support – This accounted for the largest proportion of expenditure each year under the Fund with 22.0% (€5.7m) of overall expenditure across the three academic years; and

➲ Personal Assistants – This accounted for the second largest proportion of expenditure each year under the Fund with 18.1% (€4.7m) of the overall expenditure across the three academic years.

A review of the FSD in 2016-2017 considered four main areas:

- Financial provision of the FSD

- HEA model and guidelines

- Student experience of the fund

- Educational institutions and the fund

The report of this review published in 2017 makes 14 recommendations, recommendation 1 being:

Establish an Implementation Group with a range of relevant and appropriate skills and experience to oversee the design, development and implementation of a new model for allocating

- The Implementation Group should agree with the sector the key principles for allocating FSD funding to underpin a new model including for example:

  - Transparency/Consistency/Simplified/Efficient and Effective/Needs Based (underpinned by needs assessment)

  - Maintain the individual nature of reasonable accommodations

  - Greater flexibility for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in how funding used to best support students

  - Greater ability to plan (early notification and greater certainty about level of funding)

  - A driver of service development, i.e. FSD should be progressive, supporting greater independence

  - Accountability (for HEA).

- The Implementation Group should consider the development of a funding model that takes account of the following:

- ❋ HE sector: adopting a block grant allocation approach – ideally on a multi-annual funding basis – taking into consideration:

- ❋ historical trends (e.g. numbers of students supported by FSD in the previous year or rolling average (by category of disability, by full-time (FT)/part-time (PT) (if support this));

- ❋ weighting by student needs (low, high) and by year (higher for first year (given that most retention issues arise then when needs being identified/emerging));

- ❋ FE sector: a separate allocation process though following similar principles as HE.

The implementation of recommendations in this report are likely to have a significant impact on the funds available to HEIs (HEA RGAM Review, 2017).

Recommendation

The Taskforce responsible for the design, development and implementation of a new model for allocating the Fund for Students with Disabilities should refer to this report on Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations to Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland for guidance on the changes required to allow for improved efficiencies in allocation of funding and mainstreaming of some disability activities in all HEIs.

In order to ensure that students with disabilities are appropriately supported, sufficient funding should be made available at an institutional level to support the disability infrastructure required to develop specialist disability supports, whilst mainstreaming some disability support activity across the HEI. Access performance funding via the core grant could be used to incentivise good practice in inclusive learning.

Physical Environment

Inclusive Approach

The Disability Act (2005) places a statutory obligation on all public bodies, including Higher Education Institutions, to ensure that buildings and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. An accessible environment is one where students can access, use, and understand the environment, to the greatest extent possible and as independently as possible, without the need for adaptations or specialised solutions. This includes, for example, ensuring that there are accessible routes, entrances, parking, toilets, and ramps; and appropriate signage, lighting, and acoustics.

Staff in the HEI should advise the appropriate services when they become aware that the environment is inaccessible to students with disabilities. Consideration should be given to the proximity of classes where a student will have difficulty moving between lectures due to the impact of a disability.

Students are encouraged to investigate the physical environment of the HEI they wish to attend in order to ascertain if there are any physical access issues that need to be addressed. Students should also ensure that they have access to a suitable mobility aid, if required.

A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP) is advisable for students with a physical, medical, or sensory disability, where mobility is likely to be affected when accessing the HEI environment. The need for a PEEP will be identified during the Needs Assessment process carried out by the Disability Service. PEEPs will be put in place in conjunction with the HEI Safety Office and personnel from relevant buildings.

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by Disability Service

Orientation and mobility training may be recommended to assist with safe navigation of the campus due to the impact of a student's disability. Mobility training involves orientation around the campus and focuses on locating administrative, teaching, and social venues, and practicing routes to and from buildings. Training may be provided by external organisations and may be facilitated by the HEI. The Disability Service, the student, and the mobility instructor should agree the areas of the campus to be prioritised, and the order in which they should be addressed. It may be appropriate to provide a mobility trainer as a short-term temporary accommodation, while the student is becoming familiar with the HEI environment.

Some students may require alternative equipment/ergonomic furniture (chair support, foot stool, height adjustable desk etc.) to help reduce the impact of a disability in the physical environment. This will only be provided if specifically required for academic purposes. Such Reasonable Accommodations will be facilitated where practicable and in consultation with other relevant departments (e.g. Campus Services, Health and Safety Office). It may be necessary for a health specialist to provide a recommendation on the furniture/ equipment required.

Case Study: Physical Environment – UCD Student Centre

What is the nature of the initiative?

The Student Centre is the new focus of social, creative and sporting activity in UCD. This project has won a number of prestigious architectural awards including the 2013 RIAI Universal Design Award.

Why was this practice developed?

The new Student Centre project was developed to meet the needs of the increasing number of students and their full range of activities. Due to the increase in student numbers, the expansion of the range of student activities and the reduction of available space in academic buildings, the original Student Centre had reached capacity.

How was this practice developed?

The UCD Societies Council, with the support of Sports Clubs and the Students' Union, led a referendum to increase the Student Levy in order to fund the development of a new Student Centre.

As both the clients and financial stakeholders of the project UCD students were involved in the design of the centre through an in depth consultation process. An independent accessibility audit was also undertaken to establish appropriate solutions for all users of the facility, both within the campus and the wider community.

Construction began in 2009 and the building was opened to the public in 2012.

What was the result/outcome of the initiative?

There is an emphasis on colour contrast throughout the building to aid navigation and blocks of contrasting colour have been used to indicate the beginning of steps and ramps. Clear signage is also used to assist all users to navigate the facility.

The Universal Design themes are also a feature of the sport and fitness areas. All users have access to the pool, through use of a pool hoist and a movable pool floor to raise the floor to deck level and adjust the water depth. The lights in the pool area were selected to avoid adverse effects for users with epilepsy and acoustic panels help to improve acoustics and audibility.

The UCD Student Centre is an extensive and exciting student facility which is accessible to all UCD Students and the wider community.

Academic Skills and Learning Support

Inclusive Approach

All students, including students with disabilities, need to develop key learning skills and strategies to support their academic progress. It is particularly important that students have access to support in first year to assist with the transition to higher education and to promote independent learning. This includes note taking strategies, study techniques, research skills, time management, critical thinking, academic writing, and proofreading and editing written work.

Such skills and strategies can be taught through mainstreamed workshops, modules, and online resources that are inclusive of the needs of diverse students. Educational technologies that build skills in these areas should be integrated into mainstreamed learning support programmes and should also, where possible, be made available on all HEI computers. Students with disabilities will be encouraged to avail of mainstreamed learning support during the Needs Assessment process.

Reasonable Accommodation Co-ordinated by Disability Service

While mainstreamed provision will support the vast majority of students, more specific supports may be required for individual students.   Individual or small group Learning Support may be coordinated by the Disability Service, where a student has additional disability related needs that cannot be met through mainstreamed provision. The emphasis is on enabling students to acquire key learning skills and strategies so they can complete their coursework and assignments independently. Students may be required to engage with Assistive Technology to help build skills in this area, and to encourage independent learning. Learning Support coordinated by the Disability Service is not subject-specific and does not assist with proofreading and editing written work.

Case Study: Academic Support - Peer Assisted Learning & Support — CIT

What is the nature of the initiative?

