UCD Access

Symposium Proceedings 2017

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2017**

Contents

Professor Diane Reay, Professor Andrew Deeks, Professor Mark Rogers, Professor Grace Mulcahy and Dr Anna Kelly

Introduction

Dr Anna M. Kelly, Director, UCD Access & Lifelong Learning
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The UCD Access Symposium was held in University College Dublin on June 9th 2017. These Symposium Proceedings are part of a series chronicling UCD's journey to becoming a diverse and inclusive scholarly community. The aim of this publication is to contribute to the scholarship and practice of inclusion, and help advance the integration of access and widening participation into everyday life in Higher Education (HE).

These Symposium Proceedings are laid out in 6 sections. The keynote address by Professor Diane Reay, University of Cambridge, focused on efforts to widen access and participation in the UK and explore why it has not resulted in a more socially just HE system. Inclusive Practice in UCD features a book review by Professor Lizbeth Goodman, UCD. Community Outreach Engagement showcases three examples of outreach and engagement practice, while Mainstream Academic Support describes four creative examples of mainstream academic support. The spotlight is on innovative practice in Innovative Practice in Higher Education, which highlights four leading-edge developments. Public Interview is devoted to the student voice, through a public conversation with Gavin Jennings, RTE journalist, where former and current

UCD students reveal their insights and observations.

In his opening address to the Access Symposium, UCD President, Andrew Deeks, reminded delegates that Cardinal John Henry Newman founded the University in 1854 to provide access to higher education for the Catholic population, saying "we like to think that providing access to education is in UCD's DNA". Building on this legacy, the University aims to be a fully inclusive institution, with educational experience, supports, facilities, and built and technological environments, all designed around the needs of all students.

UCD is actively mainstreaming access, as envisaged by the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, and by the HEA National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019. The latter document sets specific targets to increase participation by under-represented cohorts, including students with disabilities, adults, those from communities experiencing low progression, part-time/flexible learners, further education award holders, and members of the Traveller community (HEA, 2015). Crucially, this policy document also identifies integrating and mainstreaming access as a key goal. Acknowledging the priority attached to the

establishment of access infrastructure in higher education institutions, the HEA states that:

"

the next step is, to integrate the principle of equity of access more fully into the everyday life of the HEIs so that it permeates all faculties and departments, and is not marginalised as the responsibility of the designated access office

"

- HEA, 2015, p. 25

Speaking at the Symposium, Deputy President and Registrar, Professor Mark Rogers, acknowledged the commitment of faculty and staff to developing innovative approaches to mainstreaming and inclusion in the University, and pointed to the growing diversity of the student population, remarking that

"more than 1 in 4 under-graduate students is now drawn from target equity groups" Moving access from the margins to the mainstream is a complex task, a broad and challenging agenda that requires both institutional and individual change (May & Bridger, 2010). Making inclusion everyone's business impacts all facets of University life and, when fully achieved, has the power to transform the University (Thomas, 2011). Universities are slowly evolving into inclusive institutions: there is evidence of early signs of mainstreaming and embedding equality of access, though there tends to be an absence of institution-wide policies and practices to foster and inculcate inclusion and diversity (Kelly, 2017).

It is hoped that the publication of these Symposium Proceedings will contribute to the emerging bank of mainstreaming research and practice in higher education, and offer a useful resource that progresses the implementation and embedding of access and widening participation.

Authors

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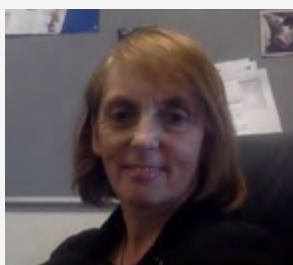
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Professor Diane Reay delivering
her keynote address

Degrees of Inequality: widening access & participation in higher education

Diane Reay

Over the last twenty years, I have researched and written on UK higher education choice processes, focusing on how working class students, across differences of race, negotiate higher education, before analysing the meanings they ascribe to higher education, and specifically the divisions within it. The research emphasized growing stratification within the university sector, a trend I return to in this talk. But the main reason I want to return to this research is that, despite the much lauded success of widening access and participation in the UK, not only have the problems of social class in British HE proved to be intractable, they have grown over the last twenty years. In the research, I have written about conceptions of 'the good university', but such conceptions have become even more racialized and classed, as polarisation and segregation within higher education have grown, providing some cautionary lessons for Irish higher education. Finally, I examine why growing class and racial diversity in higher education has not resulted in a more socially just HE system in the UK, in order to draw out implications for the Irish context.

At first glance, the Irish context looks very different to British higher education. On the surface, Ireland appears to be doing well in comparison.

Attainment at higher education level was particularly high among 25-34-year olds in Ireland, at 52%; well above the OECD average of 42%.

A1 3a. Population that has attained higher education (2015) by age group
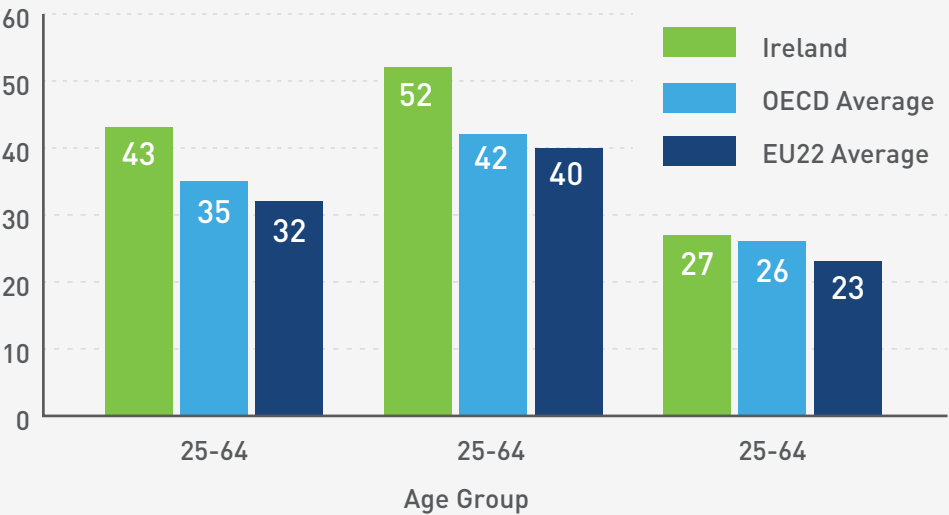
The vision for the Irish National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education is simply stated as follows:

"

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.

"

There can be little doubt that widening participation and access now occupies a central place in Irish policy, practice, and research, with positive effects. There has been a tremendous amount of creativity and effort within many access programmes, resulting in a steady increase in the number of working class students who come from skilled manual backgrounds. Thus, the impact of the 'access agenda' in urban working class areas has been dramatic; for example, in some areas of Dublin, participation rates doubled between 1998 and 2004. However, there have been more uneven results in bringing under represented groups into HE and a recent review of access suggests that the percentage of students from some of these groups has dropped or remained static in recent years (NOEAHE,

2010). Patrick Clancy found a very stark contrast in two nearby areas of Dublin, a working class area, with a 7% admission rate to HE, in contrast to a 77% admission rate in an upper middle class suburb. Overall, participation rates for working class students remain stubbornly below the Higher Education Academy targets and, in 2010, this group only accounted for 23% of new entrants. The number of students coming directly from schools through the Higher Education Access Route, an access route aimed specifically at school students in disadvantaged areas, is proportionally very small – this group accounted for only 1,009 students, out of a total of 34,500 new entrants in 2010. Furthermore, there are high levels of differentiation between institutions and between disciplines. Therefore, it is, not only the participation rates of various social groups we need to be aware of, but also which universities different groups of students are going to, and what subjects they are studying. Recent research by Fergal Finnigan suggests the structural and institutional barriers to increased working class participation in Irish HE are almost as great as they are in the UK.

Therefore, despite the many positive aspects, class divisions remain stark and the challenges facing proponents of widening participation are enormous. As is evident in these tables, the manual semi and unskilled

A.1 Current estimated national participation rates (all target groups)

	Per cent
Estimated national participation rate (new entrants aged 18-20)	52%
Estimated participation rates of target groups	
Non-manual worker group (new entrants aged 18-20) as a percentage of the population	23%
Semi/unskilled manual and agricultural worker group (18-20 year old new entrants) as a percentage of the population	26%
Mature students (full time) as a percentage of new entrants	13%
Mature students (full time and part-time) as a percentage of new entrants	19%
Students with a disability as a percentage of new entrants	6%
Flexible and part-time students as a percentage of all enrolments (undergraduate and postgraduate)	19%
Entrants admitted on the basis of a further education award as a percentage of new entrants	6.6%
Irish Travellers as a percentage of new entrants	0.1%

A.2 Socio-economic background of new entrants to higher education in 2011 (18-20 year olds)

Socio-economic group	General population aged 17-19 number and %	New entrants aged 18-20 number and %	Estimated participation rate
Employers and managers	10,531 (19%)	6,617 (23%)	64%
Higher professional	3,222 (6%)	3,842 (13%)	119%
Lower professional	6,790 (12%)	3,229 (11%)	48%
Non-manual workers	13,976 (25)	3,154 (11%)	23%
Manual skilled workers	7,429 (13%)	3,800 (13%)	51%
Semi-skilled workers	7,531 (13%)	1,840 (6%)	24%
Unskilled workers	3,064 (5%)	751 (3%)	25%
Own account workers	1,963 (3%)	2,860 (10%)	146%
Farmers	16,20 (3%)	2,692 (9%)	166%
Agricultural workers	470 (1%)	280 (1%)	60%
Total	**56,596 (100%)**	**29,164 (100%)**	**52%**

A.8.2 Population that has attained higher education (2015) by age group

Socio-economic group	Selected subjects					All subjects
	Medicine /Dentistry	Pharmacy	Veterinary Medicine	Law*	Teacher Training	
Employers and managers	18%	14%	26%	28%	27%	21%
Higher professional	44%	25%	19%	23%	8%	13%
Lower professional	13%	10%	10%	11%	15%	11%
Non-manual workers	7%	10%	7%	11%	8%	12%
Manual skilled workers	3%	8%	4%	8%	10%	13%
Semi/unskilled and agricultural workers	4%	6%	6%	8%	9%	13%
Own account workers	5%	11%	1%	6%	9%	9%
Farmers	7%	14%	25%	5%	16%	8%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

make up 18% of the population but only 9% of the intake, while the working classes generally have very low representation in the high status subjects.

However, the other vital thing to remind ourselves, is that widening access and participation may signal the end of one educational journey, but it is the beginning of another, and often the HE experience is a difficult and isolating experience for working class students. Even when working class students manage to overcome the many barriers they face and attend higher education, they continue to face prejudices and discrimination. Successful working class students should represent the fulfilment of education's aim of ensuring social mobility and social justice. Yet, on the contrary, higher education institutions often seem to make these students feel unwelcomed, marginalized, and alienated. Compared to middle and upper class students, working class students often report isolation and a lack of "fit" or belonging (Harackiewicz et al., 2014). Moreover, even at university, these students often struggle with the threat introduced by negative stereotypes, their unwelcome reception by upper and middle class students, and unfamiliar cultural norms (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012).

In this next section of the talk, I am going to focus on my own UK based research and the cautionary lessons we can draw from the UK experience.

Outsiders on the inside: The working classes & higher education

"

I feel an idiot. I guess I just didn't get the right advice so I started my law degree thinking that was all I needed to be a human rights lawyer and of course it's nowhere near enough. So now I am doing a Masters and my debt level is over £50,000... and I'm suddenly thinking how on earth am I going to get a job as a lawyer. I'll probably still be working in Next in 5 years time and the only difference between me and the other shop assistants is that I've got shed-loads of debt.

"

Lisa, a working class full-time Masters student, at a red brick University, and whose mother is herself a shop assistant, is working 15 hours a week in Next, as well as doing 12 hours of bar work, just to keep her head above the water, financially. In her interview with me, she talked of feeling trapped in education, as it felt far too risky to leave with just an undergraduate degree but terrifying to go on acquiring debts she could not fore-see ever paying off. Lisa is one of the growing number of educationally successful working class students, 'outsiders on the inside', caught up in an educational conveyor belt that all too often leads to disappointment and debts rather than the realisation of their dreams.

Yet, widening access and participation in higher education is one area of education where UK politicians claim there is notable success. In much of the political rhetoric, the success of social mobility is judged in terms of getting more and more working class young people to go to university. And, yes, over the past two decades, more and more British working class students have gone on to higher education (although this has recently reversed for white working class males (Independent Commission on Fees, 2015). However, while the increasing numbers are lauded in the press and policy announcements, what is neglected is the debt these working class students accrue in the process, the types of universities they are going to, and the subjects they are studying. In 21st century Britain, class inequalities in

higher education have shifted, from being primarily about exclusion from the system, to exclusion within it. In the UK, children from working class backgrounds account for just one in twenty enrolments into the elite institutions (Jerrim, 2013). When we focus on the poorest category within the British working class, those on free school meals, the percentage who go on to attend our elite universities, including Oxbridge, drops to less than 1% (Sutton Trust, 2010). Rich students attending UK private schools are 55 times more likely than free school meal students to gain a place at Oxford or Cambridge. These are enormous disparities in access that are only partly explained by the poorer entry qualifications of applicants from working class backgrounds. Just as concerning is the large gap between working class applications and admissions, as disparities in rates of admission to the elite universities remain substantial for working class applicants, even after entry qualifications have been taken into account (Boliver, 2011). Recent research shows that middle class students are three times more likely to go to elite universities than working class pupils, even if they have the same grades (Jerrim, 2013). More recent research from HESA shows that the percentage of students from working class backgrounds going to Cambridge fell from 12.4% to 10.2% between 2005 and 2016. In addition, there is concern about retaining working class students and ensuring their progress. In the UK, those universities with the most success at widening participation to working class

students are predominantly those that are perceived to be low status. They are also the universities with the highest drop-out rates. Approximately, one in five undergraduate students leave UK universities without gaining a degree, while research has shown that working class students attending lower status universities are disproportionately likely to drop out (Powdthavee and Vignoles, 2009).

Therefore, working class students are increasingly going to university, and accumulating debts of at least £30,000, and often much more, without accruing anything like the returns of their upper and middle class peers. Working class young people who do go to university are less likely to graduate and less likely to achieve the highest degree classes. And, it is the least well off of the working class students who have to borrow the most, since maintenance grants for the poorest students were replaced by loans in 2016. Whereas in the past, students from families with a household income of £25,000 or less were entitled to a grant to cover living costs of £3,400 per year, they now have to take out a loan (Ali, 2016). The abolition of maintenance grants has meant it is the poorest graduates who are getting the worst deal, with debts of over £50,000 on graduation.

A question of who goes where and how they feel about it

Working class students are predominantly going to universities that are seen to be low status and 'second rate'. The growing stratification of the higher education field is increasingly apparent in the very differing levels of resources across the university sector but it is also there in students' common sense understandings of 'good' and 'poor' universities. In my ESRC study, with Gill Crozier, researching working class students, in three universities spread across the universities league table, how the HE institution, these working class students attended, was classified exerted a powerful influence on how they saw themselves and were seen by others in terms of both their learner and class identities. Below, is just one of many quotes that divided universities into good and bad. Fiona is talking about how other students on her MA course will react when they hear she has done her first degree at Northern, a university near the bottom of the university league table.

"

My thoughts have always been, at my lowest point, it's always that I'm not capable of doing it.

"

Arthur, History student at Northern

> **"I'm going to be sitting there on the first day scared to open my mouth because as soon as I say something, they'll be like 'who the hell's that? Is she one of the locals?' Do you know what I mean? I can just tell how they're going to look at us. Especially when I say I went to [Northern] that's just going to be even worse, and they're all going to have gone to really good universities aren't they? It'll be like you went to the polytechnic at [Northern] [laughs], that's what they'll be saying.**
> **"**

Some of the students, from working class, as well as middle class backgrounds, talked of Northern as 'a rubbish university'. Northern's reputation suffered from being categorised as 'a working class' university, with all the reputational losses that came from such a label.

As I have argued earlier, the working class relationship to schooling has typically been one of failure (Reay, 2006) and this was still true for how a majority of the Northern students perceived their university experience. As Arthur, a white working class History student at Northern, said:

"My thoughts have always been, at my lowest point, it's always that I'm not capable of doing it."

And, as Barbara, a white working class History student at Northern, suggested:

"Academically wise I keep thinking I shouldn't be here, that you know I'm not up to the level that I should be."