PALS is a project of the Strategic Student Engagement and Retention Initiative in CIT. PALS brings together students from different year groups to form one to one mentoring relationships with new first year students. PALS also provides weekly study sessions facilitated by PALS Study Leaders for new first year's department based.

Why was this practice developed?

PALS was developed to provide support and guidance both socially and academically to all first year students. PALS Support (peer mentoring) helps first year students to successfully transition to Higher Education. PALS Support (peer mentoring) for ERASMUS students was developed as an opportunity for visiting students to engage culturally and socially with their Irish class peers.

PALS peer mentoring support allows students to have a sense of inclusion from the beginning leading to positive student experiences.

PALS (peer assisted learning) study sessions allow students to engage academically with their peers regardless of personal learning abilities. First year students meet once a week with senior experienced students to discuss and study course material covered in specific modules.

How was this practice developed?

PALS was first developed as a peer mentoring support project and later with a peer assisted learning strand.

PALS Support (peer mentoring) is now available across CIT and the outlying campuses of CCAD and NMCI.

PALS Study began in two schools in CIT the School of Business and the School of Mechanical, Electrical and Processing Engineering. PALS Study has now expanded into the Department of Fine Art & Applied Art, School of Science and Informatics. PALS has developed through engagement and collaboration with both staff and students within all the above departments and schools.

What was the result/outcome of the initiative?

The outcome and results for the PALS Project albeit it is still in its infancy has been very positive to date for both students and staff. In relation to the PALS Support students have felt it enabled them to concentrate on their course and study rather than being always worried on how they could fit in or worried about being a loner.

The PALS Support also provides the new first years with a safe and non-threatening environment where new first years can ask questions without being afraid or feeling silly.

'The programme gave me the feeling that something is organized for me and that I can ask my PALS mentor if I have any questions. Indeed, I had some questions and my mentor Emily could answer it which was very helpful for me" (ERASMUS STUDENT)

PALS Study has shown that all students regardless of academic background can achieve and feel equal to their peers. PALS Study is all inclusive and provides students with increased academic confidence, communication as well as collaborative problem solving and interpersonal skills.

"I think PALS is very beneficial for first years. As a student with a disability I have used the PALS Study Sessions that are running in my course. I am now training to be a PALS Study Leader and hope to give back to first years the support that I also received at PALS" (Business Student)

PALS Study and PALS Support offers a five credit module for all the Leaders this has resulted in students having the opportunity to add to and enhance their overall transcript.

Technology

Inclusive Approach

All students in 3rd level education require access to a computer/device to participate effectively in their course of study. HEIs recognise that this may not be affordable for all students and therefore computer labs and/or laptop loans are available for student use. Educational technology can help build and improve key academic skills such as note taking, production of written work, reading, planning and organising effectively. They can also help to alleviate memory and concentration difficulties. Technology promotes independence and helps all students, including students with disabilities; acquire key skills that are transferable to other educational settings and the workplace.

Appropriate educational technology and training should be available to all students and suitable programmes should be made available on all computers accessed by students on campus. HEIs are encouraged to provide Assistive Technology (AT) information and recommendations on their websites for the use of students and other HEIs who may benefit from this information.

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by Disability Service

Assistive Technology (AT) solutions to help reduce the impact of a disability will be considered as part of the Needs Assessment process. AT is prioritised as this is an enabling accommodation that promotes independence. Where AT has been identified as a Reasonable Accommodation, the student must complete the training that is provided to become proficient in the use of that technology. HEIs will usually favour low or no-cost AT solutions before purchasing software or equipment.

For example, students requiring AT to assist with note taking may initially be encouraged to try a free piece of software in order to determine if it meets their academic requirements. Software which incurs a financial cost will usually be

considered only after a low or no-cost solution has been trialled and has failed to overcome the student's difficulty. Ideally AT software should be embedded on all computers across the college campus. When this is not possible, a copy may be installed on the student's personal computer/device. In cases where the student does not have a suitable computer/device the Disability Service may be in a position to lend them one.

Student Services

Inclusive Approach

HEIs provide a range of student services such as counselling, student healthcare, pastoral support, financial assistance, respite facilities, learning support and other student support services. The Disability Service may refer students to the appropriate service to meet their needs or provide guidance on how the student can access a service.

Some HEIs have Student Advisers who promote the social, academic, and personal development of students and are available to meet and advise students. Members of teaching staff, sometimes known as academic tutors or mentors, may also be assigned to assist with problems or difficulties connected to the student's course of study. Peer mentoring may also be available. Most Student Unions employ Welfare and Education Officers who provide advice to students on well-being, accommodation, finances, and academic matters.

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by Disability Service

Where available, specialist individual support may be provided to students who experience significant additional challenges in adapting to the HEI environment. Specialist support is funded by the Fund for Students with a Disability to ensure that students have the support needed to assist them to engage in all aspects of college life. Students who typically avail of this support include students on the Autistic Spectrum, students with Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder, and students with significant mental health conditions.

Support is tailored to the individual and assists students to develop strategies for managing challenges that they may experience in the college environment. For example, students may require help with social skills, building self-advocacy skills, or managing the academic impact of their disability (i.e. attendance, procrastination,

planning and organising). The Disability Service may liaise with a range of different specialists, such as Psychologists or Occupational Therapists, to provide support of this nature.

Case Study: Student Services – Occupational Therapy Support Trinity College Dublin

Occupational Therapy Support (The Unilink Approach)

What is the nature of the initiative?

The Occupational Therapy Support provided within the Disability Service in Trinity is a collaboration with the Discipline Occupational Therapy within TCD.   The on-going and intensive occupation-based support is focused upon supporting those students with the highest need, as identified by the impact of the disability upon their person, occupation and environmental needs.

Why was this practice developed?

The occupational therapy approach was developed in response to the ever increasing number of students registering with the Disability Service, whose occupational needs were diverse and complex.   In particular, these students were registering with a diagnosis of a mental health difficulty, autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or developmental coordination disorder and in many cases with multiple disabilities.

The practice of delivering occupational therapy within a higher education system is a relatively new area of practice in Ireland. Occupational therapists with their knowledge and skills analysing activities and understanding complex needs are well qualified to provide individualised, tailored programmes to enable students with disabilities to develop the strategies to self-manage their college life.

How was this practice developed?

The occupational therapy process we use is tailored to each individual student based on their occupational need, interests and values. The primary focus with the student is upon facilitating them to become experts in their management of student life. The student identifies the daily occupations that are important to him / her and through the collaborative approach with the Occupational Therapist, the student has the opportunity to develop self-management strategies and skills.

Fidelity to the defined model is key in providing a quality, evidence-based approach, which can be evaluated and audited. All students who engage in the approach are supported through a six step process to support and enable the students' engagement and participation in the academic and non-academic activities associated with their student role. The six steps are as follows: 1) Referral, 2) Assessment, 3) Collaborative Planning, 4) Goal setting and prioritisation, 5) Intervention 6) Evaluation. Although clearly defined, the process is designed to fit the student, rather than the student fitting the process.

What was the result/outcome of the initiative?

The occupational therapy approach has constantly evolved over the 12 years since it was established. Assessment and Intervention tools have been developed, refined and researched to provide a suite of occupation focused approaches to enable students to engage in all aspects of their student role; academic; social; professional and personal. Outside of the defined OT approaches, the occupational therapists bring their expertise to other Disability Service supports and activities such as orientation programmes, tailoring of exam accommodations, career-development, and professional placement support.

Since its establishment of occupational therapy support within the Trinity Disability Service in in 2004, the number of students engaging with the occupational therapists has grown from 30 to over 550 students today.

Implementation at Course Level

COURSE
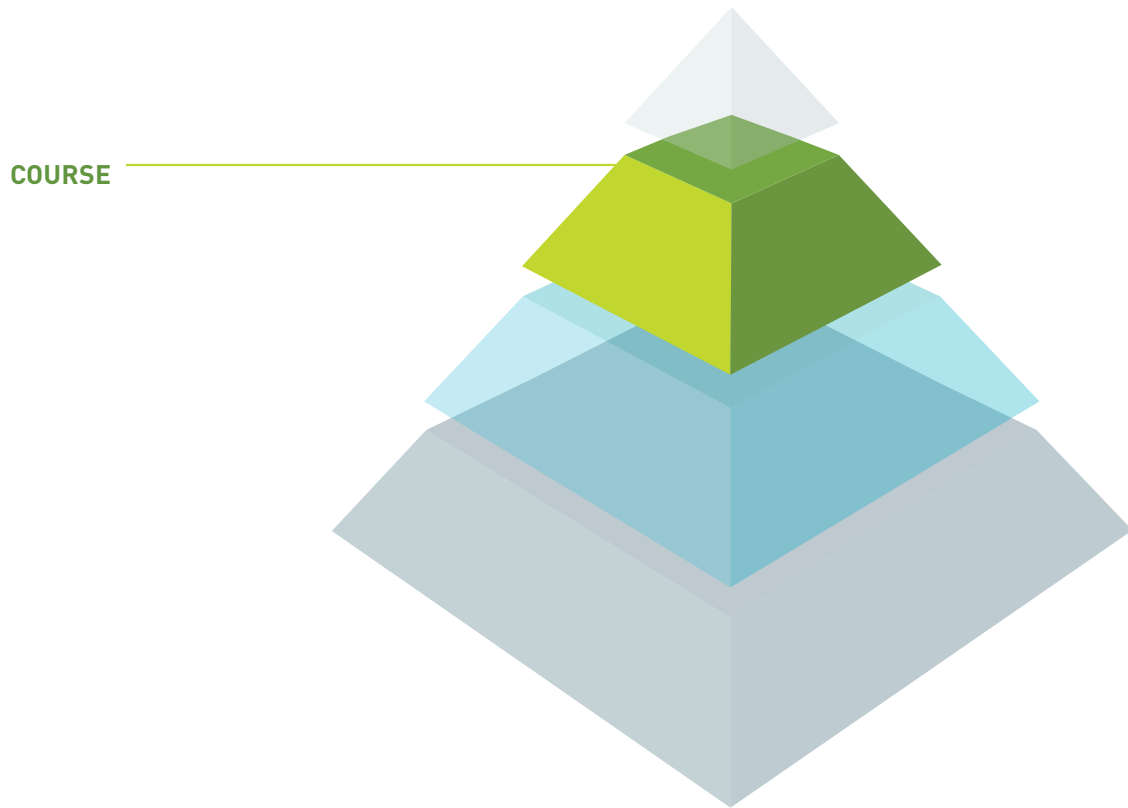
Inclusive Approach to Teaching & Learning

Students enter higher education from diverse backgrounds bringing with them diverse learning preferences and life experiences. Inclusive teaching and learning is designed for all students regardless of their previous experience, background, or disability. The AHEAD/HEA Charter for Inclusive Teaching and Learning (AHEAD, 2009) recommends the following in relation to teaching, learning, and assessment.

Teaching

Teaching is implemented in a manner that allows all students to fully take part in all activities and minimises the need for additional adjustments. Staff use information and communication technologies to meet the learning needs of students.

At a minimum:

➲ | the institution provides students with access to course materials including online before the lecture where possible so students can fully engage with the lecture.

➲ | Staff use creative and innovative teaching methods and integrate where required the principles of inclusive/universal design.

➲ | Learning outcomes and assessment approaches are clearly stated for all student courses/programmes.

➲ | All academic staff teach in accessible formats. This may require some professional developments in consultation with learning support and disability support services.

➲ | The institution provides training and support to staff to further develop expertise in teaching and learning.

Learning

Active learning is an integral part of all course provision. Standards of learning are improved through formative assessment and continuous feedback on performance. The curriculum should be designed and delivered in a manner that respects that everyone learns in different ways and that learning outcomes can be achieved in many ways.

At a minimum:

- ➲ | Study skills are a clearly articulated part of the curriculum for all students including students with disabilities and are expressed in course/programme as learning outcomes.

- ➲ | Students and staff make use of timely, constructive, and relevant feedback in the learning process given that it is a key component of student achievement.

- ➲ | Students for their part engage as partners in the learning process.

Assessment and Examinations

Assessment and examinations are student-centred, flexible, transparent, and fair. The assessment methodologies match the stated learning outcomes.

At a minimum:

- ➲ | The institution considers the most appropriate and balanced methods to assess learning outcomes.

- ➲ | When assessing student learning whether through continuous assessment or end of year assessment, a range of approaches where practical, are offered.

- ➲ | The institution offers a choice of assessment, thus reducing the need for Reasonable Accommodations. (This does not exclude Reasonable Accommodations identified in a Needs Assessment).

- ➲ | The institution provides clear information to students on the assessment methodologies used and the marking schemes employed.

- ➲ | The institution provides students with timely information on when and how they will be assessed, and in an accessible format. This also provides for any additional accommodations to be put in place.

Access to Course Materials

Inclusive Approach

Course materials, such as reading lists, lecture notes and any handouts that are made available in class, should be provided in an accessible electronic format and in advance of lectures. Students can reformat these materials into the format appropriate for their needs, for example, by enlarging font size or converting to audio versions. Reading lists should be provided well in advance to facilitate early reading and to allow sufficient time for conversion into alternative formats. Reading lists should be prioritised to indicate the most important books on the list and to direct students to key points in their readings.

Reading materials and the facilities and services in the Library should also be accessible to students with disabilities.   This might involve, for example, ensuring books are available in accessible formats and that assistance is available to help students retrieve books from shelves.

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by the Disability Service

Students are expected to reformat their materials by availing of technology and training that is available in the HEI. Where materials are not available in an accessible format or cannot be reformatted by the student, the HEI should reformat these materials upon request for students. Reasonable notice is required and an alternative formatting request form must be completed and submitted by the student to the designated service (see Appendix 7 for Alternative Format Request Form). Students may be provided with assistance with printing costs where there is a need to print or photocopy more materials than other students due to the impact of a disability.

Access to Lecture Notes

Inclusive Approach

Effective note taking is a skill that all students are expected to acquire. Good note taking reduces the risk of plagiarism and assists students to engage with the course content effectively. There are a variety of mainstreamed supports – learning support programmes and technology solutions that can help students develop their note taking skills.

However, even with support many students find it difficult to take notes in lectures and would benefit from access to notes in advance of the lecture or a recording of the lecture. This is particularly important for students who may be unable to take sufficient notes due to the impact of a disability. Ideally, the HEI should, where appropriate, facilitate the recording of lectures and make these available to all students. Where lecturers write on the board, students should either be permitted to take an image of the board or an image could be made available online to the entire class by the lecturer. Students using recording devices will be required to sign a Lecture Recording Agreement (see Appendix 8) confirming that recordings are made for personal use and will not be shared with other students or in the public domain. Where a recording of a lecture is not permitted, it may be necessary for the lecturer to provide a suitable alternative (i.e. a transcript of the lecture).