Both Arthur and Barbara are mature students with, as Arthur points out, a considerable gap between school and university, but even the young students lacked confidence in their own academic ability:

Unfortunately, my experiences of school always taught me that, I mean I was always a late learner, I never caught on particularly quickly but when I did it was always slightly later. So I was always brought up with the attitude that 'oh Katy will never amount to anything'. (Katy, a white working class Chemistry student, Northern).

A majority of working class students end up in universities seen to be 'second class'

both by themselves and others. Even now when increasing numbers of working class students have access to higher education, class inequalities reappear in the unequal access to forms of valued cultural and social capital, as the middle classes monopolise both those universities seen to be the 'best', and high status, esteemed activities and social networks within the less prestigious universities (Bathmaker et al., 2013). The success of the few working-class students who do gain entry to UK elite universities has a negligible impact on this broader picture of continuing classed and racialized inequalities.

In the study, a major factor impacting on working class university experience, and the students' chances of integrating fully into the field of higher education, was the university they attended. What we also found in our research was that the rewards and recognition of going to university were nearly always lower for the working class students than their middle and upper class peers. Of course, we want more working class and ethnic minority students to go to university but when they primarily go to poor, working class, universities in a segregated system, we are talking about a very unlevel playing field. So, it is much more than an issue of widening access. The troubling paradox of widening access and democratisation of higher education is that, despite its democratic intentions, widening access has brought an intensification of class and racial inequalities between different levels of UK higher education. Growing diversity within

the field of HE, rather than producing a more inclusive higher education, has resulted in a segregated and increasingly polarised system.

Upper and upper middle class pursuit of the educational exclusivity they experienced in private and selective state schooling has relegated the working classes and the lower middle classes to the universities the more privileged do not want to attend.
I want to look more closely at what lies beneath this growing exclusivity by drawing on some of statistics from our research project. We administered a questionnaire, with a social class cross-section of 1,259 students, in three very different universities. They were: Northern, the low status university I have been talking about, Midland, a pre- 1992, civic, university, and then Cambridge was our elite university. A number of stark inequalities emerged. 65% of the Northern students were undertaking paid work, compared to 30% at Midland and only 8% at Cambridge. Learning experiences across the three institutions also differed widely. In Cambridge, 77% of students rated intellectual challenge as high. The comparable percentages at Midland and Northern were 35% and 27%, respectively. Similarly, there were wide disparities in the level of academic support students perceived. Some 41% of Cambridge students rated academic support as high, while in Midland the figure was 16% and in Northern, 10%. Relatedly, the questionnaire responses revealed that 82% of Cambridge students had regular one-to-one support, while the

figures for Midland (28%) and Northern (15%) were much lower. The statistics were supported by the interview data, with Cambridge students talking about far more support for learning than in less resourced universities like Northern. Northern is suffering from underfunding, and as a result there were a reduced number of tutorials, increased tutorial size, and less student contact. Paradoxically, it was in Northern that students talked about having to rely on their own intellectual resources rather than learn in collegial, experiential and often more challenging ways. Students at Northern were governed by expediency and 'the logic of necessity' (Bourdieu, 1990) in which their learner identities were constantly at risk of being subsumed by their responsibilities and commitments as workers and family members. The need to work during term-time was an imperative that restricted, in particular, working class students' quality of life as a student. The psycho-social strains and academic costs of juggling work, family and university course were highlighted in Kylie's story of being able to give up work on receipt of a small inheritance from her grandfather:

"I was working so many hours and I got quite low grades ... then I got an inheritance from my granddad so if it hadn't been for that I'd still be working full-time hours. I mean my marks went right up because I used to get like 40s, 50s and stuff like that and all my marks last semester were firsts."

As she goes on to point out, there is a clear connection between competing demands such as work and family commitments and realising one's academic potential:

"I was doing 36 hours a week and being a full-time student, it's impossible. I just wasn't going to reach my potential."

This is in stark contrast with the accounts that the Cambridge students provided, of developing as a learner over the two years of the research study (Reay et al., 2009):

"I've learnt so much... The gains here are enormous. You can't really compare the education you get here with anywhere else because it's so intense and challenging and so intellectual and yeah they've just got experts in every field here, just so amazing." (Jamie, white, working-class law student, Cambridge)

As Jamie makes clear, for the most part, there is a compounding of advantage, with the more confident and committed learners being in the better resourced and supported universities. The social class and racial connotations are evident. It is primarily working class and ethnic minority students studying in the less well resourced and well staffed universities, while their white, middle class peers are studying in universities with better resources and more advantageous staff-student ratios.

But elite universities like Cambridge, rarely allow individuals with alternative qualification routes into their undergraduate programmes, do not cater readily for part-time first-degree students, have few British, black minorities, and assume the vast majority of their intakes will be aged 18 with very high A-level scores. Unsurprising, then, that Oxbridge in 2014 has falling numbers of working class students compared to the two years before.

This is also why the latest HEFCE Report shows that working class students are doing less well in higher education than those with the same prior educational attainment from the middle and upper classes. They do not have the same choices, opportunities, and university experiences. It is this injustice, as well as unfair access, that needs to be urgently addressed.

The myth of meritocracy in the 21st century

In order to fully understand the way class works as a form of educational exclusion within higher education, we need to step back and examine, not only the mission and purpose of elite universities like Oxbridge, but also how they justify and explain their selectivity and elitism to themselves and others. This requires an interrogation of the meritocratic ideal that Oxbridge and other elite universities hold dear. It also requires an analysis of the powerful ways in which educational systems, including their universities, work to reproduce the existing order rather than transform it.

When Michael Young coined the term meritocracy in his 1958 satire, 'The Rise of the Meritocracy', he introduced into popular understanding an ideal long cherished in British society: 'may the best person win'. The meritocratic paradigm, if not the term itself, has been a cornerstone of liberal and social democratic thought for the last two centuries. And, despite Young's pessimistic account of the dangers of meritocracy, it has become widely accepted as an ideal in liberal democratic societies. A meritocratic system is a competition in which there are clear winners and losers, but in which the resulting inequalities are justified on the basis that participants have an equal opportunity to prove themselves. However, in the 21st century, the reality is that meritocracy has become a powerful means of legitimising both social exclusion and elitism (Dorling, 2015). A crucial part of the operation of reproducing the British elite, and nurturing and expanding its academic, cultural and social capital, is carried out by Oxbridge and a small number of other elite universities (Savage 2015). Currently, Oxbridge admits 0.4% of each age cohort based on academic performance, of which 10.1% are from socio-economic classes 4 to 7, and 3.2% from low-participation areas (Bolton, 2016). This may appear to be meritocratic, but it is also highly elitist. The beneficiaries are the white upper classes.

As a consequence, Oxbridge remains the equivalent of 'a finishing school' for the private school system, polishing, refining and accentuating the elitism and sense of superiority acquired in earlier schooling. What is clear is that clinging to the meritocratic principle as a way of achieving fairness in relation to university admission and participation will not work.

For over thirty years, sociologists of education have been pointing out that educational choice is based on the resources and social power and networks of the parents rather than the ability and effort of the child (Brown, 1990; Gewirtz, 2001; Reay 2015). Meritocracy has become the educational equivalent of the emperor with no clothes, all ideological bluff, with no substance. We do not have a meritocracy, or anything approaching a meritocracy in the UK. Yet, the elite universities continue to justify their elitism on the premise that they operate in a meritocratic society.

A higher education system that rewards the richest

But as the table below indicates, the issue of resources and funding raises uncomfortable and difficult issues around value, in which views of moral and intellectual value are entangled with, and expressed through, levels of monetary value. The new opportunities for the working classes have diminished value because they are studying in low ranking universities with 'too many'

students like themselves who are perceived to be 'low status'. As the table makes evident, in the neoliberal market economy of HE, the low value attributed to the working classes translates into poorly funded courses in inadequately resourced universities, while the rich are seen to merit generously funded courses in wealthy universities.

Table 1: Richer and poorer (from Brown 2012)

Top 10 universities by income per full-time student 2010-11 (£k)

Cambridge	65.84
Imperial College	48.82
Oxford	46.82
UCL	37.61
Edinburgh	27.77
LSE	26.24
KCL	25.87
Bristol	23.74
Liverpool	23.47
Warwick	22.17

Bottom 10 universities by income per full-time equivalent student 2010-11

Chester	8.04
Bath Spa	7.97
Leeds Metropolitan	7.93
West of Scotland	7.91
Abertay Dundee	7.80
Swansea Met	7.57
Wales Newport	7.57
Wales Trinity St David	7.20
Glamorgan	7.08
Edge Hill	7.05

However, it is not just the stark differences in resources and funding within higher education that make the working class experience of higher education very different to that of many middle and upper class students. As Stevenson and Clegg (2011) found in their research, due to forces of circumstance, the majority of working class students were trapped in the present as 'onlookers' on student life, compelled by economic necessity to live at home and work in the labour market. In our study, working class students were far more likely to be exhausted from part-time work, distracted by financial, health and family problems, and often lacking the confidence and self-esteem to be able to construct themselves as successful learners. They were jostling competing demands that undermined their ability to adapt and integrate into Higher Education. Widening access to a very unequal, hierarchical field is a very crude response to an intractable problem that requires a much more sophisticated, morally informed solution. And just how rich many Oxbridge students are is graphically revealed in the following research results from a 2009 student survey published in Varsity, the Cambridge student newspaper.

Colleges	Av. Annual parental income
Churchill	£72,500
Robinson	£79,200
Girton	£69,900
Clare	£85,100
Jesus	£68,000
Trinity	£82,800
Peterhouse	£54,800
Corpus	£78,500
Downing	£77,900
Caius	£96,100
St John's	£63,900
Murray Edwards	£108,000
Trinity Hall	£69,800
Magdalene	£75,800
Emmanuel	£82,400
Sidney Sussex	£67,100
King's	£75,500
Queens'	£68,800
Homerton	£55,100
Pembroke	£80,600
St Catharine's	£58,500
Newnham	£66,800
Christ's	£70,900
Selwyn	£77,900
Fitzwilliam	£64,500

Although these income levels are now almost ten years out of date, they represent salary levels most British families can only dream of.

The huge expansion of higher education in the UK is often presented as evidence of the success of social mobility and meritocracy in British society. However, just as in relation to the school system, the inequalities

permeating higher education are damaging for all university students. The 'winner takes all' ethos, and the intense competition and striving for academic excellence that underpin it, have taken their toll across social classes. In 2013, a survey by student newspaper, The Tab, revealed that 21% of Cambridge students have been diagnosed with depression, while a further 25% think they may be depressed. The problem disproportionately affects female students. In all-girls' college, Murry-Edwards, 28% of students have experienced eating disorders. The numbers are reflected more widely – the National Union of Students surveyed 1,200 students and found that 20% believe they have a mental health problem, while 1 in 10 experienced suicidal thoughts. Welfare teams at Cambridge alone anticipate 50 to 60 suicide attempts per year. As Wilkinson and Pickett (2004) demonstrated so powerfully over a decade ago, inequality, in a culture of hyper-competitive individualism, reduces everyone's sense of well-being.

But, while all students are affected by the inequalities of the university sector, it is working class students who suffer the most, and the unfairness they face continues even after they have left university. Working class students will now graduate with an average of £12,500 more debt than their wealthier peers (Britton et al., 2015). They are also to be found disproportionately in unsalaried or low-paid posts six months after leaving university (HESA, 2013). Overall, 40% of UK graduates end up in non-graduate jobs

(Allen, 2014; Walker, 2012), and it is working class graduates who are still much more likely than their middle class peers to end up getting working class jobs. Coulson et al. (2017) found that, of the working class students on a special entry scheme to an elite Russell group university, 57% gained graduate jobs, compared to 74% of university-wide graduates. This was despite a higher percentage of these working class students gaining a First or Upper Second than the general student population.

Even when working class students do attain graduate jobs, they will find that the much-vaunted graduate premium is much less than they were promised. Britton et al.'s (2016) research shows that students from higher income families have median earnings, which are around 25% more than those from lower income families. As Crawford et al. (2016) found, class differences in graduate earnings persisted even when educational attainment, including university attended and subject studied, is taken into account. More recent research (Laurison and Friedman, 2016) found that people from working class backgrounds who get a professional job are paid an average of £6,800 (17%) less each year than their middle and upper class colleagues. They identify the 'stickiness' of class origin in which a poverty of resources in early life often continued to shape individual life courses well beyond occupational entry.

If you are working class, even a high-class degree from a top university does not provide equality of access to top professions and higher earnings. The sad irony is that, as more and more working class students have achieved a degree, its status has been eroded and the value in which it is held, both symbolically and in financial terms, has dropped (Institute for Fiscal Studies, IFS, 2016). The Longitudinal Education Outcomes survey (2016) found that, as student numbers have increased graduate earning power has decreased in relation to non-graduate earnings. As the IFS conclude, 'increasing numbers of future graduates would result in further declines in the educational wage differential'.

The fallacy that sending more and more working class young people to university constitutes social mobility has become a common belief. Yet, producing more and more working class graduates in a restricted labour market for graduates is a perverse form of social mobility. The consequences can be seen in the working class female PhD graduate who has been serving in my local restaurant for three years, and the male Masters graduate who has been working at the checkout in the local supermarket for nearly 5 years. Can either Rosie or Assiz be called socially mobile when both are in casualised and poorly paid work? Although highly credentialed, both are desperate and despairing about their lack of economic progression. As I have argued earlier in the article, these are the educational

successful working classes who no longer see themselves as working class but are striving to become middle class. They have a fragile relationship to the working class communities they have come from but also to the middle class society they are struggling to belong to.

So, to come back to the Irish context, there are a number of cautionary lessons to be learnt. First, the strong emphasis on raising working class aspirations in the UK has been at the cost of addressing social class inequalities in attainment directly. Thus, raising aspirations is not the answer, combatting social inequalities is.

Second, there is the minefield around finances and the costs of HE. Although Ireland still has a grant system, it is inadequate. As a recent Bank of Ireland survey estimated, the annual cost of attending third-level education is as high as €13,000, while the average student grant payment is just over €3,000 per annum. Then, although the status hierarchy in Irish higher education is not as exaggerated as that in the UK, statistics from 2014 show that a third of students at Trinity are from private schools, while only 9% are from disadvantaged backgrounds (Lavin, 2014). So, Ireland, too, has elite universities. In fact, Mike Grenfell, until recently a professor at Trinity, wrote in 2010:

Inequality is at the core of higher education systems, and the Irish system in particular. In part, such inequality acts as its generator, its 'logic of practice'. In this respect higher education might not be seen so much as a site of consensus but of ongoing conflict which will exert an influence on all its activities and practices.

-Grenfell 2010

So, even those activities, such as widening access and participation that have a social justice rationale, are undermined by the wider inequitable context within which they have to operate.

Author

Diane Reay

Professor Diane Reay is an educational sociologist working in the University of Cambridge. She grew up in the North of England and was the daughter of a coal miner. She was the first generation in her family to attend university. Her research includes boys' underachievement, higher education access, female management in schools, and pupil peer group cultures. Reay's research has made a significant contribution to our understanding of educational disadvantage and social justice issues.

Book Review

Universal Design for Curriculum Design: Case Studies from University College Dublin

Edited by Lisa Padden, John O'Connor and Terry Barrett

By Professor Lizbeth Goodman

This much-needed book fills an important gap in the literature about access to education in Ireland and Europe, and has significant lessons to offer to the global education scene as well.

The chapters provide focused case studies on issues faced by 'non-standard' learners, their teachers and educators, and the educational establishments which seek to recruit and support them on a sustainable basis. A welcome focus is on simple, practical questions that cut across case studies in terms of student support interventions, asking in each case 'what was difficult?' and, also, 'what helped?' By focusing on learner voice and the expressed needs of students of all kinds, the book provides a rich and varied guidebook that should help all learners to understand that they are in good company on their diverse learning journeys.

The book explores the Inclusive Design model, which has been applied throughout the UCD context in terms of the model set forward by Professors Jutta Treviranus et al. of the Inclusive Design Research Institute of Canada, who defines Inclusive Design as a '1 size fits 1' model that rejects the notion of a 'standard' student and instead supports the widest diverse range of profiles, from those returning to learn as adults, to those from economically disadvantaged demographics, those with learning differences, et al. In this definition, the learner requires and deserves personalised supports and, crucially, an understanding from the educational establishments and policy makers that learning can be challenging for all kinds of reasons, for all kinds of people, at all points in their lives and careers.