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by the Disability Service

The Needs Assessment process explores all appropriate solutions to assist with note taking difficulties and students are expected to engage with the Reasonable Accommodations that are identified through this process. Technology solutions are explored in the first instance. It is the student's responsibility to complete the training that is provided and to become proficient in the use of that technology. A note taker may be provided in the absence of a technological solution and where the student is unable to handwrite or type notes due to the impact of a disability.

Information on the role of the Educational Support Worker (ESW) note taker is outlined in Appendix 12.

Case Study: Access to lecture notes – Panopto - University College Cork

What is the nature of the initiative?

To encourage academic staff to use Lecture Capture software Panopto to record their lectures, they can choose to record either audio or video. Ideally this recording is available to all students in the class however if this is not possible then it is made available to students registered with the DSS.

Why was this practice developed?

The Disability Support Service was anxious to promote Lecture Capture in lectures to

◊ Promote greater independence for students with disabilities in lectures.

◊ Encourage all academic staff to embrace this support for all UCC students.

◊ Phase out the use of notetakers that are currently in place for a minority of students.

◊ Begin to withdraw the use of individual recording devices being used by students.

Promoting the use of Panopto will mainstream notetaking support for students with disabilities.

How was this practice developed?

The DSS linked with Audio Visual and Media Services in March 2014 to explore collaboration in rolling out Panopto for some lectures in 2014/15.

In May of 2014

◊   a site license was purchased for Panopto, the DSS and a number of other Departments contributed to the cost of the License.

◊   UCC staff identified specific lecture venues where cameras would be installed.

◊   DSS staff began to link with Academic staff to request they recorded lectures in 14/15.

◊   Access to the recordings only for students registered with the DSS.

In May 2015

◊   Additional venues were identified for cameras installation.

The DSS linked with the VP for Teaching & Learning and he endorsed lecture and encouraged academic staff to adopt it in their lectures.

What was the result/outcome of the initiative?

In the past two years access to lecture capture in UCC has resulted in

◊   The number of students availing of notetaking support has increased but the cost of this support has reduced.

◊   Initially the focus of this support was SPLD students but we have now rolled it out for all students registered with the DSS including students that are Vision Impaired and Hearing Impaired.

◊   Academic staff who originally embraced the technology for students registered with the DSS only are now aware of the benefits for all students and have made the recordings available to all students.

The Academic staff using Lecture Capture has grown every year and we would expect to see similar growth in future years.

Subject Specific Support/Academic Tutor

Inclusive Approach

Making lecture notes and learning materials available online, providing an overview and summary of lectures, directing students to important texts to read, and providing guidelines on areas for revision will help students come up to speed on the areas they have missed. Students are expected to engage with mainstream academic supports e.g. the Maths Support Centre, as early as possible if they are struggling with particular aspects of their course. Students are expected to proactively engage with their academic departments as early as possible if they are struggling with their academic work or if they have missed a significant amount of time due to the impact of a disability.

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by Disability Service

The provision of subject specific support or an Academic Tutor is coordinated by the Disability Service in consultation with the relevant Academic Department (see Appendix 12 for information on the role of the ESW Subject Specific Support/ Academic Tutor). When a student has missed a substantial amount of time due to the impact of a disability a review of their situation may be required. Subject specific support may be provided where a student has been absent for a period of time due to the impact of a disability (e.g. short-term stay in hospital) or in very exceptional circumstances where a student cannot fully benefit from a lecture due to the impact of a disability (e.g. where a Deaf student is missing out on parts of a lecture due to gaps in the translation from ISL). It is only provided after the student has first discussed their difficulties with the relevant lecturer (see Appendix 9 Procedure for requesting ESW Subject Specific Support/Academic Tutor). In most cases clarification from the lecturer and access to the lecture notes and/or recordings of the lecture will be sufficient. Subject specific support is delivered on a one-to-one basis and involves recapping of material covered in lectures. Provision of this support is subject to the availability of a suitably qualified tutor. Subject specific support may not be an appropriate or even an effective Reasonable Accommodation when a student has missed a substantial amount of class time.

Managing Deadlines and flexibility with attendance

Inclusive Approach to supporting all students

Providing assignment topics early and clear instructions on what is expected will help students when prioritising their workload and preparing for assignments. Lecturers should, where possible, consult with each other on deadlines to ensure an even and manageable workload for students. This may not be possible if students come from diverse programmes with many modules and some flexibility may be required. Students are encouraged to engage with mainstreamed academic supports that are available to ensure they structure and pace their work appropriately to meet the required deadlines.

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by Academic Department

During the Needs Assessment process the Disability Service may identify that an appropriate Reasonable Accommodation is the provision of flexible deadlines due to the impact of a student's disability. Where this is the case, it should not be necessary for the student to provide additional medical documentation for each occurrence. Where this Reasonable Accommodation has been identified as part of the Needs Assessment process, the Academic Department does not have the right to refuse an extension.

Attendance at lectures, tutorials, labs and other teaching and learning activities is a requirement for all students as per HEI regulations. However, where a student is unable to attend due to the impact of their disability, for example, students with mental health difficulties who are unable to participate in small group tutorials for a period of time, they should not be penalised or be required to provide additional medical documentation for non-attendance. This Reasonable Accommodation is a timed intervention intended to support student retention and allow the student to seek support for their difficulty while still engaging with their academic studies. However, students will be expected to engage with appropriate supports in order for them to participate fully in their HEI activities.

Most HEIs have non-attendance guidelines and rules in place and an Extenuating Circumstances Policy. Disability Service staff should review all non-attendance procedures and inform the HEI of the need for flexibility of attendance for a small group of students when requested via the needs assessment process in the HEI. Policy and procedural changes may be required to ensure this happens in practice.

Choice of Assessment Method

Inclusive Approach

Flexibility in assessment allows students to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple ways. This is a more inclusive approach to assessment as it acknowledges that students learn and express their knowledge differently. It is good practice to have a range of assessment methods as this provides more opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and achieve the learning outcomes.

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by Academic Department

Where an alternative assessment is deemed to be a Reasonable Accommodation, such as an alternative to group work or presentations, the student and/or the Disability Service must discuss this directly with the relevant lecturer. This accommodation must be approved by the Academic Department. The Academic Department may liaise with the Disability Service on the appropriateness of an alternative to group work or presentations due to the impact of a student's disability. An alternative assessment may be provided pending the development of the skills required to participate in such activities (DAWN, 2012).

Implementation at Disability Service Level
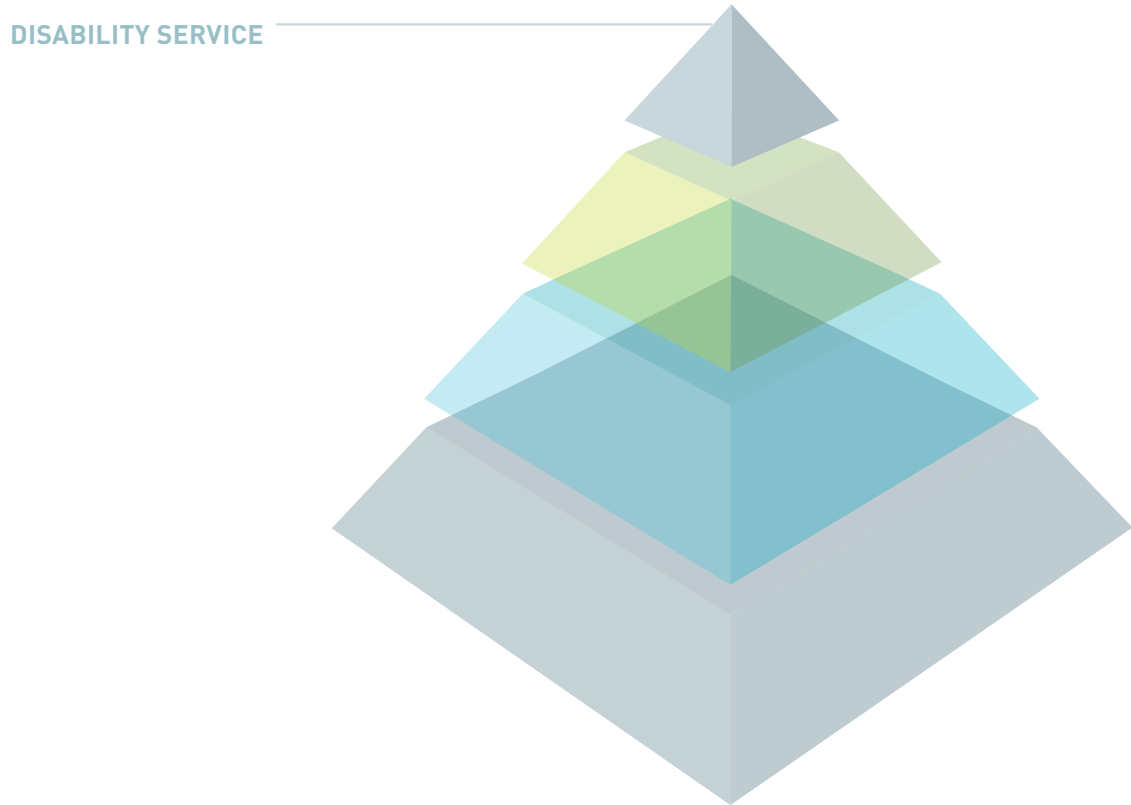
Defining disability supports in HEIs

There are a range of supports available for students with disabilities in HEIs. To access these supports students are expected to submit evidence of their disability (see Appendix 5 for DAWN Evidence of Disability Form). The evidence of disability provided is used to assess the impact of the disability and ensure the student receives appropriate support.

Support for students with short term or temporary disability

For students who experience a short term or temporary disability, such as a broken leg, there are other student services available for example: Student Health, Student Counselling, and temporary exam accommodations.

General Disability Support

Students who are unable to provide documentary evidence from the specialist specified on the DAWN Evidence of Disability Form (Appendix 5) can avail of a general level of disability support (e.g. Exam Accommodations, Academic supports, advice on Assistive Technology and access to a disability advisor) by providing evidence of a disability from a General Practitioner or other health professional e.g. Psychologist. Students with a Specific Learning Difficulty, who do not have a full report from an Educational Psychologist, may present evidence of a history of a specific learning difficulty or receiving educational supports e.g. as part of the DARE Educational Impact Statement or State Examinations Commission letter regarding RACE (Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations) accommodations.

Additional Disability Supports

Students requesting additional disability supports, such as Assistive Technology or one-to-one learning support must attend a Needs Assessment meeting with a Disability Officer in their HEI. They will be required to provide the disability documentation as outlined in the DAWN Evidence of Disability Form (see Appendix 5). This specific documentation is required in order for the HEI to make an application to the Fund for Students with Disabilities to cover the costs of the supports provided.

Needs Assessment process

Students can register with the Disability Service upon entering the HEI or at any point during their education. Individual needs assessments determine the level of support that students require. The following areas are addressed during the Needs Assessment process:

1. Nature of disability or condition, to include: impact on education, severity, hospital admissions etc.;

2. Treatment: any medication they are taking, outpatients' appointments, such as physiotherapy;

3. Previous support: what arrangements were made at secondary school, if any;

4. Current difficulties: what difficulties does the student anticipate they may have with their course;

5. Access to equipment and IT facilities;

6. Appropriate academic and disability support.

A needs assessment report is generated following the Needs Assessment. The information in this report is passed on to the relevant staff in the HEI. Students will be provided with the relevant supports they require and some of these will be listed in the report (See Appendix 6 for a Needs Assessment checklist).

Disability Services should ensure that students fully understand how they can avail of Reasonable Accommodations. The Student Guide to Disability Support (Appendix 13) will assist HEIs to develop communication plans for students on the needs assessment process and supports.

Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines

Examination accommodations

Examination accommodations are determined by the impact of a disability on the student's ability to complete timed exams. DAWN developed 'The Policy, Guidelines and Procedures for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities' in 2012. The purpose of this document is to support Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in developing policies and procedures that ensure students with disabilities are treated fairly and equitably in the examination process, thereby allowing them to compete on an equal footing with their peers and to demonstrate their true knowledge and competency.

Academic Personal Assistant (PA)

An academic PA may be provided when a student requires assistance with mobility around the campus, educational or physical tasks (i.e. photocopying, note taking, carrying personal belongings) and some personal care needs that the student cannot complete independently. The Disability Service will, where possible, work with the student to develop strategies and skills to reduce reliance on a PA and promote independence. Information on the role of the ESW Academic PA is outlined in Appendix 12.

Irish Sign Language Interpretation

Inclusive Approach

Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpretation is provided as a means of communication for Deaf students who are users of ISL. Translation is only provided from English into ISL and vice versa. ISL interpretation provides access to the teaching and learning environment for Deaf students. Academic staff should ensure that ISL interpreters receive a copy of any handouts or materials in advance of the lecture, as some preparation may be required to ensure the interpretation is clear. A glossary of key terms should also be provided so that the interpreter and student can agree signs for unfamiliar/technical terms. Information on the role of the ISL Interpreter is outlined in Appendix 12. Where ISL interpretation is not available other services should be explored such as Remote ISL or Captioning.

Captioning

Inclusive Approach

Captioning is the conversion of audio content into text which is displayed on a screen. Online courses, and audio visual material used in lectures, should include captions so that they are accessible to students who are Deaf or hearing impaired.

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by Disability Service

Captioning services convert the audio content of lectures into text, which is displayed on a computer screen in real-time, to allow students to access the information as it is spoken.

Captioning may be provided as an alternative to ISL interpretation for Deaf students as deemed appropriate. All captioned dialogue should also be provided as a

transcript to the student after the lecture/event. Captioning may also be required for other course materials e.g. audio visual material that is not already captioned. Where real-time captioning is not available, the lecture may be recorded to allow the Disability Service to have it captioned and made available to the student as soon as possible.

Transport

Assistance with transport to and from the HEI may be provided where a student is unable to use public transport due to the impact of a disability. Transport is usually provided for one single or return journey per day. Students wanting to park in a designated disabled parking space require a current valid Disabled Person's Parking Card (i.e. Blue Badge). The HEI may also issue a campus-specific parking permit. A valid disabled person's parking card does not guarantee a vacant disabled parking bay or give a student a right to park in a particular parking bay.