Taking this model into practice, the book presents a range of case studies from the experiences of teachers and learners at UCD. Chapters outline the challenges faced by, for instance, distance learners, or learners on placement, or learners requiring specific supports to help them to read and understand scientific papers.

Overall, this book provides an original and substantial support document for multiple users within and beyond the academy. It would be a model set text book for courses on Diversity, Access and Inclusive Design, and for modules and courses at third level aimed at interdisciplinary researchers engaged in practice-based research with impact in the community or the policy sectors.

I recommend this book most highly to all researchers interested in Inclusive Design methodologies and practices, across all disciplines, and to those engaged in or committed to the rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the needs and abilities of all diverse learners.

Author

Lizbeth Goodman

Lizbeth Goodman is Full Professor of Inclusive Design for Education and Chair of Creative Technology Innovation at University College Dublin, where she directs SMARTlab and the Inclusive Design Research Centre of Ireland at UCD, and is an Executive Board member of the Innovation Academy (member institutions: Trinity College, UCD and Queen's University, Belfast). For UCD she coordinates and manages the high level work of the pan-institutional senior faculty engaged in design and implementation of educational and pedagogic strategy in learning futures through the IDRC, and is the university representative on the all-Ireland University Project for the future of education, and on the Marie Curie ASSISTID Programme for the DOCTRID Research Institute: the first top tier research institute bridging the Republic and Northern Ireland. Also on behalf of UCD and the national universities network, she was elected to Chair the Social Sciences Panel of the Irish Royal Academy in 2012.

Innovation and Progression: The UCD Community Drugs Programme

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Abstract

This paper will outline the structure and approach of the UCD Community Drugs Programme which, in partnership with Urrús, Ballymun Youth Action Project, provides an undergraduate Diploma in Community Drug and Alcohol Work and a progression route onto the UCD Bachelor of Social Science degree for students who would normally face multiple barriers and challenges accessing and completing third level education. As well as practice challenges, successes and learning points from this established programme, consideration will be given to the contextual factors that have influenced and shaped the programme and its sustainability.

Background

Widening participation and community engagement are increasingly positioned as a critical nexus beyond teaching, learning and research within higher education (Bernardo, Butcher & Howard, 2014). Community engagement can comprise research partnerships, educational outreach or widening participation initiatives (Sandman, Williams & Abrams, 2009). Few programmes seek to both widen participation and engage with community partners, most likely because of the inherent challenges in maintaining stakeholder relationships, while also attending to student educational and support needs. In Ireland, there remain urban areas of significant social and educational disadvantage (Clancy,

2001). A lack of access to education is often compounded by low incomes, high levels of unemployment, drug and alcohol use, and weak social networks (Edwards & MacKenzie, 2005). Individuals from less affluent communities are more likely to underachieve in the education system, leaving formal education with few or no qualifications, effecting life chances and increasing their risk of poverty and social exclusion (Clancy, 2001). There has been some discussion on the effectiveness of programmes that seek to address educational disadvantage within the communities described, with Chowdry, Crawford, Dearden, Goodman & Vignoles (2013) highlighting the need for more robust routes into higher education for those with low educational attainment at secondary level living in disadvantaged areas. This paper considers the development and implementation of a programme that seeks to respond to the ingrained educational disadvantage experienced by those living in communities also characterised by drug use, poverty, and social norms of low educational achievement and low employment.

The programme

The Community Drugs Programme has been in place within UCD for nearly twenty years, with the current partnership programme with Urrús entering its twelfth year. Within a partnership arrangement, UCD and Urrús deliver an undergraduate Diploma in Community Drug and Alcohol Work, a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Level 7 course with 60 ECTS. In 2010, a pathway straight on to the second year of the UCD Bachelor of Social Science degree for students completing the Diploma was implemented. The Diploma is delivered in a dual location within a community setting and on the University campus and provides both University access to those who have left the formal education sector early and professional drug training in the drug and alcohol sphere. The Diploma is also aimed at those already working in the drug and alcohol sector, or responding to drug and alcohol issues within their work.

Programme structure and approach

National research indicates higher rates of low and poor educational achievement in urban communities characterised by social and educational disadvantage as compared to more affluent communities (Boldt, Devine, MacDevitt & Morgan, 1998). The structure and approach of the programme addresses these wide ranging social issues in a number of ways. Firstly, the Diploma is delivered in a way consistent with the principles of adult and community education and content is both theoretical and practical, recognising the role of community in understanding and responding to drug and alcohol related issues. Engaging with students in this way allows learners to connect with current and previous experiences and to relate the educational content to the reality of their lives (Knowles, 1980).

Secondly, the programme is delivered one full day per week and every second Saturday over the academic year, with evening tutorials where appropriate. This allows those working full time to access the programme if they have employer support, as well as being manageable for those working on Community Employment Schemes (CE Schemes) which require participants to work within a structured setting for 20 hours per week. The full days of teaching, while posing pedagogical challenges, do minimise travel and childcare commitments for participants, and provide participants with a greater possibility of maintaining part time employment than if the course were provided in traditional segmented lecture and tutorial structure. Beyond this, class sizes are kept relatively small, with an annual cohort of around twenty five students to ensure programme participants receive adequate educational support and to foster mutual support within the group. Completion rates average around 90% per cohort. The structure and approach of the programme is shown in the diagram below.

Figure 1: Key components of the Diploma in Community Drug and Alcohol Work and BSoc.Sc. progression route

The role of the community partner in encouraging, supporting, and enabling student participation is pivotal. Empowerment is a key feature of the programme, as students are encouraged to take control of the decisions that affect them and their communities. By participating in the programme, students are encouraged to realise and achieve their full potential, despite the unfair social systems they grew up and continue to live in. Careful attention has also been paid to course content, development of academic skills, and how these are assessed.

The progression route onto the Bachelor in Social Science is important in, not only providing a clear and accessible pathway onto a degree programme, but also in allowing students to observe the progression of other students onto degree and post-graduate programmes. Even with the existence of access programmes, students may lack the confidence and resources to take these opportunities. The existing and previous progression students provide formal and informal supports to those considering or taking up the degree progression route, based on the concept that mentoring can be key to making sustainable life changes (Marlow et al., 2015). Post-graduate progression students provide dedicated tutorials to students in their first year of progression onto the degree, and current and previous progression students provide informal academic, emotional and practical support to incoming students. Many of the

students also know each other through community and social networks, which can be helpful in fostering a sense of belonging and integration for those continuing their education within the University.

Challenges, successes and learning points

Students on the Diploma programme have typically left school early due to numerous difficulties and challenges they have encountered in early childhood, often related to educational and other social factors. These negative experiences often continue from their childhoods through to adolescence and adulthood. Negative schooling experiences are often related to poor relationships with peers and teachers and educational difficulties such as dyslexia, which often goes undiagnosed until later in adulthood. For many, these early negative educational experiences result in a lifetime of internalised stigma. The associated stigma is often acted out in the classroom setting, creating difficult and challenging group dynamics. The profile of the student cohort is typically characterised by experiences of educational and social disadvantage; poverty; and lengthy problematic substance using careers. Drawing on the experiences of their own journeys, into problematic substance use and exit pathways through a variety of drug treatment and rehabilitation approaches, can be central to their own learning processes.

Being aware of and understanding these experiences and subsequently being responsive to internalised stigma and negative educational histories is crucial to the style of teaching and approach adopted by the programme. The provision and delivery of the programme challenges stigma in a number of ways but none more so than in the creation of a positive and healthy learning environment that takes account of the students' previous histories and life experiences. The learning environment acknowledges these histories and promotes the opportunity for a different type of educational experience through the application of a range of pedagogical approaches such as learning by listening (Bourne, McMaster, Rieger & Campbell, 1997), discovery learning (de Jong & Van Joolingen, 1998), and learning through discussion and debate (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1994). Through the utilisation of a variety of pedagogical approaches, and the creation of a learning that values all types of experiences and different types of learning, self-directed learning is encouraged and promoted, enhancing the opportunity to develop self-efficacy.

The value of mentoring has been identified within substance use treatment (Marlow et al., 2015; Reif et al., 2014), particularly for modelling success of treatment and recovery pathways. Drawing on this approach, the programme has developed and built in a mentoring programme to further support the needs of the student cohort. Students who have progressed on through the Bachelor in Social Science degree to post-graduate study provide dedicated tutorials to incoming progression students, as well as providing guest lectures and tutorials to the Diploma cohort. This allows students to witness, discuss, and access support from those who are illustrating and living the benefits of continuing in education, as well as supporting post-graduate students in their own professional development.

Changes and developments in drug policy within Ireland have had an impact on the delivery and sustainability of the programme. The economic recession saw a reversion to a more bureaucratic and individualistic approach to drug intervention and policy, with less focus on community engagement and addressing of social disadvantage (Loughran & McCann, 2006). This had implications for the programme, as funding cuts to community based drug services and to community employment schemes (Citywide, 2012), reduced demand for places on the programme for a period of time and opportunities for follow on employment also diminished. Significant funding reductions to the higher education sector also resulted in reduced academic staffing assigned to the programme. Added to this, potential students had less means to pay programme fees, and potential student funding streams from drug rehabilitation agencies were severely diminished, resulting in lower student numbers and reduced fee income. Beyond the strong partnership relationship between

UCD and Urrús, which is underpinned by a shared vision for the programme, two factors were key in sustaining the programme through these challenges; the development and ongoing of the progression route onto the Bachelor of Social Science, and the extension of the of partnership to include a research alliance.

Beyond the direct benefits to the students accessing the progression route onto the Bachelor of Social Science, the value has been noted within the academic community in the host University. This occurred at a time when the value of community engagement and partnership were being explored and supported within the wider higher education sector (Bernardo et al., 2014; Hoy, 2013; Sandman et al., 2009). As the brunt of the recession was experienced by the programme, the host university included key objectives in relation to community engagement and partnership within the UCD Strategy (2015-2020), which provided a strong driver to retain and develop the programme further. Part of this further development included the setting up of a research alliance between UCD and Urrús, which, not only deepened the partnership, but has also resulted in valuable research outputs and community and substance use intervention impacts (Morton, O'Reilly & O'Brien, 2016).

Students accessing the Bachelor of Social Science have, not only achieved academic success, but also enriched the learning environment by adding a diversity of viewpoint and the ability to draw on lived experience in discussions, debates, and academic work. Both students on the undergraduate degree and those going on to avail of the post-graduate offerings within the University have demonstrated the value of the programme to the wider academic community, thus ensuring its ongoing support. All of these factors ensured that, when the economic context threatened the programme, wider support within the University and commitment from the partner agency, ensured the recognition and sustainment of the programme when severe economic challenges were met. Demand for places on the Diploma programme now far outstrips places available, and a record number of students have progressed onto the B.Soc.Sc for the incoming academic year. However, the factors that sustained the programme through challenging years may inform other higher education institutions seeking to develop similar initiatives.

Implications for policy and practice

This community partnership programme is an example of an initiative that seeks to widen participation while also providing professional education on addressing problematic substance use within disadvantaged communities. This is a complex approach to responding to the complex issues of disadvantage, exclusion, lack of educational access and deeply ingrained community norms of substance

use within some urban communities in Ireland. At the core of the programme is the relationship between the educations providers and the students, and the structuring and delivery of a programme that models respect, acknowledges educational deficits and centre stages the value of students' lived experiences within their communities. The challenges and learning points outlined illustrate the significant resourcing such a programme requires, particularly in relation to teaching delivery and student supports. However, the high completion rates and educational achievements attained by students, as well as the positive impact on employment (McCann, 2012), indicate the success of the programme in addressing educational disadvantage within the target communities.

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Dr Sarah Morton is Director of the Community Partnership Drugs Programme. She has extensive experience in research, policy and practice in relation to addressing complex issues including domestic violence and substance use and has a special interest in access and progression routes for learners that are typically excluded from higher education.

Dr Laura O'Reilly

Dr Laura O'Reilly is the Co-ordinator of Urrús Addiction Training Centre, Ballymun Youth Action Project. With many years working in the drug and alcohol sector, recently her work has focused on the progression pathways of substance users into education and employment, as well practitioner and organisational capacity building to respond effectively to drug issues.

Crumlin Olympic Challenge at UCD Physio Hub

Crumlin Olympic Challenge at UCD Physio Hub:

Cunningham, C., Blake, C., Cradock, K., Delaney, E., Mageean, C., Purcell, C., Mc Mahon, S.

Access Symposium Presenting Author July 2017:

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Abstract

UCD Physio Hub facilitates UCD-community outreach projects, affording UCD students the opportunity to engage in 'real world' projects in partnership with typically underserved communities. Active citizenship is encouraged via student-led projects, including the successful 'Crumlin Olympic Challenge', a physical activity promotion project for school children with a disability.

Background

The Physio Hub was founded at UCD Sport in Spring 2015 by Dr Caitriona Cunningham, Dr Catherine Blake, and Dr Sinead McMahon, all members of the UCD Physiotherapy academic team.

A key driver for the development of the Physio Hub was the need for health professional curricula to map to society's health needs and to connect health directly to larger political, social, and economic issues (Steketee, 2013). Critical to the development of the Physio Hub was a recognition of the potential of UCD's infrastructure, staff, and students to act as a community resource, with associated service learning opportunities. A summary of drivers for the development of the UCD Physio Hub is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Key Drivers for the Development of UCD Physio Hub

Graduate Employment Challenges & opportunities	— Changes in the graduate employment landscape with fewer 'traditional' hospital and rehab based posts — Need for alternative, innovative clinical education models to optimise graduate employment opportunities, facilitate extended scope of practice (portfolio worker opportunities, health promotion).
Graduate Attributes - Meeting Society's Health Needs	— Need to respond to society's health needs, with management of chronic/ lifestyle diseases critical (Healthy Ireland DoHC, 2013). — Recognition of importance of health promotion and exercise prescription in curriculum and key position of physiotherapists in the health workforce tasked with delivering the Healthy Ireland priorities. — Shift in emphasis from tertiary to primary healthcare (DoHC, 2001 Primary Care Strategy) — Development of 'advocacy' skills as required by Physiotherapy accrediting Bodies (WCPT, 2016), including advocating for clients with disability.
Providing unique and important Clinical Learning Opportunities	— Opportunities to facilitate theory-practice transfer identified as a gap in exercise curriculum review process (O Donoghue et al., 2011) — Challenges in Clinical Education capacity with a lack of primary and community care and community exercise learning opportunities (Mc Mahon et al., 2014).
Recognition of UCD's Resources	— Sports and exercise infrastructure on UCD campus with scope to optimise student learning experience. — Excellent Physiotherapy Students who have meaningful contribution to make to UCD and the wider community.
Physiotherapy- led community exercise programmes - Restructuring Student contribution	Formal restructuring of student contribution and associated learning opportunities related to Physio-led Community exercise Programmes: — UCD Get in Gear (Blake and Keane, 2006). — UCD Better Bones (Cunningham and Mc Carthy, 2012). — UCD Physiotherapy student services to Sports clubs (Mc Carthy, 2008). — UCD Better Hearts (Cradock, 2016; UCD Get in Gear, 2017).
Community Engagement and Service Learning Opportunities	— Recognition of opportunities to develop initiatives for underserved populations — Service learning opportunities within wider community — UCD strategy: to provide best educational experience, to build engagement locally, nationally and internationally, to become a preeminent, diverse and inclusive scholarly community of students, faculty and staff, to improve quality of research, scholarship and innovation (UCD strategy, 2015-2020).

UCD Physio Hub

UCD Physio Hub is a dedicated facility at UCD Sport from which Chartered Physiotherapists, supported by students promote physically active and healthy lifestyles for the local and wider community, with the Hub model facilitating community outreach activities. Development of the Physio Hub evolved from a long-standing, successful collaboration between UCD Sport and UCD academic Physiotherapy team, with previously established UCD Get in Gear (Blake , Keane 2006) and Better Bones (Cunningham C, Mc Carthy U, Blake C, 2012) programmes and an ongoing sports physiotherapy partnership. (in UCD Get in Gear).

Hub Mission

"To optimise the health of our students, sports club members, staff and the wider community through the provision of evidence informed health screening and promotion, sports rehabilitation and exercise services, led by health professionals and supported by Health Science students. Underpinning this is a philosophy of integrating service provision with student education and research consistent with best international practice"

Advocating and developing community initiatives for underserved populations including individuals with disability the socio-economically disadvantaged, the more sedentary student population, older people and members of the traveller community represents some of the core work of the Physio Hub team,

Teaching and Learning at UCD Physio Hub

Physio Hub learning integrates with the existing Physiotherapy clinical education model, with the Hub placement representing one of six clinical education modules which Physiotherapy students undertake as part of their professional programme. Under the supervision of dedicated Physiotherapy practice tutors, over fifty BSc and Professional MSc physiotherapy students have completed clinical work placements, (each lasting four to six weeks) at the Physio Hub since its foundation. The usual Physiotherapy student assessment procedures for clinical education apply, including the use of the national 'common assessment form' (Coote et al., 2007). A unique clinical education experience is provided via the Hub - the community gym context versus a hospital environment, with an emphasis on health promotion versus rehabilitation and a focus on development and delivery of community outreach initiatives. Based on social constructivist learning theory (Surgenor, 2010) students are encouraged to collaborate, be creative to co-construct knowledge in a community gym context to address community health needs, including those of the typically

underserved populations. Students engage with student and community clients on campus via the community exercise programmes. Community outreach activities see students learn in a variety of real world settings: local sports clubs, mainstream primary schools, schools for children with special needs, farmer events, traveller health projects, and disability organisations. This learning is facilitated by embedding an action based learning project in each placement (Cunningham, 2014). Student performance is assessed using a variety of innovative assessment tasks including the delivery of project presentations to stakeholder groups, generation of health promotion materials, development of exercise programme logs, evaluation of physical activity data, all of which are critical skills for health professionals. Emphasis is placed on teamwork, with opportunities for peer learning and support. Two such action learning community projects have focused on sports inclusion for children with disability: the 'Sports for all' disability inclusion initiative at UCD Kids' camps, and the 'Crumlin Olympic Challenge Project'.

Sport and Exercise for all at UCD

UCD is committed to being an inclusive University with a diverse student cohort (UCD strategy, 2015-2020) and prides itself on its top class sporting facilities and attracting students with outstanding sporting ability (UCD Sport, 2017). Thus, initiatives, which encourage individuals with a disability to engage in sport and exercise, map well to UCD's overall ethos. Children with a disability are known to engage in less physical activity compared to their typically developing peers (Shields, 2016) and barriers to such participation include a lack of knowledge and skills, the child's preferences, fear, parental behaviour, negative attitudes to disability, inadequate facilities, lack of transport, lack of programmes and staff capacity, and cost (Shields, 2012). Physio Hub Partnership projects were established with Enable Ireland and Scoil and Coláiste Eoin, Crumlin, to help overcome such barriers and facilitate related student learning.

Disability Inclusion Projects

A Disability Inclusion partnership was established with Enable Ireland and UCD Sport staff, leading to an enhancement of support mechanisms to further enhance inclusion of children with a disability at UCD multisport Kids' camps. This initiative sees Physiotherapy students train and act as camp instructors as part of their work placement at UCD Physio Hub. They thus provide an additional resource, bringing their knowledge of adapting physical activity and a positive participatory approach to the UCD Kids' camp team. Child and parent feedback has been very positive, with further supported camps planned, related student research projects completed (De Loughery et al., 2017), and student disability inclusion learning outcomes being met.
More recently, a partnership was established

with Scoil and Coláiste Eoin, Crumlin, primary and secondary schools in Crumlin, Dublin 12, which specialise in providing education programmes and structures to cater for the individual needs of students (approx. 140) with mild learning difficulties. Enabling students to access mainstream school curricula and examinations, where possible, is core to the ethos of these schools. UCD Physio Hub was invited to become involved with a view to further enhancing the physical education programme at the school. An overview of the Crumlin Challenge project is outlined in Figure 1. Stage 1 included stakeholder consultations and a needs assessment survey to prioritise the Crumlin pupil and staff needs in relation to physical education and to plan how best UCD Physiotherapy might contribute.

Stage 2 saw UCD physiotherapy students developing and delivering physical activity education and active exercise sessions with Scoil Eoin teachers and pupils using the analogy of training for the Olympics to enhance accessibility of messages (Figure 3). This culminated in a Physiotherapy-led multi-sport activity day at UCD (Figure 4), with ninety pupils and teachers from Scoil Eoin enjoying the on-campus University experience, not only because of the opportunity to meet Olympic athlete and Physiotherapy student, Ciara Mageean, but also stepping onto a university campus for the first time for most of the students. Stage 3 is ongoing at the Physio Hub, with further physical activity promotion activities planned at Scoil Eoin and a formal participant evaluation underway.

Stage 1 Building Partnership	Stage 2 Intervention	Stage 3 Evaluation and sustained Partnership
— Inital consultation: building partnerships — Needs assessment survey & meetings with teachers	— Education day in Crumlin with teachers (fig 3) — Physical activity day in Crumlin with pupils — Design and fomatting of exercise videos introduced on interactive boards for teachers to use at intervals throughout the day — Physical activity day in UCD multi sport camp designed and planned by UCD students (fig 4)	— Formal Evaluation - ongoing — Ongoing UCD -Crumlin partnership.

Figure 1. Crumlin Olympic Challenge - Stages 1 to 3

Discussion

There is an increasing expectation that contemporary universities produce work ready graduates (McAllister and Nagarajan, 2015); individuals who, not only think and practice in the ways of their chosen profession, but who also have the capability to develop beyond those defined capabilities (Barradell, 2017). The Physio Hub at UCD provides opportunities for exercise and health promotion initiatives in partnership with community organisations, including those typically underrepresented among UCD students. The Hub model called for a blurring of the roles of student-educator and community; with sharing of power, expertise, and resources for a common mission (Butin, 2005). Students excelled when given the opportunity to drive this community initiative, providing health-related services and resources (Brush, Markert & Lazarus, 2006; Dorfman, Murty, Ingrma & Li, 2007; Lashley, 2007).

Conclusion

The Physio Hub at UCD provides a model for health and physical activity promotion initiatives in populations typically underrepresented among UCD students. This model can be utilised to enhance existing, and underpin new, community partnership projects, with scope for even greater levels of community participation and interdisciplinary learning opportunities.

Resources Generated

— A model and resource package (e.g. presentations for teachers and students physical activity diaries) for health and physical activity promotion initiatives for children from communities, generally underrepresented among UCD students (physical and intellectual disability; socioeconomically disadvantaged).Action learning module manual for service learning projects (Cunningham, 2014)

— Action learning module manual for service learning projects (Cunningham, 2014).

Figure 2. UCD Physio Hub Cofounders, 2015

Dr Sinead Mc Mahon, Dr Catherine Blake, Dr Caitriona Cunningham, UCD Physiotherapy. School of Public Health, Physiotherapy, Sport Science

Figure 3. UCD Physiotherapy Students leading Physical Activity education Session with Teachers at Coláiste Eoin, Crumlin, Spring 2017

Figure 4. UCD Physiotherapy Students leading Scoil & Coláiste Eoin students in Exercise group at UCD Sport, May 2017

Figure 5. UCD Physiotherapy Staff and Students with SPARC and UCD Sport Representatives - Scoil & Coláiste Eoin Activity Day UCD Sport , April 2017

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 @UCDPhysiohub

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Access & Lifelong Learning (ALL) Collaborative Outreach with Southside Traveller Action Group

Access & Lifelong Learning (ALL)
Collaborative Outreach with Southside Traveller Action Group
Fiona Sweeney and Thomond Coogan

Abstract

This article is written to augment a presentation given at an E.A.N. conference[1], on the emerging relationship between UCD Access & Lifelong Learning Centre (ALL) and Southside Traveller Action Group (STAG). The paper offers an overview of ALL's Collaborative Outreach programme, and also of the Irish Traveller Community. The paper focuses on Education and the Traveller Community, and describes UCD's work in raising aspirations and increasing educational participation by this group.

Irish Travellers

Travellers account for less than 1% of the population in Ireland, yet the numeric imbalance between the Traveller and non-Traveller communities may be seen a harbinger of inequity and tension between the two. The relationship is complex and frequently tests the value systems and identity of both groups. McGréil in his report on the attitudes and prejudices of the wider population towards Travellers writes that failure to emancipate Travellers is shameful (McGréil, 2010). That is not to say that Travellers, no less than non-Travellers, are a homogenous group, and that within their community a variety of lived experiences exist. This is noted by Martina Hegarty: 'Travellers retain within their own community an internal class system, a spectrum of possession and privilege, with some of the associated trappings of wealth and poverty.' (Hegarty, 2013, p. 71). Traveller experience is acknowledged as one that includes racism and discrimination. Traveller rights organisation Pavee Point states that the dominant view of Travellers in Ireland

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has been that Travellers are some sort of 'deviant settled people', and the solution to the Traveller 'problem' has been to turn Travellers into settled people (Paveepoint, 2017). Likewise, Bryan Fanning observes that a recurring theme in response to Travellers has been that of a homogenous society under threat. He states that it **'would be difficult to exaggerate the extent of racism and discrimination against Travellers in Irish society and the extent to which it remains justified within racialized discourses that depict Travellers as deviant and inferior.'** (Fanning, 2012, pp. 5-6). Across a range of measures the Traveller Community fare significantly worse than non-Travellers. A recent ESRI[2] report documents the **'extreme disadvantage'** suffered by Travellers across a range of indicators, including health, housing, education, employment, and premature mortality (Watson, Kenny, McGinnity, 2017, p. 68).

Despite a history of nomadism and distinctive cultural traditions there has been limited recognition of Traveller identity in political and social terms. They have been subject to a range of failed policies ranging from assimilationist to integrationist and only recently to intercultural acceptance (Fanning, 2012; Hegarty, 2013). In 2006, responding to the level of inequality experienced by Travellers, the Equality Authority recommended that they be recognised as an ethnic minority. This status was only

granted in March 2017, and came following U.N. recommendations, pressure from the E.U., and years of campaigning by Traveller and other Human Rights groups. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties state that recognition of Traveller ethnicity will mark a turning point in how Travellers are treated in Irish society and a final **'moving away from Government policies over the past 50 years which viewed Travellers as the object of assimilationist policies.'** (Irish Times, 2017). Census figures (2016) show that the number of Travellers is 30,987, with 6,006 living in Dublin County and 44% of that number living in Dun Laoghaire and South County Dublin. Both are in UCD's catchment area.

Education and the Traveller Community

Education is recognised as a basic human right[3]. It is defined by Baker et al as a competition for advantage in an unequal society, and as a public, as well as a personal, good (Baker, Lynch, Cantillon, & Walsh, 2009). Compelling evidence suggests that Travellers are among the most educationally disadvantaged in Ireland, yet during Ireland's financial crisis cuts to Traveller-specific education amounted to 80% (Lynch, 2014). The significance of education for Travellers, both the extent of their educational disadvantage and the importance of education in enabling them to move out of unemployment and poverty is

clear. (Watson et al, 2017). The reality is that, for well documented reasons[4], Travellers are not active consumers of education (Fanning, 2012; Baker, Lynch, Cantillon, & Walsh, 2009; Watson et al., 2017). Traveller parents' formative experiences influence their construction of education for their children. **'The understandings they have about how the system works are based on their own memories of social segregation, academic disregard and public humiliation….'** (Hegarty, 2013, p. 185). Another complicating factor is the reluctance of some Travellers to step outside their own culture and the pressures imposed by some Travellers on others, which block progression in both education and employment (Fanning, 2012, p. 166).

Only 13% of this ethnic minority are completing post-primary education. The disparity between Travellers and non-Travellers in terms of education completed is so large that The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education set a national target figure of 80 students in third level education, rather than a percentage increase as for other under-represented groups[5]. Watson et al conclude the depth of educational disadvantage experienced by Travellers warrants targeted additional supports in order for them to participate in mainstream education (Watson, Kenny, McGinnity, 2017, pp. 74-77).

UCD ALL Outreach Approach and our local Traveller Community

Access & Lifelong Learning (ALL) has developed an outreach approach that supports the HEA's *National plan for Equity of Access to Higher education 2015-2019*, and UCD's Strategic Objective 5: 'to attract and retain an excellent and diverse cohort of students'[6].

The outreach approach aims to:

— Create awareness of third level opportunities particularly in UCD
— Create awareness and actively promote all progression opportunities to UCD
— Build confidence and develop knowledge about attending college
— Work collaboratively with colleagues within and outside UCD
— Develop effective community relationships
— Focus on geographical communities with low progression rates and organisational/ interest communities within the catchment of UCD
— Develop measures to effectively measure the impact of the outreach approach

The target groups include:

— First time mature students
— Students with a disability and, in particular, students with a physical or sensory disability

4 Including the experience of racism and marginalisation, the use of waiting lists and other exclusionary measures in schools
5 The current number in higher education is thought to be 35 (0.1%of entrants). (Higher Education Authority, 2015).
6 http://www.ucd.ie/strategy2015-2020/objectives/index.html

- — Students from socio- economic groups that have low participation rates in higher education.
- — Part-time and flexible learners
- — Further education award holders
- — Irish Travellers
- — Students who have attended DEIS Schools
- — Ex-offenders

Historically, ALL has worked collaboratively with the Department of Education and Skills and Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers on projects targeting Traveller primary pupils and their parents. Other Outreach activities included supporting the activities of STAG's Youth Group. However, projects and initiatives were ad hoc and reactionary. The new ALL community outreach approach seeks to target additional supports and be proactive in engaging with the Traveller community both on a local and national basis. A number of opportunities facilitated UCD in arriving at this point including the National Access Plan, and the dialogue and research which emerged from the EAN 2016 conference, and a Traveller Access to Third Level Seminar[7].

It's a cultural thing – or is it?
Play, staged at UCD for E.A.N. conference, by playwright, actor and Traveller, Michael Collins.

The findings and recommendations which emerged were: the need for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to proactively engage with local Traveller groups and Traveller culture; for HEIs to create awareness and clearly promote all entry routes; the need for Traveller specific scholarships and for places on specific third level courses to be ring fenced for members of the Travelling community. The provision of clear, accessible information on the range of supports available for students, including financial, child support, and crèche facilities and post entry supports is crucial. Finally, a peer to peer mentoring and support structure is identified as a valuable resource to be advanced as more members of the Travelling Community progress in education. Exchange House Ireland is a national

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7 Cork, October 2016.

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provider of Traveller specific frontline services where the distinct ethnicity, identity and experience of Travellers is acknowledged, celebrated and respected. ALL has historic links with Exchange House, but more recent engagement focuses on the promotion of a UCD Traveller specific scholarship which will be promoted though the Exchange House national network. We aim to explore further synergies and expand on this relationship. On a more local level, ALL has also established a collaborative partnership with Southside Traveller Action Group (STAG), and the Institute of Art and Design Dun Laoghaire (IADT). The first aim of this partnership is to build an effective working relationship with local Traveller families, with the goal of improving third level access and progression to UCD and IADT for Traveller students of all ages. A second aim is to develop collaborative activities that support and complement STAG's on-going work.

STAG's educational remit is organised around three key groups.

1. The TASK programme (Training Awareness Skills Knowledge programme) for young people aged between 16 – 34 who are undertaking a level 4 QQI-FET course in employment skills.

2. The Primary Health Care initiative, aimed at improving the health and life expectancy of the Traveller community in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area. Travellers are trained as primary health care workers and provide health information directly to the community through home visits, and support individual Travellers in accessing health services.

3. The Children and Young Peoples programme works with young people aged between 10 and 21. This group operates from a Critical Social Education model of youth work, which seeks to provide young people with the opportunity to actively identify, explore, and participate in activities and issues of importance to them. The programme offers a range of social and sports programmes.

Through a consultation process with STAG, a programme of initiatives has been developed to specifically complement the work of these three strands of activity. For the TASK group, the initiatives are linked to their level 4 Communication and Career Planning Module and include workshops on visual communication skills and Chatology' sessions[8], presentation skills, interview preparation and an introduction to Entrepreneurship. These students will also have an opportunity to meet UCD and IADT students and spend a day in UCD and IADT through student shadowing days. For the Children and Youth programme, the focus is on sports nutrition and sports activities. Targeted initiatives will support the Primary Health Care workers through continued professional development workshops.

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8 A term coined in-house to denote informal classes and dialogue between UCD staff and TASK students on why education matters. Staff speak of their own journey in education and communicate what makes them passionate about their chosen field of study.

The activities are delivered by UCD and IADT staff and are offered on either campus or at the STAG centre. In addition, as part of the collaboration, members of STAG will deliver a workshop on Traveller culture and awareness to be UCD and IADT staff.