Residential Accommodation (where available)

Inclusive Approach

The HEA report on student accommodation (HEA, 2015c) acknowledges that accommodation provided by HEIs is a key factor in supporting participation in higher education for students with disabilities. The report specifically recommends that HEIs should consider allocating up to 10% of new bed spaces for students with disabilities. The report further recommends that HEIs should consult with relevant stakeholders, including students with disabilities, on adaptation of existing accommodation and design for new builds. Procedures for the provision of on-campus accommodation for students with disabilities should be clearly communicated via the HEI's accommodation website.

Reasonable Accommodation Coordinated by Disability Service

Some HEIs have a limited number of rooms reserved for students with a disability and priority is given to those who are unable to live off-campus e.g. due to a lack of accessible rental accommodation. A place in HEI accommodation may be allocated if a student's participation and retention in college, due to the impact of a disability, would be at risk without living on campus. HEI accommodation may recommended for a student with a disability on the following grounds:

➲ Proximity: where the impact of the disability is such that the student will experience significant and prolonged difficulty walking even short distances to the HEI. This might be appropriate for a student with a significant visual impairment or a student with a significant mobility difficulty.

➲ Physical Accessibility: where the impact of the disability is such that the student requires accessible accommodation. This might be appropriate for a student who uses a wheelchair and requires accommodation that is adapted for use by someone with a physical disability.

➲ HEI Regulated Accommodation: where the impact of the disability is such that the student experiences significant social, communication or behavioural difficulties that will impact on living in private rented accommodation. This might be appropriate for a student on the autistic spectrum or a student with a significant mental health condition.

Campus accommodation is prioritised for students with physical and sensory disabilities and in many cases is recommended for the first year of study only. Due to the limited number of places reserved for students with a disability, campus accommodation cannot be guaranteed even when a student meets the criteria outlined above. Campus accommodation may not always be suited to a student's needs, and therefore students are advised to research the nature of the accommodation available to determine suitability. Campus accommodation is managed through the Residence or Accommodation Office and not by the Disability Service.

Case Study: Campus Accommodation – Maynooth University

What is the nature of the initiative?

In the 2013-2014 academic year, it was agreed that MAP and Campus Accommodation Office would come together to agree formal criteria and recommendation process for the 2014-2015 academic year. Until this point, MAP had an informal recommendation process with Campus Accommodation. Maynooth University Access Programme (MAP) piloted an initiative to prioritise campus accommodation for students with disabilities in the 2014-2015 academic year.

In order to ensure that all students have every opportunity to fulfil their academic potential at Maynooth University, there are rooms reserved in campus accommodation for students with significant disabilities. Campus accommodation is recommended where a student's participation and retention in university, due to the impact of a disability, would be at risk without living on-campus. First year students with physical, sensory or mobility difficulties are prioritised for campus accommodation. In limited circumstances, MAP may make a recommendation for campus accommodation for the duration of a student's primary degree.

Why was this practice developed?

MAP developed a campus accommodation policy for students with disabilities as it was clear that students with physical, sensory and mobility difficulties were unable to secure alternative accommodation due to the nature of the disability (e.g. need ground floor, special aids, etc.).

In light of the difficulties some students with significant disabilities were experiencing, the MAP collaborated with the Campus Accommodation Office to explore how the two services could work together to oversee and manage a process of securing suitable accommodation for students with significant disabilities.

How was this practice developed?

MAP saw with the rising numbers of students with significant disabilities such a physical and sensory that some of the students were having issues with securing suitable accommodation in the private rental sector.

The criteria agreed between the two offices went to the University Executive in April 2017 in a policy jointly sponsored by the Director of Access and the Director of Student Services proposed by the University Registrar.

The following policy was formally adopted and enacted by the University and was applicable to all new students entering in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Applicants will be prioritised for campus accommodation using the following criteria;

1. Proximity: Where the impact of the disability is such that the student will experience significant and prolonged difficulty walking even short distances to the University or experience significant fatigue due to the impact of disability. An example of when this might be appropriate may include a student with a significant visual impairment or a student with a significant physical disability/mobility difficulty.

2. Accessibility: Where the impact of the disability is such that a student requires accessible accommodation. An example of when this might be appropriate may include a student who is a wheelchair user who requires accommodation that is adapted to the needs of an individual with a physical disability or a student with a sensory disability.

All first time applicants (new, continuing students and postgraduates) will be assessed based on above criteria.

The number of students to be recommended for reserved places in on-campus accommodation is determined by need, not by a quota.

Rooms recommended are subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed. Where demand exceeds availability room offers will be prioritised.

What was the result/outcome of the initiative?

There is a clear and transparent process for applicants who are assessed based on their medical documentation and supporting documentation such as the Educational Impact Statement. The policy and process adapted by the University Executive allows MAP to administer an effective and timely support for students. There is a very positive and supportive relationship between Campus Accommodation and MAP.

This process ensures that students with significant disabilities are provided with accessible accommodation catered to meet their individual needs. The Maynooth University campus accommodation is an inclusive and diverse environment that includes students with significant disabilities who are able to fully participate in campus life.

Service Dogs

Some students with disabilities may require the assistance of a Service Dog, including in areas where animals would not typically be permitted (e.g. HEI provided residential accommodation).

Examples of activities for which a Service Dog may be required include, but are not limited to: helping a blind or low-vision person with navigation or other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, pulling a wheelchair, assisting a person during a seizure, alerting a person to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or a telephone, providing balance and stability support for a person with a mobility impairment, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviours. Students who will be attending college accompanied by a registered Service Dog should contact the Disability Service with as much advance notice as possible.

The student must provide documentation to confirm that they have a disability and that the animal is a registered Service Dog. Students may be required to participate in a Health & Safety Assessment to ensure that they are not exposed to unnecessary risks while accessing the campus facilities. Access to HEI provided residential accommodation and other areas on campus must be negotiated in advance of the student arriving on campus. Students are responsible for the care of their animals and must ensure that they are under effective control at all times and do not cause a disturbance to others on campus.

Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is an international term and is not legally classified under Irish Law. Currently most Irish third level colleges included do not permit Emotional Support Animals on campus.

Guidelines for Work Placements

Work placement is a planned period of professional learning or experience which may be accredited, and where the learning outcomes are part of the student's programme of study. The requirement to complete a period of work placement has been integrated into many courses in higher education and is a mandatory requirement for most vocational/professional courses. Work placement refers to a range of activities such as professional practice, internships, or work experience. For the purposes of these guidelines, work placement will be used throughout this section to represent all types of placements that students participate in.

Work placements give students the opportunity to gain skills specific to their subject or industry of choice, as well as key employability skills that are highly valued in the workplace. It is important that institutions ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to work placement opportunities, and that they are appropriately supported when on placement. The Equal Status Act 2000 (as amended) and the Employment Equality Act 1998 (as amended) place a statutory obligation on institutions to ensure that students with disabilities are reasonably accommodated on placement. Under the Employment Equality Act, a person with a disability is considered fully competent of undertaking the duties of the position if they can perform those duties with Reasonable Accommodations.

Students must meet specific evaluation standards or competencies to pass the workplace component of their course. While the evaluation standards remain the same for all students, some students with disabilities may require Reasonable Accommodations to meet those standards. Students who require Reasonable Accommodations on placement must register with the Disability Service. The process of identifying and implementing Reasonable Accommodations for the placement setting is a collaborative one involving the student, placement staff, the Disability Service, and the employer/placement provider.