Other initiatives have also emerged as a result of the collaboration with STAG, UCD's Centre for Irish Folklore currently exhibit a Traveller Trailer project. It features a miniature chrome trailer, built by women from STAG, and includes recordings of their memories 'on the road'. The recordings speak of alienated lives, inadequate housing, and lost freedom. In telling their stories, the women reveal how Travellers' lived experience is impacted by social policies, including not travelling as a condition for receiving welfare payments. Traveller activist, Michael McDonagh explains that **'...for Travellers, the physical fact of moving is just one aspect of a nomadic mind-set that permeates every aspect of our lives'.** He writes that Travellers have a different attitude to life in general from the non-Traveller population - **'Just as settled people remain settled when they travel, Travellers remain Travellers even when they are not travelling'** (McCann, 1994, p. 95).

UCD's engagement with the TASK group specifically received impetus from an injection of funds from a UCD SPARC project.[9] The funding gave rise to two 'Welcome to UCD' collaborative initiatives, which were aimed at breaking barriers and pre-conceived ideas of education. The young people from TASK visited UCD for a tour of the Veterinary hospital, followed by a talk on horse healthcare from Veterinary lecturers[10]. The group was also welcomed to Rosemount Environmental Research Centre, where they learned about research projects taking place. A second welcome day is planned to take place in Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, when colleagues from the School of Archaeology will host the TASK group at a working archaeological site alongside UCD students.

In conclusion, the partnership and projects are in still in the early stages, and we are mindful that forging effective working partnerships will take time and dedication. Early indications are that on-going engagement is proving to be productive and satisfying for all partners in the partnership described above. Our aim and commitment is to maintain a platform for positive engagement in education by both our local and national Traveller community; to encourage and support their own initiatives, and to jointly establish sustainable solutions to educational disadvantage based on mutual respect and open communication.

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[9] The SPARC (Supporting Partnerships And Realising Change) programme enables UCD staff and students to work together on projects that make UCD and/or the surrounding community a better place to learn, work and live.
[10] The topic of the talk was chosen in consultation with the young Travellers and UCD students who volunteered to work with ALL staff on this project.

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Participation by geographic area

National Plan for Equality of Access to Higher Education 2015 -2019

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UCD in the Community

Dr Rhonda Wynne

Abstract

UCD in the Community aims to mirror the work of Campus Engage, the national network for civic and community engagement in higher education. This paper details the achievements and ambitions of Campus Engage, and elaborates on how this work is developing in UCD.

Introduction

Higher education institutions are increasingly keen to engage with society in a more structured and organised way. Engagement with wider society has been named as a core role of higher education in both the 'National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030' (Department of Education and Skills, 2011), and 'Towards a Performance evaluation framework: Profiling Irish higher education' (Higher Education Authority, 2013). This move towards greater consideration of engagement mirrors international trends. The 'engagement agenda' is considerably more advanced in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia where many institutions have senior engagement posts and engagement units.

Engagement is understood in multiple ways, but can broadly be deemed to have two dimensions: entrepreneurial and social. The entrepreneurial interpretation involves business and employer engagement, and is concerned with innovation and knowledge transfer. The social interpretation includes terms such as civic engagement, community engagement, and public engagement, all of which tap into the public good and democratic responsibility role of higher education. Such community engagement can take multiple forms including collaborative research projects, student and staff volunteering, public participation in science, and students learning in community settings. In Ireland, this work has been championed by Campus Engage, the national network to promote civic and community engagement in higher education. UCD in the Community has been established to mirror the work of Campus Engage. This article will detail how this is happening.

Campus Engage

Started as a project funded by the Strategic Innovation Fund with matching institutional funding, Campus Engage has had various iterations and membership. Presently, the network is made up of the seven universities and Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), and is based in the Irish Universities Association (IUA). There are similar networks around the world including Talloires Network (an international association), Campus Compact (United States), National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) (United Kingdom), AsiaEngage, South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum, Service Learning Network South America, and Engagement Australia. While organised and funded differently, with a slightly different focus in each jurisdiction, these networks have broadly similar aims to promote collaboration between higher education institutions and their communities for mutual and reciprocal benefit.

On June 16, 2014, twenty-three leaders of higher education institutions across Ireland came together in Dublin Castle to sign the Campus Engage Charter for Civic and Community Engagement. The signing of the charter indicated a willingness to enhance further the links between higher education and society. Subsequently, the institutions have worked collaboratively to agree a set of indicative actions which articulate and elaborate the ambitions of the Charter.

Campus Engage has four Working Groups. Three are directly related to student and staff engagement and collaboration with communities - Student Volunteering, Community Based Learning and Research, and Engaged Research. The fourth, Metrics and Evaluation, is considering how to capture this work in a meaningful way to argue for support, funding, resources, and recognition. This working group approach has contributed to the development of a community of practice and helped build capacity across the sector.

UCD in the Community is actively involved in these strands of work and in running the Science Outreach Lab, which aims to engage schools, predominantly from disadvantaged areas, in science education. Each strand of activity will now be outlined.

Studentvolunteer.ie

Studentvolunteer.ie is a national platform to promote student volunteering in higher education. Rather than each institution develop individual systems to match students with volunteer opportunities, studentvolunteer.ie brings a unified approach with each institution having its own website 'skin'. A number of institutions, with a proven record in student volunteering, came together to design the architecture of the website so that students can register and look for volunteer opportunities, and community organisations and charities can register to recruit volunteers. Since the platform was launched initially in September 2015, ten higher education institutions have signed up, 3330 students have registered to volunteer and 500 community organisations have listed opportunities. It was shortlisted in 2016 for the THINKTECH Awards.

THINKTECH is a €1 million Tech for Good fund, created by Social Innovation Fund Ireland with support from Google.org and the Irish Government, which aims to find and back tech based solutions to Ireland's critical social issues.

UCD launched its studentvolunteer.ie portal on December 5th 2016. UCD in the Community is now recruiting its own team of volunteers to work within UCD to promote volunteering and assist with the volunteer fair, community projects and training events. The Student's Union are also collaborating to promote the website and log volunteer opportunities within student clubs and societies.

Community Based Learning

Campus Engage has run a national training programme, Participate, to build capacity in developing community engaged learning and research for students. Community-based learning (CBL) is a form of experiential education, with a civic underpinning. It connects classroom learning with communities, and students gain academic credit for participating in, and reflecting on, a community project or experience. It is becoming more established as a pedagogical approach within higher education, as it involves students in 'real-life' learning, builds social and civic graduate attributes, and contributes to learning outcomes such as team work, communication skills, problem solving and leadership.

Community-based learning is organised variously, nationally and internationally, to reflect the multiple ways students can learn from community experiences. Students might work on a project, be engaged in research, or be involved in a community placement, or a combination of all three. One of the challenges is the assortment of terminology and multiple models, with subtleties and distinctions that are not always obvious. While there are various names for the activity - students learning in the community, service learning, community

engaged learning, science shop, engaged learning, community service initiative - the programmes have broadly similar ambitions to promote student civic learning outside the classroom in charities, community groups, civil society organisations, and non-governmental organisations. Assessment generally involves reflection, either through a portfolio, learning journal or structured writing task, to explore learning from the community experience. There is also an aspiration across the various models for the institution and community group to work in partnership for mutual benefit.

UCD in the Community now offers a hybrid volunteer/community-based learning module, Community, Volunteering and Leadership, for students who have volunteered for fifty hours or more. The module looks at active citizenship, community leadership, volunteering from a volunteer perspective in terms of motivations, skills, benefits, and from a volunteer management perspective with regard to legislation, policy, training, evaluation, and impact. The course considers the growing research in this area and all classes are run in a participative format to encourage student engagement and collaboration in the classroom, as well as beyond. Students are required to submit a portfolio which reflects on their identity as volunteers, and on what they have learned personally and professionally.

The module was piloted successfully in Spring 2017 and will be offered in both academic terms in 2017/2018.

Engaged Research

A significant achievement for Campus Engage was the launch, in December 2016, of the Engaged Research report, which elaborates a framework for conducting collaborative research with communities that involves both parties from the framing of a research problem through to dissemination of findings. The report has been endorsed by the Irish Research Council and The Wheel, amongst others, as increasingly funders place significant weight on the need for greater engagement with public research stakeholders, including public or professional service and product users, policy makers, civil and civic society organisations (CSOs), and other actors.

The report itself was developed collaboratively and eighty-five case studies of examples of engaged research were submitted from across the sector. UCD in the Community hosted a consultation session, where the Engaged Research Framework was proposed and discussed, and feedback then submitted to the editorial team. Now that the report has been publicly launched, workshops and training sessions are planned to promote the ideas, principles, and practices of collaborative research.

Metrics and Evaluation

As can be seen from these three strands, community engagement could potentially touch all spheres of higher education activity. The Campus Engage Metrics and Evaluation Working Group have been developing resources to assist institutions account for the multiple dimensions of civic and community engagement and campus community partnerships. Civic engagement networks, community engagement practitioners, and scholarly reports in this field, all stress the need for engagement work to be named, recognised, and rewarded if it is to prosper.

A significant challenge for mapping and reporting this work is that it is context specific, and organised differently in institutions, with personnel positioned across varying units from Access, Teaching and Learning, Research, to dedicated units, all with varying levels of responsibility, power and budget. Progress is hugely dependent on institutional priorities and committed leaders who recognise the contribution community engagement makes to society, as well as to academic endeavours.

The metrics group has collaborated with the HEA to influence and shape the development of future civic and community engagement metrics, as, currently, they are not required to account for this work in any meaningful way.

Conclusion

The Campus Engage activities have been influential in putting civic and community engagement on the agenda within higher education in Ireland. Through the working groups, events, training workshops, and resources that have been developed collaboratively, there is now a growing number of people involved in developing, promoting and advocating for community engagement activities. UCD in the Community is now building on this body of work and expertise locally while also contributing to the national community engagement conversation.

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Dr Rhonda Wynne is based in UCD in the Community, a new unit aiming to build community links, promote engaged research, and encourage student volunteering. Rhonda has represented UCD on Campus Engage working groups developing the National Charter on Civic and Community Engagement and metrics resources and tools.

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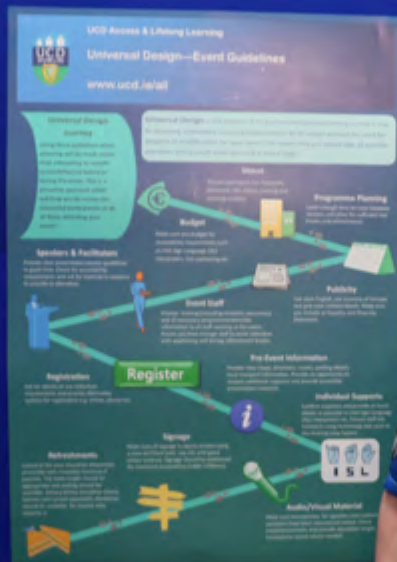
L-R Dr Anna Kelly and
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Access Symposium Proceedings

Supporting Adult Learners: An Integrated Student Support Framework

Collins, K., Kendlin, V. and O'Brien, O.

Abstract

As the population of higher education changes, institutions are having to rethink supports needed by a diverse population, with student supports being rethought. Central to this process is understanding the student. This case study provides an insight into the innovative student supports on the Bachelor of Business Studies programme at the UCD College of Business.

Keywords: Higher education, student support, adult learner, mature student academic skills, student profiles

Introduction

Ireland has seen a rise in the number of new entrants to part time courses and an increased international recruitment drive has diversified the student populations in all HEIs (HEA, 2015). These changes to student profiles create opportunities and challenges for developing academic supports (Hendry and Farley, 2006).

Specific academic skills required at university level which students find challenging include academic reading, academic writing, and critical thinking. Increasingly, it is acknowledged that students need to be provided with ongoing support to develop in these areas and transform their thinking skills during a programme of study. In recent years, there has also been an increase in the number of studies which have explored the provision of academic supports at universities, including those of Hattie et al. (1996), Wingate (2006), O'Brien and Dowling-Hetherington (2013), and Menis (2017). As Wingate suggests (2007, p.395), there is an experience of 'learning to learn', where students experience a

complex process of changing learning habits and perceptions (2007, p.395). While there are many opportunities linked with the provision of such academic interventions to assist students in developing these skills, embedding such provisions within the curriculum of programmes requires profound changes to the programme design and structure (Drummond et al., 1999).

This article explores the academic support framework in situ at the Bachelor of Business Studies programme at the UCD College of Business. An insight into current research in this area is provided before a short discussion of the case study commences.

Challenges faced by Adult Learners

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can be perceived as intimidating for adult learners, particularly for students that have had previous negative educational experiences (McGivney, 1996). There have been a wide range of policy initiatives at national level that have focused on increasing mature student enrolments (The Qualifications Act, 1999; Equal Status Act, 2000; National Plan for Achieving Equity of Access 2008-2013; The Hunt Report, 2011), but these have not addressed the challenges adult learners face once in higher education. These challenges include family responsibilities, mental health issues, and lack of financial support to undertake programmes of study (Fleming, 2013). In addition, adults tend to

lack confidence in their academic abilities, particularly at the start of an education programme (Ross-Gordon, 2003). The skills of information gathering, research, and critical evaluation are complex, amorphous, and are new to adult learners as a discrete skill-set (Rapchak et al., 2015). They can drive anxiety and negative perceptions of a student's own ability.

Considering that the majority of adult learners are primarily enrolled in part-time education programmes (Kasworm, 2003), the classroom is the focal point of their college experience and this is the time to address fears of deficiencies in academic skills (Ross-Gordon, 2003). It is not surprising that, in university mentoring schemes, the mentoring function used most frequently by mentees was academic support (Gershenfeld, 2014).

Approaches to Academic Skills

As well as the attention in policy provision for adult learners in recent years, interest has grown in approaches to student academic development (Cottrell and Jones, 2003; Durkin and Main, 2002; Wingate, 2006; Putwain, Sander and Larkin, 2013). Three key structures to support students are previously evident in the literature.

1. The 'bolt-on' approach' (Wingate, 2006) suggests institutions offer 'extracurricular 'academic skills courses' (Wingate, 2006, p.457), which are separate to the

disciplinary programme of study being undertaken and are usually provided by an institutional learning support service, rather than by the programme. Such an approach is limited, as it results in the separation of academic skills from subject content and knowledge (Wingate, 2006).

2. The 'built-in' approach (Durkin and Main, 2002) ensures that discipline content and academic skills development cannot be divorced. Such an approach is welcome, but there is a danger, particularly in a module system, that each module effort is isolated, rather than programmatic.

3. O'Brien and Hetherington (2013) suggested a third approach, called the 'Build Up', which, not only ensures that each module has built in academic support, but that it is managed across a programme and progressively throughout a programme. This approach advocates discipline specific academic skills modules, coupled with the use of a managed programme approach to academic skills development. This 'build-up' approach facilitates students to 'build-up' their academic skills in a structured and progressive manner throughout the duration of their studies. It allows assessment and formative feedback to incrementally develop students' academic skills with the support of a dedicated academic liaison. The use of assessment is managed at a programme level and ensures that academic modules are meshed with the discipline-based

modules and within the overall framework of academic support. This article now discusses an example of the 'build-up' approach and suggests it as a useful support to meet the needs of a diverse part-time student cohort.

CASE STUDY: Build Up Approach to Academic Skills, Bachelor of Business Studies

This section of the paper presents a case study of the progressive and discipline driven approach adopted by UCD College of Business for the development of academic support on the Bachelor of Business Studies part-time programme at the UCD College of Business. The programme is the four-year part-time Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) Level 8 degree (a Level 7 Diploma is awarded at the end of Year 2). The programme is specifically aimed at mature students entering higher education who are currently in the workplace. It is delivered through a blend of home study and occasional weekend attendance on campus. The development of the academic support framework is central to the programme's design. The programme celebrated its 20 year anniversary in the academic year 2016/2017.

Student Profile

As the Bachelor of Business Studies is designed for mature students with work

experience, students must be at least 23 years old on admission. To select suitable candidates, attention is given to applicants' motivation and career development. To be admitted on the basis of matriculation, students must have successfully completed certain subjects at Leaving Certificate Examination (Department of Education). To ensure that applicants are well-briefed and motivated for the further study, candidates are invited to attend for interview.

The programme now has 16% of its intake from financial services, but growth in the pharma and e-business means that we have increasing numbers from these sectors. In particular, the course has seen a strong growth in participants from Ireland's thriving multinational sector. Despite a challenging few years in Ireland's domestic banking sector, interest levels from that sector in the course have remained steady throughout.

The course's growing popularity has been based on middle managers being motivated for conceptual knowledge about how the business world operates, even if they missed out on a chance to acquire this academic knowledge earlier in their career. The programme leverages students' real-world experience and they are actively encouraged to share experiences and critique theories and frameworks against their own praxis-based knowledge. This mutual engagement and lively class discussions enhances the student learning experience and increases confidence in their ability to succeed (Dwyer

et al., 2013).

All students have chosen to equip themselves with further education and, as a result, are highly motivated. However, studies have shown (Kasworn, 2010; Kemp, 2002) that high levels of anxiety surrounding students' perceptions of their own abilities and their acceptance as learners within the wider University community often fuels their engagement with academic skills "learning to learn" modules. The success of the 'Build Up' approach used by the UCD College of Business is directly related to the students' need for academic skills and the College of Business' understanding and active support of this need.

Programmatic Academic Support

The UCD College of Business has adopted a discipline-driven approach to the development of academic support among its part-time students. Content and assessment is customised to meet the specific needs of student cohorts taking the discipline based modules in each of the four years of the degree programme. The content, classroom delivery, and module assessment are designed and managed centrally at a programme level by the LSO. The approach to academic skills development among its part-time undergraduate students is the progressive 'build-up' of students' skills through a series of collective and individual interventions at key stages throughout the four-year programme.

The student support framework puts the non-traditional learner in higher education at the centre of its goals. The framework includes the provision of programme-based Learning Support Officers (LSOs). These LSOs are responsible for providing ongoing support to students on all aspects of their programme, handling both academic and administrative queries. The LSO provides regular individual and group academic support to students (Ryan and Dowling, 2006). They closely monitor a student's progress, with frequent contact and a strong presence when students are on campus. The approach adopted by the UCD College of Business recognises the progressive nature of academic skills development during a student's programme of study. In providing guidance to students on academic material, close collaboration is required with LSO staff and the module coordinator/lecturer responsible for delivering and assessing the modules. The LSO also regularly monitors how students are progressing through their programme across all modules. Such monitoring also assists the School in identifying those students who may require additional one-to-one academic writing support.

Diploma Stage: Building a Strong Foundation

The approach the College has taken to the development of academic development on the BBS degree is a gradual, staged, and progressive support over the duration of the programme. The approach to learner support is adapted to the stage the student is at. For example, there are two academic skills modules in Year 1: 'Introducing Academic Competencies' is offered in Semester 1, while 'Developing Academic Competencies' is offered in Semester 2. Both modules are compulsory, with five ECTS credits awarded upon the successful completion of each. Both modules draw on content from the programme curriculum. The Semester 1 module strives to support students to understand the fundamentals of academic writing (essay planning, essay structure, grammar/punctuation critical thinking, information literacy, and referencing) and in developing their general cognitive skills. The Semester 2 module aims to assist them in developing meta-cognitive skills and provides them with an opportunity to reflect on their own academic capability. This module covers more advanced information literacy, analytical and critical thinking, approaches to learning and understanding a student's own approach to learning. Ongoing support contributes to student retention, particularly amongst adult learners (Marques and Luna, 2005); attrition rates in Year 1 Diploma students is considerably lower than the national average (O'Brien, 2017).

Degree Stage: Developing and Refining Critical Thinking Skills

As a student progresses to later stages of the programme, demand for skills in critical thinking, evaluation, and synthesis escalates. Individual attention is given to these skills during the project-based modules in Year 3 and the dissertation in Year 4, where students are pushed to demonstrate their critical thinking, particularly through academic writing. To support this need, a workshop on the transition from Diploma to Degree is provided, with a further session focusing on the dissertation requirements targeted at Year 3 students moving to Year 4.

Conclusion

The changing in population of higher education is allowing for the exploration of more sophisticated methods of student support. Many approaches have been explored in the literature. In reviewing the needs of adult learners, it is clear that a 'bolt-on' or 'build-in' approach might not meet the needs of this unique student cohort. The case study provided here demonstrates the opportunity for an innovative student support, coupled with a programmatic approach to student development on a staged basis. The particular profile of this adult learner group appears well met, with a comprehensive and integrated approach to student support, which allows the student to develop at each stage of their programme.

The Learner Support Officer role, the specific academic skills modules, and programmatic approach to curriculum design and assessment work as a single support system.

While it is acknowledged that the case study outlined here is not based on empirical evidence, there is anecdotal evidence which suggests that a comprehensive approach can help to maintain and develop a vibrant, diverse mature student population within a university environment. The opportunities of 'learning to learn', while time consuming, serve a student well throughout the studies. More importantly, if properly managed, they provide students with a skill set which stands to them beyond their studies and into their career and beyond. This is what the university experience should ultimately be about - transformative learning. Learning which transforms thinking and the opportunities available to the student.

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Authors

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Kate has worked across the public, private, and not for profit sectors over the past 10 years. She joined UCD in 2012, firstly as an internship officer in the UCD Career Development Centre, followed by PhD Training Coordinator for the PhD Simulation Science, and most recently senior research programme manager for the Horizon 2020 project E-CAM. Kate has also lectured in Scientific Writing and Transferable Skills, both in UCD and Wageningen University, the Netherlands. Kate holds a PhD from the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) in the area of workplace learning (specifically exploring the use of the Recognition of Prior Learning in organisation training and development), a MSc in Marketing, also from DIT, and a BA from University College Dublin.

Valerie Kendlin

Valerie Kendlin has worked in a number of roles covering professional development, learning support, and educational management across the private and public sectors. A qualified librarian, she managed information services for UCD's Law and Business Schools and worked as an Information Officer in the City of London with the corporate law practice, Weil Gotshal & Manges. Valerie has published in peer-reviewed journals on evidence-based decision making and in national newspapers on the verification of information sources in academic assignments. She has a strong interest in the use and evaluation of information to support student academic achievements and has delivered workshops and conference papers on this topic. She has a Masters in Library and Information Studies, and a BA and professional qualifications in training practice, teaching & learning and management. Valerie is a UCD and IMI graduate.

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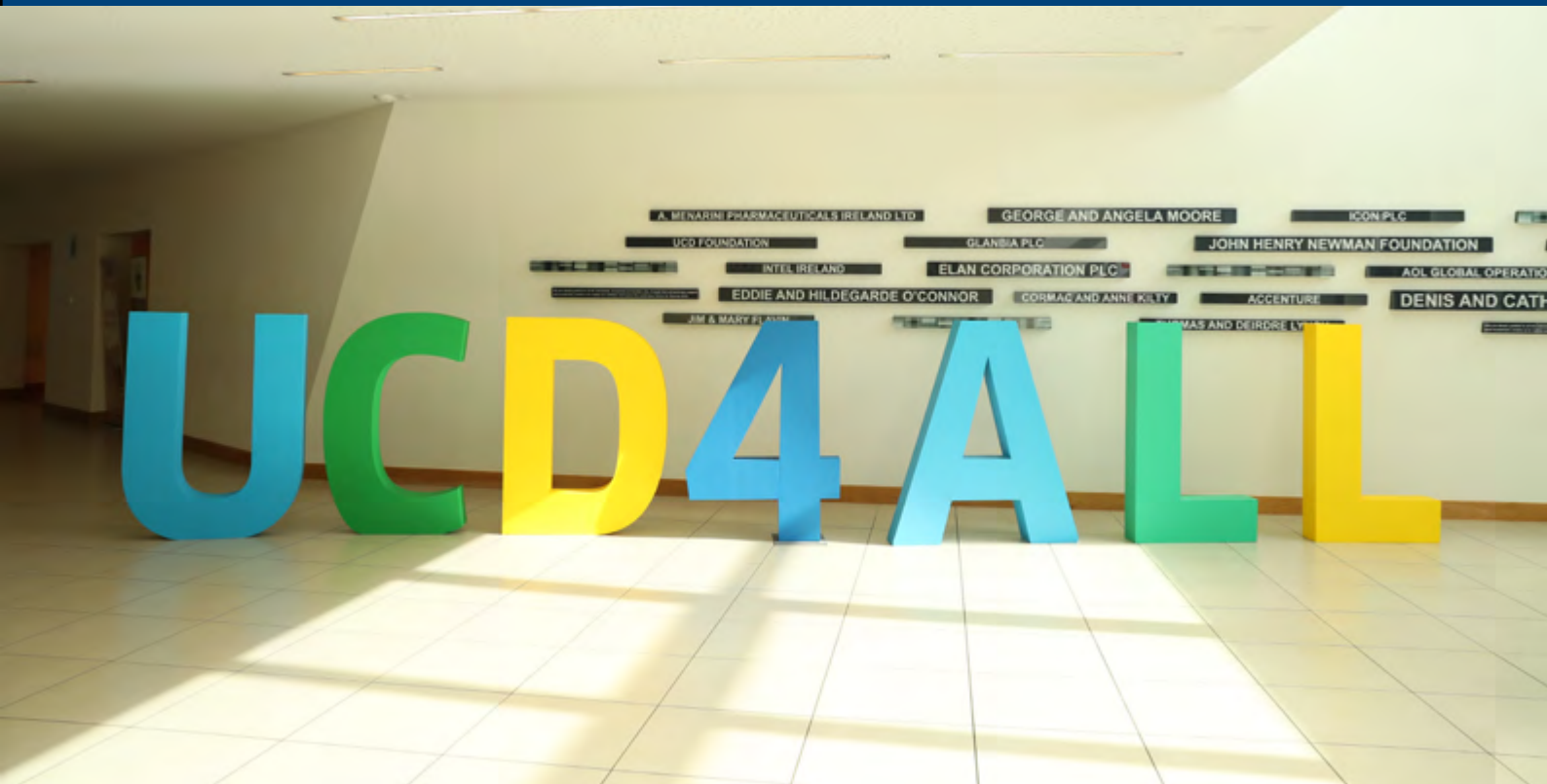
Library for All

Avril Patterson, UCD Library

Abstract

UCD Library's commitment to supporting all students equitably is outlined. Particular reference is made to supports for Access and Lifelong Learning (ALL) students. The importance of working collaboratively is stressed, as are the benefits of collaborative initiatives.

Introduction

UCD Library Strategy 2016-2020 embraces the University's values of excellence, integrity, collegiality, engagement, and diversity. One of the library's guiding principles is to treat all our users with dignity and respect and provide services with consistency and impartiality, assuring equity of access to services and facilities. The pun in the title of this short piece is intentional, as it denotes, not only inclusivity, but also focuses on how the library supports Access and Lifelong Learning (ALL), and the Widening Participation agenda.

The concepts of equality and equity are often confused. Equality means giving everybody the same – in this case, a box, whether or not it is necessary. Inherent in equity is a sense of justice – of fairness so that each gets what is needed. The library's commitment is to provide equity of access to services and facilities, thereby providing the necessary support to ensure that all students can "see over the fence" and so become independent learners.
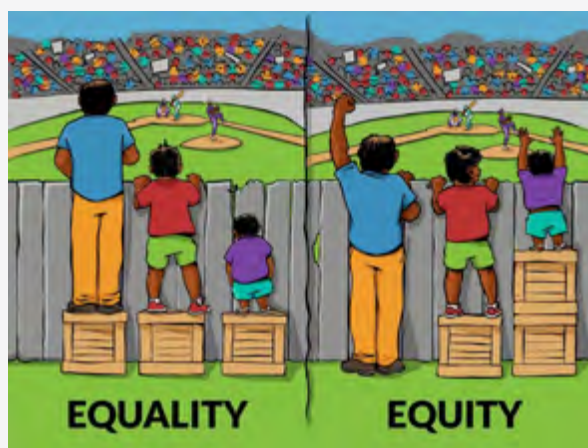
Interaction Institute for Social Change - Artist: Angus Maguire

Library as space

The library provides a safe, structured working environment, with a variety of study spaces – individual, group, and social. It

incubates critical thinking, creativity, and inquiry. Students' first impressions of the University and student life are gleaned through the Orientation programmes. Conscious of this, the library's aim is to provide a welcoming physical and online environment. Its orientation programme is multi-stranded, commencing with "Pop-ups" across campus during Orientation week to ensure incoming students become aware of the library and its services. Trained peer mentors provide library tours during Orientation Week, and this is followed in the first week of Semester with activities within the library to enable students to use the library services and resources confidently. Following through on our commitment to equity, additional orientation support is provided for identified cohorts. For instance, we work closely with Access and Lifelong Learning to tailor orientation for DARE students, which is included in a package with Writing and Maths Supports. Designated tailored information sessions for mature students are essential, as many of these students are returning to learning, some after many years. Similarly, Access students' sessions are organised generally in Weeks 3 and 4 of Semester, when the first assignments have been given. As with the mature students embarking on degree programmes, it must be remembered that some of these students may have no experience of using libraries. They can experience library anxiety, seeing library space and operations as overwhelming and confusing. Equally, it is worth remembering

that the courses, on which these students have embarked, carry potentially life changing consequences, especially for first generation entrants, and those for whom university never before seemed like a viable option. Ripple effects within their social sphere are also possible consequences.

Services

Clearly, supports do not cease when Orientation activities are over. In all five library locations, there is a staffed information desk service for individual assistance, ensuring continuity and consistency of support. In addition, a designated staff member is available to help students with particular needs. This support is arranged in collaboration with ALL's Disability Advisor. Whereas group study rooms are available to all students within the library, they can be made available for individual use to students with particular needs registered with ALL. Again, this is in collaboration with the Disability Advisor, with whom the library has a close relationship.

The Library also liaises with ALL to ensure website and library communications adhere to universal design and accessibility protocols.

Existing rights for disability access are copied across to the recently installed temporary card kiosk, so staff intervention is no longer necessary when a temporary card is used. This service enhancement will

no doubt be appreciated next semester, as it supports self-service and independence.

Collaboration

Collaboration is vital for the provision of bespoke services. Earlier this year, an initiative involving Library, ALL, and the Vice President for Students resulted in the development of a Respite Room for students with narcolepsy. The repurposing of a single study room in the library was in itself a learning experience, as it involved improving fire alarms, ensuring access to the space was made available to the particular cohort, while also ensuring it was included in the library's evacuation and closing procedures, and also that Health and Safety criteria were met. ALL provided appropriate furniture, and terms and conditions of use were drafted and agreed between the Library and ALL, who also administers the Google Calendar used for booking. The financial support of the Vice President for Students was essential for this development, and ought to be acknowledged also. Although only in use in the latter half of Semester 2, it was heartening to see that the facility was used regularly, thus relieving some of the difficulties experienced by students with this condition. It is possible that access to this facility may be extended to include students with other conditions with similar requirements.

Widening Participation

For the past five years, the library has made its space available to Leaving Certificate students for study purposes in the period following the UCD exams, in the lead up to and period of the Leaving Certificate. This provides a structured environment for individual study, but with a social dimension, as students work alongside their peers. It is extremely popular with pupils from schools in the immediate vicinity. The small fee payable is waived for DEIS school pupils, and thanks to the Students' Union, who underwrite the cost, a U-CARD with €25 is also available to those pupils to help with campus costs. Details of the scheme are sent to targeted schools in early April each year, and a member of library staff attends the Future You Graduate ceremony to highlight the facility also. This year, 26 pupils from DEIS schools used the facility.

Employment

On a very practical level, tangible support for ALL students comes in the form of part time employment in the library. Since 2015, the library has targeted ALL students to work as student shelvers – re-shelving returned loans, participating in stock maintenance and stock moves as required, and providing directional assistance when working on the floors. This service is required in the four libraries on the Belfield campus, and operates as three shifts throughout the day from 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 pm. Students are generally allocated nine hours per week

so that the commitment does not affect study. This seems to be a "win –win", as from the library's perspective, the students have been reliable, committed, pleasant, amenable, and without exception they have been a joy to work with. Student feedback has indicated that, in addition to providing financial security, as in "bridging the Suzi gap", the part time work has developed their skill set, particularly in time management, organisational skills, and team work. One student observed that working in the library allowed her to develop these skills in a friendly and positive atmosphere. Perhaps the greatest proof of this pudding is that a group of students who worked in the library for the year preceding their Erasmus programme in China have now contacted us for work on their return in the coming academic year.

The Future

There is, of course, room for improvement. The Leaving Certificate programme could be strengthened with a specific campaign to local DEIS schools, and discussions with Future You have suggested possible avenues for collaboration. Similarly, the current Transition Year programme could be expanded with DEIS schools targeted in tandem with the Leaving Certificate programme. The cultural heritage collections could be made accessible to a wider audience, and there are suggestions for initiatives involving primary and second level pupils. The need for improved physical space for students with a disability is also recognised, and our experience with the Respite room is invaluable in this development.