Disability Disclosure on Work Placement

Disability disclosure is a very sensitive issue and it is important that students are as informed as possible when making this choice. Many students will choose not to disclose on placement because they can manage their disability and do not require Reasonable Accommodations. However, some students may choose not to disclose because they are concerned about the possible implications of this disclosure. Building confidence in disclosure is important and students should be made aware that there are legal protections in place to prevent discrimination on placement, and that information will only be disclosed with the student's express written consent. Clear information should be made available on how disclosure is managed, and students should be given the opportunity to discuss this with either the Disability Service or placement staff, as appropriate. Providing answers to a number of key questions will help students make informed choices about disclosure.

⮕ | Why may it be important for the student to disclose and what are the benefits of disclosure?

⮕ | What information needs to be disclosed to ensure the student is appropriately supported on placement?

⮕ | Who should this information be disclosed to?

⮕ | How will the information be disclosed?

⮕ | When is the best time to disclose to ensure Reasonable Accommodations are in place?

There are a number of additional considerations that students should be advised of in relation to disclosure:

⮕ | Disclosure may be necessary on courses where there is a legal obligation to disclose any risk factor (which might include a disability or medical condition) if it has the potential to cause harm.

➲ | It is not possible to consider the impact of a disability or to apply Reasonable Accommodations retrospectively, where a student discloses a disability after the completion of a work placement.

Support from Placement Staff

Most institutions have designated staff – either a centralised Work Placement Office or a member of staff in the Academic Department – responsible for coordinating work placements and providing support to students. There are a variety of resources – support with CVs and interviews, placement handbooks, placement preparation classes – to help students prepare for their work placement. Information on supports for students with disabilities, disability disclosure and placement planning for students with disabilities should be included in all work placement materials and resources.

In many cases, these mainstreamed supports are sufficient and students with disabilities will not require Reasonable Accommodations on placement. However, the work placement setting is very different to the academic environment and this can present new challenges that students may not have encountered before. Students with disabilities who require additional support on placement should engage with placement staff to discuss their individual needs.

A placement planning meeting can be organised, if required, to discuss the impact of the disability and to identify the Reasonable Accommodations that are needed. Students who request Reasonable Accommodations must be registered with the Disability Service before a placement planning meeting can be arranged. If a student discloses to someone while on work placement they should be advised to contact the Disability Service for help and advice if they have not already done so.

Support from the Disability Service

The Disability Service can help students prepare for work placement and can also provide advice to placement staff on disability related issues. Collaboration is

central to effective placement planning and the Disability Service works closely with students and placement staff to provide guidance on the following:

- Discuss work placement demands as part of the needs assessment process, and encourage students to start thinking about the impact of their disability, and the types of Reasonable Accommodations that may be required.

- Help students understand the disclosure process and support them to make informed choices about disclosure.

- Support students to engage with placement staff if Reasonable Accommodations are required.

- Provide guidance to placement staff on disability related issues and Reasonable Accommodations that may be needed.

- Attend placement planning meetings if required to identify work placement needs.

Reasonable Accommodations for Work Placements

Some examples of typical Reasonable Accommodations for work placement are listed below, together with a rationale as to why the accommodations may be required and the intended benefit to the student. This section contains suggested changes to the placement environment which students should reasonably expect in order to make the placement more inclusive and accessible to them and in order to comply with the Disability Act 2005.

Assistance with Sourcing a Placement

Very often students are required to source their own placements. Assistance with finding a placement may be required where Reasonable Accommodations need to be negotiated and agreed in advance of the placement.

Disclosure of a Disability on Placement

Where it is appropriate for a student's disability to be disclosed to a prospective placement provider, before an interview, or during the hiring process, written consent from the student must be requested.

Selection of a Placement Venue

Not all placement venues and locations are appropriate for the needs of students with disabilities. It may be necessary to select placements that are in accessible venues and within a reasonable commute, or close to accessible public transport for some students with physical disabilities, medical conditions and students who are blind or vision impaired.

Facilitate a Pre-Placement Visit

Where a student requires support on placement, it may be useful for the student to meet with key placement staff to discuss how the Reasonable Accommodations will work in practice and to provide reassurance in advance of the placement. For example, students with physical disabilities and students who are Blind or vision impaired may benefit from a pre-placement visit, so that they can familiarise themselves with the route to the placement site and with the venue itself.

Assistive Technology (AT)

Assistive Technology may be required on placement to enable students to carry out key tasks. For example, a student with dyslexia may need to use specialist software to complete some written communication tasks. Where technology has been identified as an appropriate Reasonable Accommodation, it is the student's responsibility to complete the AT training that is provided, and to become proficient in the use of that technology. The use of some technologies may need to be negotiated and agreed with placement provider.

Allow an Assistant to Attend the Placement with the Student

Some students with a physical or sensory disability may require a Personal Assistant or an Irish Sign Language Interpreter to assist with physical tasks or communication on placement. In such instances, it is important to clarify with the student, the competencies being measured, and the role of the assistant or interpreter in achieving the goals that have been set.

Flexibility on Attendance

Some students may be absent due to ill-health, medical appointments or hospitalisation. Flexibility on attendance should be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account placement requirements, the nature of the student's disability, and the level or frequency of absence that can be reasonably accommodated.

Flexible Work Schedule

Some students may be unable to complete a typical working day or a typical working week due to the impact of a disability. In exceptional circumstances, only – where the normal working hours will impact significantly on a student's mental health or levels of endurance – it may be necessary to adjust the work schedule to enable the student to complete the placement successfully. This might involve, for example, adjusting the number of hours worked per day or the number of days worked per week. Such arrangements should be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the nature of the student's disability and the degree of flexibility that can be reasonably accommodated.

Additional Time to Develop Practical Skills

Students with reduced fine motor skills, processing speed difficulties or a disability which causes pain, fatigue, or reduced mobility, may require additional time to develop practical skills on placement. It is not reasonable to expect everyone to work at the same speed, and so, wherever possible, students should be given additional time to develop alternative techniques or practice specific skills to reach an appropriate level of competence.

Rest Breaks

Some students may require rest breaks due to fatigue associated with managing a disability, or to self-administer medication, or monitor blood sugar levels. Such arrangements should be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the nature of the student's disability and the degree of flexibility that can be reasonably accommodated.

Supporting Erasmus, International and Visiting Students

The Disability Service in each HEI has a role in supporting students who study as an Erasmus, International or Visiting student. This applies to students who come to study at the HEI (referred to as Incoming students) as well those who go to study in other HEIs outside of Ireland (referred to as Outgoing students).

Information for Students

➲ Incoming and Outgoing students should research their intended HEI and country carefully. Students registered with their home Disability Service should contact their Disability Service/ International Office when planning to study in another country to discuss in advance how best to prepare for studying abroad, including disclosing a disability to a host institution and seeking Reasonable Accommodations. This should be done before, or as soon as possible after application. See Study Abroad/Erasmus checklist for students with disabilities (Appendix 11) for a suggested checklist that can help students when planning to study abroad.

➲ Supporting Incoming and Outgoing students is a collaborative process involving the International/ Erasmus Offices and the Disability Service in the HEI. Specific information on the supports available to Incoming and Outgoing students with disabilities should be available on the HEI Erasmus/ International and Disability Service web pages and literature.

➲ Students should be made aware that the adoption of inclusive practices and the provision of Reasonable Accommodations can vary significantly in different institutions and countries. Reasonable Accommodations may differ depending on the institution and the jurisdiction in which the student intends to study.