Finally, the library's commitment to work together with Access and Lifelong Learning, to ensure that the values of equity expressed in UCD Library Strategy 2016-2020 (http://libguides.ucd.ie/ld.php?content_id=24541293) are delivered is assured, as its continuing involvement in contributing to the Widening Participation agenda.

Author

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Avril Patterson is currently User Services Manager in UCD Library. Prior to taking up this position in March 2015, she held a number of positions across the UCD library service. She is committed to the development and provision of user focused services. She is a member of the Widening Participation Committee, with a strong personal interest in its agenda, as she graduated as a mature student.

The Writing Centre: Developing Students' Self-Perception as Writers

Željka Doljanin

Abstract

This article explores the practices of the UCD Writing Centre. It shows how the measures implemented by the Centre, such as student-centered individual sessions, workshops devised around student needs, early intervention, and increased flexibility, help the Writing Centre support the students from underrepresented groups and to continue working on building the students' writing confidence.

The UCD Writing Centre provides free individual and group writing support to all undergraduate and postgraduate students of UCD. Experienced writing tutors work with students and help them to develop the ways in which they organise and communicate their knowledge and ideas in a written format. Our mission is to ensure that the students' subject or disciplinary expertise and critical thinking skills are not diminished by difficulties with, or fear of, any aspects of the writing process. In an effort to alleviate this fear and any writing anxiety that students might experience, we endeavour to increase students' confidence by offering useful strategies and tips for overcoming obstacles in the writing process. By offering these strategies and taking time to work on a piece of writing with students, we try to change, both the students' perception of the writing process (by placing the emphasis on exploring the ideas through writing and thereby not seeing writing as a quick process, separate from research and thinking), and the students' perception of themselves as writers and learners. While some students are confident in their own ability and academic performance, students from underrepresented groups, possibly due to previous difficulties with writing or long periods of not having written anything (mature students), may see themselves, and often describe themselves to the writing tutors, as 'bad at writing'. This article will examine the practices of the Writing Centre

and will show what the Centre does to change this misperception (seeing oneself as a 'bad writer') and to support these underrepresented groups. Addressing the students' specific needs in workshops and one-to-one sessions, remaining flexible, practicing early intervention, and evolving and adapting to student needs are some of the methods that have proven successful for the Writing Centre. Positive student feedback, collected from after-session feedback sheets and student survey, attests to the usefulness of these methods, and shows a strong correlation between the Writing Centre's approach and the rise in confidence, improved writing skills, and a more positive student experience in general (see charts 1 and 2, below, taken from the student survey completed in May 2017)
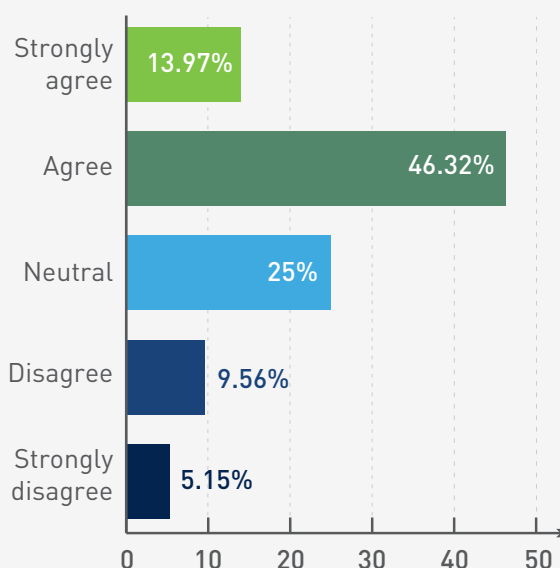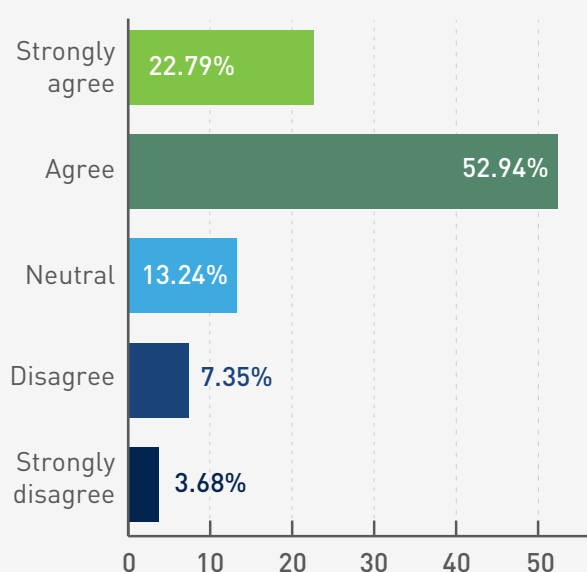

Chart 2
Q3: I feel more able to approach the next written assignment.

Writing Centre services: workshops/seminars and one-to-one sessions

The Writing Centre provides occasional workshops and seminars on different writing-related topics. These workshops provide a helpful introduction to various writing topics and are a place where students at different stages, from different disciplines, meet, ask questions, and engage in a discussion. The workshops, which are well received and well attended, are developed based on student needs and our records of the most common writing problems. These sessions might include the more practical workshops on 'Essay Structure', 'Using Secondary Sources', 'How to Write a Sentence', 'Editing and Proofreading', to the seminars aimed at postgraduate

Chart 1
Q4: I perform better overall as student because of my visit(s) to the Writing Centre.

or later-stages undergraduate students, such as 'Literature Review: Research, Purpose, Structure', 'Writing Analytically' or 'Academic Phrasing'. Our experience with incoming students and our participation in the Orientation week writing classes for HEAR students have prompted us to think very carefully about first-year students, who often approach their first written assignment without necessarily understanding the context of university, or fully knowing the register of their discipline or the conventions of the college writing. This thinking resulted in a new introductory seminar, 'Writing in College – What's Different?', which was designed to help the students to make the transition to college-standard writing and has proved to be more popular than we had anticipated. Similarly, our newest workshop, 'Overcoming Writing Anxiety', was devised after a number of students visiting the Writing Centre said that they: feel 'blocked'; have a fear of writing; feel overwhelmed by, or anxious about, their assignments; worry about criticism; have difficulty understanding the assignment task; are not sure where to start; or feel that they never have sufficient knowledge or information to attempt the assignment. Both workshops, each in its own way, aim to help students overcome their insecurities about college writing and to provide useful tools and strategies to work through these initial obstacles.
The following feedback, written by two mature students and sent to the Writing Centre after two different workshops, clearly shows the benefit of attending the sessions:

"

I'm a mature student who has not written an essay in 30 years and was anxious about the idea of doing one now. After the workshop ['Writing in College – What's Different?'] I now feel I have the skills to take on the task and might even enjoy it!

"

TThis and similar feedback attests to the fact that the students feel better equipped to carry out their assignments after attending the workshops. It also confirms to us that the approach we have taken – breaking down common writing problems into doable tasks, and devising new workshops when new issues or problems are identified by us or by students - is working to students' advantages and supporting students with a range of different needs. These individual needs are further recognized and explored in our individual sessions.

"

I attended the "How to Write a Sentence" session today. I have to say it was one of the most beneficial 50 minutes I have spent at UCD in the past 3 years. The Writing Centre is doing such great work. I only wish it had been fully up and running during my first year at UCD.

"

Mature Student

The Writing Centre's main role is to provide one-to-one sessions to students, and these sessions can be particularly useful for students from underrepresented groups: the sessions are highly student-centered, which means that the student sets the agenda and the pace, while the writing tutor and the student focus on the student's individual work and the students' specific writing issues. Regardless of what these issues are, the emphasis in the session is always on writing as a skill – a skill that can be learned and mastered. The 'neutral' position and non-judgmental attitude of Writing Centre tutors, who are not the students' lecturers or subject tutors and are therefore not here to grade or judge their work, enables the tutors to talk from the position of a 'fellow writer' or an 'ally'. The tutor and the student discuss a piece of written work, with the tutor asking questions and offering strategies for organising, phrasing, editing the work more effectively or for arguing a point more convincingly, encouraging the student to slowly take over, to work on the next section more independently, and to take ownership of his/her own writing. This means that both the student and the tutor spend time exploring possible solutions and thinking deeply about a piece of writing. The student learns the following important points: his/her work has merit and should be composed with focus and care; writing is a process and needs time; experienced tutors/writers also take time to look for solutions to argue a point or to re-arrange or rephrase parts of the work. Writing is a skill and all writers are still learners. This approach empowers the students and helps them to feel more confident and less inadequate as writers.

With our sessions devised in this way – student-centered, at a pace set by the student, in the form of a discussion, with the writing tutor as an 'ally' – we believe that both students' confidence and students' self-perception as writers can be changed.

While any student may come to the Writing Centre lacking confidence, it is particularly students with learning difficulties, mature students, or disadvantaged students who often feel that they need to constantly 'catch up'. This can include part-time students, who find that they do not have as much concentrated time for thinking and writing. This perceived disadvantage may lead the students to believe that they cannot be as good a writer as someone without these disadvantages, which, in turn, brings us back to the same problem – students' perception of themselves as poor writers. Again, by promoting academic writing as a skill that can be learned, we are working on dispelling this misperception. A study of the London Metropolitan University Writing Centre shows that discussing work with a writing tutor brings about, not only an increase in the students' writing confidence, but also in their self-perception: 'Instead of viewing themselves as passive recipients of knowledge, students began to see that they had the potential to contribute to the discourse within their discipline' (Raynolds,

2011). Therefore, one-to-one sessions, which enable tutors to adjust their approach, pace and language to suit individual students, have proved to be the best way of supporting the students who feel that they are failing to keep pace or do not possess enough knowledge or confidence to complete the assignment. Very often, the student's confidence receives a boost after a single session and the student feels enabled to go on. This is obvious in the two charts presented here: the chart below (Chart 3) shows that a great majority of students use the Writing Centre only once during an academic year, while Chart 4, shown later, shows that 90.8% of students report increased confidence after a single session.
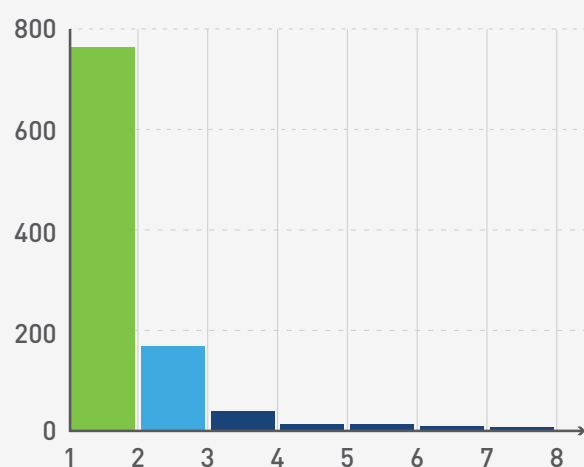

Chart 3
Repeat visits

Ensuring equality of opportunity for students from underrepresented groups

Apart from student-tailored one-to-one writing sessions, we have found that the best ways to work on expanding participation are early intervention and flexibility. Early intervention begins with transition year and fifth-year students from DEIS schools, who take part in a day long Writing Centre project called 'Writing as a Skill, Writing as Process, Writing as Practice'. Working with different tutors on a range of writing exercises, the students are given writing tips and are encouraged to think of writing as a skill that can be mastered with enough time, practice, and concentration, but also as a skill that will serve them throughout their lives. Having benefitted from the classes and enjoyed a UCD tour, these students might consider UCD as an option for their studies. Starting early by attending writing classes during Orientation has also benefited incoming HEAR students, as feedback from their Student Advisors shows. Since 2012, our tutors have been invited to deliver 3-hour writing workshops to these students, helping to familiarise the students with the conventions of college essay writing, and helping with effective reading strategies, managing reading lists, understanding the assignment task etc. The Writing Centre reaches other underrepresented groups during Orientation week, delivering talks, presentations or workshops (e.g. our tutors have been involved in Mature Students'

Writing Academy) to show the students, who might benefit from writing instruction, that the service is there for them. In collaboration with these groups' Student Advisors and Coordinators, who constantly look for better ways to assist students' transition to college life, we endeavour to remain flexible and adaptable to their needs. Last year's decision to bring DARE students (and this year Open Learning students) into the Writing Centre space, instead of giving them a presentation elsewhere, has proved to be very helpful, as students became familiar with the space and do not feel intimidated to come back when their assignments are due. By intervening at this early stage, we strive to inform the students of what kind of help they can get, encourage them to come and ask for help, and possibly give them confidence and a head-start to succeed through these early writing workshops.

Flexibility with our opening hours, length of sessions, workshop materials, and workshop accessibility has been crucial in our work with students from underrepresented groups. We have often made changes/exceptions in our scheduling or engaged additional tutors to allow for longer sessions; sessions booked back to back; multiple sessions in one week; sessions with an interpreter to accommodate students who need more time, a slower pace or the help of an interpreter. We have also made exceptions by providing online advice to students who are distant learners or who cannot attend our classes due to work commitments or chronic health

issues. For these students, we also provide workshop materials, PowerPoint slides, and other resources that they might require. We have collaborated with some schools and have delivered workshops to their groups of mature part-time students who can only attend workshops out of our opening hours or on a specific day and time. By far, our most requested workshop, 'How to Write a Literature Review Without Melting Down' has been filmed and made available on our website to accommodate a large number of part-time students who could not attend the workshop. Our main aim in accommodating these requests is to encourage the students not to panic but to keep working on their assignments and to submit them in time.

Conclusion

This article has endeavoured to show the methods and approaches that successfully work for the Writing Centre in supporting the students from underrepresented groups. By offering student-centered individual sessions with workshops devised around student needs and their most common writing issues, in implementing early intervention by familiarizing students with the conventions of college-standard writing and with our space, and by remaining flexible in accommodating students' special requests, the Writing Centre continues to work on increasing student confidence and, as a result, on changing their self-perception as writers. The popularity of the Writing Centre (our tutors delivered 1,398 one-to one sessions

and 59 workshops, attended by 1,157 students, in 2016/17) and positive feedback attest to the fact that students recognize the value of writing tuition and its impact on their studies overall. The Feedback Sheets are given to students to fill in after every individual session and Chart 4, below, shows how students view their own confidence levels after their session.
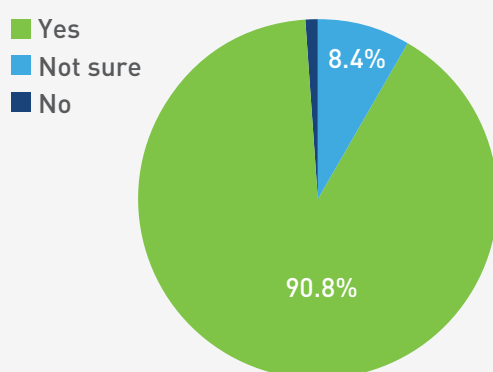

Chart 4 - I feel more confident about writing my assignment

In the Writing Centre, we are now looking at other ways to support students in the coming years, by introducing a higher number of longer sessions, longer opening hours for part-time students, additional resources and new videos, and some form of online support. We will continue to work on higher retention and widening participation by giving students confidence in writing, confidence that they can successfully complete the written assessment that still dominates the curriculum, and confidence in their own ability as independent writers, learners, and researchers.

Author

Željka Doljanin

Željka Doljanin was educated at the University of Zagreb, Croatia, and at University College Dublin, where she completed a doctoral thesis on contemporary Irish literature under the supervision of Professor Declan Kiberd. She has since tutored and lectured on a variety of literature or writing modules at University College Dublin. She started teaching writing in the Writing Clinics at UCD in 2011. Previously a language teacher and a Head Teacher of the English department in a language school in Zagreb, Croatia, she is currently the Managing Director of the UCD Writing Centre.

Widening Access in the School of Agriculture and Food Science

Mary Forrest

Abstract

320 students enter undergraduate programmes in the School, annually. The Programme Board's targets, to register 15 HEAR, 15 DARE, 25 QQI-FET, and 12 – 15 mature students, were achieved in the first two categories. The means were links with 2nd level students, progression from Colleges of Further Education and UCD orientation.

Introduction

The UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science (SAFS) offers 12 4–year undergraduate B.Agr.Sc. or B.Sc degree programmes. This chapter outlines practices undertaken to widen access and participation of less represented students to these programmes. Annually, some 320 undergraduate students enter Stage 1. The Agricultural Sciences Programme Board set targets for under-represented groups as follows:

Higher education access route (HEAR) 15 students; Disability Access route (DARE) 15 students; QQI-FET (formerly FETAC) 25 students; Mature students 12 – 15 students. Places are also available to candidates who have successfully completed the UCD Access to Science and Engineering, Certificate in Foundation Level Studies.