Registering with the Disability Service as an Erasmus, International or Visiting Student

⮞ Incoming and Outgoing students should contact the Disability Service in the host institution well in advance of arrival to discuss the registration process, Reasonable Accommodations and funding available.

⮞ Incoming students must follow the registration procedures in the host HEI which includes registration with the Disability Service and completion of a Needs Assessment to identify the Reasonable Accommodations that are required.

⮞ Incoming students must bring copies of their disability documentation from their home country. If the documents have been completed in a language other than English, they must be submitted with an English translation. This translation must be completed by an individual/organisation that is completely independent of the student. A letter confirming supports received in the home institution is not sufficient, but this letter (translated into English) can accompany the student's documents.

⮞ The Reasonable Accommodations that Incoming and Outgoing students receive in the host institution may differ from those accommodations received in the student's home institution. Reasonable Accommodations for Incoming students will be provided in line with the guidelines outlined in this document.

⮞ Where an Outgoing student has provided express written consent, the HEI Disability Service can provide details of Reasonable Accommodations and documentation to the host institution.

Funding for Disability Related Costs

As part of their preparations to study in another country, Incoming and Outgoing students should make a financial plan which includes additional disability related costs and any funding that may be available to cover these extra costs.

Incoming students have a right to access education and Reasonable Accommodations under the Equal Status Acts 2000 (as amended) and the Disability Act 2005. Institutions in Ireland are legally obliged to ensure that Incoming students are reasonably accommodated, and funding should be made available to cover the cost of these accommodations as per the ESF/FSD criteria.

The ESF/FSD funds Reasonable Accommodations for Outgoing students while they are studying in another country.

The Erasmus programme may allocate additional funding to support students with a disability wishing to take part in an Erasmus+ exchange in the EU, and who might otherwise be prevented from doing so. More information on this is available through the HEI Disability Service/International/Erasmus Office, and also from EURIreland.ie.

The HEI is responsible for carrying out Needs Assessment for Incoming students.

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Appendices

Uniquely, the appendices of this document are housed online as a set of live updateable and editable resources for the sector. Below is a list of the each appendix and a brief descriptor of it's function. To access the online webpage where you can download the resource, simply click the appendix title.

Appendix 1: Member Institutions of DAWN

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a list of active members of the Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN), a professional organisation for Disability Officers who are primarily responsible for supporting learners with disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland.

Appendix 2: Definition of Disability

The purpose of this appendix is to outline the definitions of disability contained in Irish law.

Appendix 3: Universal Design Principles

The purpose of this appendix is to outline the principles of both Universal Design for Instruction and Uinversal Design for Learning which are two complimentary frameworks for inclusive teaching and learning.

Appendix 4: DAWN Code of Practice and Disclosure of Disability Form

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a template code of practice and disclosure of disability form. The downloadable template provided was created by DAWN, the Disability Advisors Working Network. College staff can amend this template to use as a code of practice for their institution and can use the associated disclosure of disability form to inform students of their rights and responsibilities, and gain permission to disclose pertinent information about their disability to select college

staff members, when it is necessary to provide the agreed upon supports.

Appendix 5: DAWN Evidence of Disability Form

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a template Evidence of Disability Form. The downloadable template provided was created by DAWN, the Disability Advisors Working Network. College staff can amend this template to use as a form in their institution for students/medical professionals to complete in order to verify that they have a disability, thus making them eligible for supports.

Appendix 6: Procedure for conducting a Needs Assessment and Checklist

The purpose of this appendix is to provide an outline of the key actions involved in a robust needs assessment process. This document also serves as a checklist for staff conducting needs assessments to assist them in ensuring they have completed all aspects of the process.

Appendix 7: Alternative Format Request Form

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a template Alternative Format Request Form. The downloadable template was provided by University College Dublin. College staff can amend this template to use as a form in their institution for students who are seeking publications on their course reading lists in an alternative format.

Appendix 8: Lecture Recording Agreement - Permission to Record

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a sample Lecture Recording Agreement. The sample agreement was provided by Trinity College Dublin. College staff can amend this sample to use as a form in their own institution for students who have been granted permission to record lectures as part of recommendations arising from a needs assessment. Within the form the student signs that they understand that the recordings are for personal use only and not to be shared with others.

Appendix 9: Procedure for Requesting Subject Specific Support Student Details

The purpose of this appendix is to provide an example of a Subject Specific Tuition Request Form. This sample is provided by Trinity College Dublin. This form is used when a student wishes to gain access to subject specific tuition via the Disability/Access Office and should be completed in tandem by both the student and their tutor/course coordinator.

Appendix 10: Guidance for Students on Provision of Lecture Notes

The purpose of this appendix is to provide an example of a Guidance for Students on Provision of Lecture Notes form. This sample is provided by DAWN and is designed to be used with students who are receiving lecture notes facilitated by Disability Support Service as part of their needs assessment recommendations. By signing the form the student states that they understand that the lecture notes are for their use only and not to be shared with third parties.

Appendix 11: Study Abroad/Erasmus Checklist for Students with Disabilities

The purpose of this appendix is to provide an example of a Study Abroad/Erasmus Checklist for Students with Disabilities seeking to study abroad. This sample is provided by DAWN. This checklist is used to assist students with disabilities partaking in an Erasmus study abroad programme in ensuring that they have fully thought through every aspect of their study abroad and that they are fully prepared.

Appendix 12: Disability Service Educational Support Worker Pack

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a Disability Service Educational Support Worker Pack. This sample pack is provided by DAWN and is to be used to guide educational support workers hired by Disability Services to provide supports such as note-taking, Irish Sign Language interpretation, speed-text, personal assistance etc. The pack outlines the roles and responsibilities of each type of support worker and outlines the responsibilities of the student in the relationship.

Appendix 13: Guide for Students on Disability Supports in Your HEI

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a disability services with a template guide for students on how to access disability supports in there institution and to loosely outline what types of supports might be available to them. This sample pack is provided by DAWN and is design to be handed out to students registered with the service or displayed on the institution website.

Appendix 14: DAWN HEI Policy Development Guide

The purpose of this appendix is to provide institution staff with a guide to developing and maintaining policies and some pointers as to how they can translate the Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations guidelines into institutional policy.

Appendix 15: Trinity Inclusive Curriculum: A Case Study on the Development of an Inclusive Curriculum Strategy

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a case study around developing resources and tools for lecturers to make their teaching and learning practice more inclusive. This case study is provided by Trinity College Dublin. The Trinity Inclusive Curriculum (TIC) project commenced, with the aim of responding to the increasing diversity of the student population through the promotion of appropriate inclusive practices and the provision of tools and resources.

Appendix 16: Guide for Studying Abroad

This web guide developed by AHEAD is intended to help students with disabilities prepare for an international study-abroad opportunity. It covers lots of practical things for students to consider in advance of their study abroad including choosing where to study, seeking funding, getting disability supports, preparing for living abroad and more. You can send students who are considering a study abroad opportunity the link to this guide to give them the best chance of having a successful Erasmus experience.

Appendix 17: DAWN Principles, Guidelines and Procedures for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities

The purpose of this appendix is to support Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in developing policies and procedures that ensure students with disabilities are treated fairly and equitably in the examination process, thereby allowing them to compete equitably with their peers and to demonstrate their true knowledge and competency.

It is the outcome of work undertaken by DAWN in developing standardised examination procedures for students with disabilities in higher education in Ireland.