The practices examined are firstly, recruitment of students from second level schools, progression with QQI-FET certificates and admission of mature students; secondly, student orientation; thirdly, adaption of the physical infrastructure of the Agriculture and Food Science Centre. The chapter concludes with a review of student numbers from the targeted groups.

Recruitment 2nd Level /Pre-University

While information about degree programmes are available at the UCD Open Day, Higher Options Fair and National Ploughing Championships, the SAFS provides opportunities to experience 'being in UCD' for 2nd level students.

Transition Year Programme – Agriculture, Food and Nutrition
The Agriculture, Food Science and Human Nutrition Summer School is organised annually by the SAFS Programme Office as part of the UCD Summer School programme. A reduced rate is available for applicants whose families are in receipt of job-seekers or disability payments (€15/€35 regular rate). Following a welcome from the Dean or Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning, participants have lectures from faculty, visit research laboratories with postgraduate students, and an outdoor activity, a 'Biodiversity Walk and Talk' with faculty.

Publicity and Information
Each year, the SAFS issues a Non Standard Entry and Progression booklet, which details entry routes to Stage One for prospective students who may or may not have sat Irish school-leaving examinations or who are progressing from Colleges of Further Education.

Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)
is a third level admissions scheme for school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. HEAR is aimed at school leavers who have the ability to benefit from and succeed in higher education, who come from socio-economic groups in Irish society that are under-represented in third level. The second scheme DARE is a College and University admission scheme which offers places at reduced points to school leavers with disabilities. The SAFS has allocated a quota of 15 places, each on a reduced points basis, for students entering HEAR and DARE. Candidates are requested to meet the matriculation and entry requirements of the B.Agr.Sc and BSc in Food Science and Human Nutrition programmes.

Progression from Colleges of Further Education
In recent years, increasing numbers of students with QQI-FET (formerly FETAC) certificates are progressing to SAFS - 5 in 2014, 10 in 2015 to 11 in 2016. In order to support potential students, an Open Day jointly hosted by the SAFS and the College of Science is held in the O'Brien Centre for Science each January. A staff member gives an overview of the programmes. The information in this presentation is tailored towards QQI-FET candidates. Candidates must have Distinctions (80% or better) in a minimum of five modules in the qualification,

which must include distinctions in specific modules. If those attending the Open Day have expressed an interest in a particular degree, recruitment and marketing staff arrange meetings between individual students and academics.

The qualifications accepted for entry to named Agricultural Sciences programmes on a competitive basis are

— QQI-FET Level 5 Qualification: 5M3807 Applied Science – Laboratory Techniques;

— QQI-FET Level 5 Qualification: 5M2586 Horticulture;

— QQI-FET Level 5 Qualification: 5M2768 Animal Care.

The Animal Care qualification provides an illustration as to the process of recognising a QQI-FET qualification. The careers advisor at Killester College of Further Education, Dublin, contacted the SAFS on behalf of an Animal Care student who wished to study Agriculture in UCD. Having examined the content of the Level 5 module and having determined that the content and learning outcomes were a suitable prerequisite to the degree programme, a proposal was brought to the Agricultural Sciences Programme Board and later to the University Programme Board, where it was approved.

Together with the formal approval process, marketing and recruitment staff and some faculty in the SAFS have informal links with staff in the Colleges of Further Education, so students interested in progressing can visit UCD and meet with staff and students.

UCD Access course

The UCD Access and Lifelong Learning Centre (ALL) provides a yearlong course Access to Science and Engineering leading to a Certificate in Foundation Level Studies. The School's Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning is a member of the board of studies. This course give students the confidence and skills necessary to plan and organise study for their particular needs and provides students with analytical skills in order to fully understand the material presented in all subject modules. It equips students with the skills and confidence to take a degree course in Agricultural Science: Engineering/ Architecture; Science; Medicine; certificate/ degree or diploma course in Health and Safety at Work. It also supports students to find the third level course that best suits their aptitude and interest. Being based in UCD, the course co-ordinator can arrange meetings between students and programme option co-ordinators or current students.

Meeting a group of Access students one Spring, they had obviously formed a bond among themselves. They had a place on their selected courses and were looking forward to the coming academic year with confidence. By way of acknowledgement of their studies, successful applicants may request Recognition of Prior Learning, in respect of two five-credit modules to be used towards elective credit (only) at either Stage 1 or Stage 2. While the numbers are small, Access students do well in their studies and participate in student societies with enthusiasm and commitment.

Mature students

A mature applicant is anyone who is at least 23 years of age on 1st January of the proposed year of entry and whose school-leaving qualifications are insufficient for admission in the normal way. Application on the grounds of mature years is made through the Central Applications Office. Since 2013, the UCD MSAP test has been part of the School's application process, with the exception of DN272 Horticulture, Landscape and Sportsturf Management. Having completed a CAO application, applicants must register for the MSAP by applying online at http://msap-ie.acer.edu.au/ and secondly complete a mandatory UCD Supplementary Statement Form as part of their application. Applicants normally have an informal interview with the relevant Programme Option co-ordinator and the Chair of Mature Applicants committee.

In SAFS, there was much discussion about use of MSAP. Some staff considered that the assessment and related costs deterred potential applicants. Others considered it as an opportunity to undertake an assessment, as assessment in whatever style was going to occur while a student was in UCD. Some staff viewed MSAP as a standard test which could be used for entry to several programmes and which held currency for a number of years. It also reduced the number of personal statements that programme option coordinators had to read for few available places. While the number of applications has decreased in recent years, no discernible

impact on the net number of offers made and offers accepted has been observed by the SAFS.

Student Orientation

Once students have accepted a place at UCD, the process of orientation commences.

Orientation for HEAR students

Orientation for HEAR students, organised by Access and Lifelong Learning, takes place in the week prior to the university wide orientation for incoming students. Students participate in tours of the campus, in social activities and in 'taster' academic lectures or classes. They are accompanied by a peer mentor. When the peer mentor is a Hear student studying in the SAFS, they can inspire incoming students.

One academic activity, a field visit for incoming Agriculture and Food Science students takes place to UCD Rosemount Environmental Research Centre. There, the students are shown around the experimental greenhouses, see 'the high tech' PEAC unit, and harvest some apples in the orchard. The field visit serves several functions for incoming students. Stage 1 is Science based and many students have difficulty connecting what they are studying in their first year with their chosen degree; the visit demonstrates some of the practical applications of the basic sciences in an applied science.

Secondly, students have come to know a few classmates before the semester commences. Thirdly, they meet staff in a more informal setting. While a written report would follow an undergraduate field visit, in this case each student was asked to reflect for a moment and then tell another student one point or item that caught their attention during the field visit.

Access and Lifelong Learning Scholarship Awards ceremony
This Awards ceremony, which occurs during Semester 1, provides another opportunity for staff from the SAFS to meet Stage 1 students and their families.

Ongoing orientation
The SAFS Programme Office supports ongoing orientation for all students. Peer mentors meet with students, while email reminders are issued about various events. A semester one coffee morning is held in the student common room, to which peer mentors, School staff, staff from the Library, Maths Support Centre, Writing Centre and Applied Language Centre are invited together with UCDSU and the Agricultural Society. As the semester progresses, exam information is circulated. Early in semester two, following the release of provisional examination results, a soup and roll lunch is organised for Stage 1 students, to which peer mentors, School staff, and representatives of student societies are also are invited.

Recent developments within the Agriculture and Food Science Centre to provide access

The Agriculture and Food Science Centre opened in 1980 and had limited wheelchair access. In 2015/2016, the following changes were made to improve physical access. In the basement, by the student Common Room, a sliding sensor door replacing old push/pull access was fitted. A new WC to facilitate disabled students was installed in the basement. On the 1st floor, new doors were fitted to allow easier wheelchair access to the lecture theatre.

Discussion
The outcomes of the initiatives to widen access to the SAFS are shown in Table 1 and Table 2. The target of 15 HEAR students was achieved in 2015 and 2016, when the numbers were 21 and 16, respectively. The target of 15 DARE students was exceeded in each year, with 25, 19, and 24 students registered. The numbers of students progressing from QQI-FET, though increasing from 5 – 10 and 11, has not met the target of 25 students per year. With closer links to the Colleges of Education, who offer the existing progression routes and the development of new progression routes, this target could be achieved.

Table 1 - Numbers of HEAR, DARE and QQI-FET students registered to programmes within the School of Agriculture and Food Science in years 2014-16

	HEAR			DARE			QQI-FET		
New Entrant Year	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
Programme Description									
Agricultural Science	10	16	13	22	15	18	5	7	7
BSc Food Science	3	3	2		1	3		3	4
BSc Human Nutrition		2	1	3	3	3			
TOTALS	13	21	16	25	19	24	5	10	11

Numbers of students registered via the Mature route have declined in the years reviewed, from 10 to 2 increasing to 4 in 2016. They are decreasing compared to peak numbers registered between 2009 and 2012. This may reflect changes in the economic situation within the country at these times and the decreasing number of people who are eligible for 'free fees'. Numbers entering via the UCD Access route have declined, from 2 to 1, to 0. Availability of accommodation in Dublin and the cost of living may preclude Mature and Access students from pursuing degree programmes.

Table 2 - Numbers of Mature and UCD ACCESS students registered to programmes within the School of Agriculture and Food Science in years 2014-16

	Mature			UCD ACCESS		
New Entrant Year	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
Programme Description						
Agricultural Science	7	1	3		1	
BSc Food Science	2	1		2		
BSc Human Nutrition	1		1			
TOTALS	10	2	4	2	1	0

Widening access has occurred in the School, due to the commitment of staff in the Programme Office working in collaboration with colleagues in the SAFS and with Access and Life Long Learning. A 'supportive environment' and 'staff interest' was highlighted in a testimonial from Eva Ziggiotto, a 2106 graduate: 'As a mature student the prospect of going back to college was quiet daunting but the supportive environment in the School of Agriculture and Food Science and the genuine interest of the staff in assisting my development throughout the course was simply inspiring'.

Acknowledgements

Author

Dr Mary Forrest

Dr Mary Forrest is an Associate Professor in the School of Agriculture and Food Science, where she lectures in Horticulture. She is the Dean of Agriculture's nominee on the Widening Participation Committee and a member of the SAFS Student Engagement Committee. Previously Head of Teaching and Learning in the School of Biology and Environmental Science and former Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in the School of Agriculture and Food Science, she has been involved in widening participation issues for many years.

—

L-R Professor Grace Mulcahy, Professor Diane Reay, Professor Andrew Deeks, Dr Anna Kelly and Professor Mark Rogers

Apps and Automation

Pauric Holleran

Abstract

By leveraging technology, assistive technology support in UCD was enhanced. In addition, the scope of support was broadened. This was achieved by capitalizing on two emerging trends: the rise of free apps and workflow automation.

"

Technology allows us to do more and more with less and less.

"

- R. Buckminster Fuller

The number of students registering for disability support in UCD has consistently increased for the past several years. This is a welcome development, but it brings with it a new set of challenges. During the same period, the FSD (fund for students with a disability) has continually declined. Despite these limitations, by leveraging technology it has been possible to, not only maintain the level of support to students during this period, but also continue to enhance the service and broaden its scope.

This was achieved by capitalizing on two emerging trends: the rise of free apps and workflow automation.

Free apps

It's hard to overstate the impact that smartphones and the app ecosystem has had in the empowerment of students. A huge range of possible solutions have been opened up for a variety of difficulties that students with disabilities encounter.

Example 1 – Voice Recognition
Voice recognition is an example that illustrates the transformative power of smartphones and the ecosystem. A mere five years ago, in order to use voice recognition, it was necessary to purchase an expensive software package, typically costing three hundred euro. Now, it is possible to use voice recognition features found on standard smartphone devices to compose a message, an email, or even a term paper with voice dictation. This software is maintained by Google and Apple, large technology companies who, because of their desire for platform dominance, are incentivized to continue developing and improving the service.

The barrier to entry for these services continues to disappear. Instead of going through the laborious process of purchasing, installing, and configuring software, users can now access voice recognition with a tap of a button on their smartphone. In addition, because of the ubiquitous use of smartphone, users can reliably assume that they will have access to voice recognition wherever they go.

Example 2 - Text-to-Speech
A further example is the use of text-to-speech software. In the past, it was necessary for a user to purchase an expensive software package for speech synthesis, costing up to four hundred euro. This software continues to be available on an annual subscription license basis at a high cost.

This arrangement promotes user dependency. A user reliant on the software must pay a substantial amount of money to continue to use it. However, these features are available as standard on Apple devices, and many free apps are available on other platforms.

Student Empowerment
There is no longer a need, in the vast majority of cases, for students or institutions to purchase expensive assistive technology software. This is a huge advantage to all users of technology. They are no longer dependent on costly software. When they transition to the workplace, or wish to use the software for their own purposes, there is no longer a cost barrier. Furthermore, students report feeling less self-conscious when using mainstream tools rather than specialized software.

Automation

There are several steps in the conventional assistive technology support process. These are:

1. **Assessment** - the student is assessed and recommended supports based on their difficulties and personal circumstances. **Referral** - the student is referred for particular software solutions.

2. **Provision of Equipment/Software** - the student is provided with the technology solution.

3. **Training** - the student is provided with training on using the technology support.

4. **Support** - the student is provided with ongoing support as needed.

1. Assesment ┄┄ 2. Referral ┄┄ 3. Provision of Equipment /Software ┄┄ 4. Training ┄┄ 5. Support →
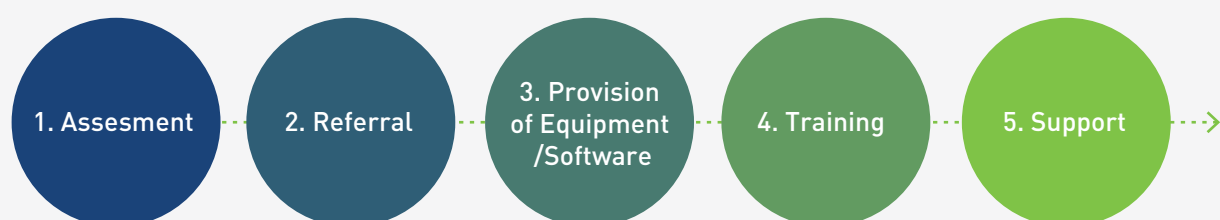
This was the previous AT support model used in UCD. This model works with a small number of students to support. However, the model does not scale well. With a single staff member as a point of contact for Assistive technology, support availability is limited.

Because the semester is so short, it's imperative to meet the students and put the supports in place as quickly as possible. A new model was developed to accomplish this, optimized to cater to larger influx numbers.

There are several steps in the conventional assistive technology support process. These are:
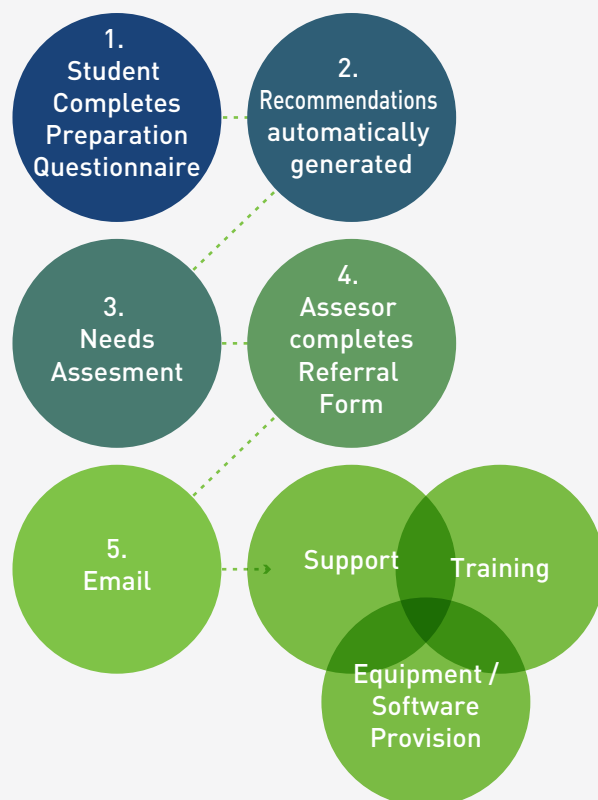
5. Student Completes Preparation Questionnaire

6. Recommendations are automatically generated

7. Needs Assessment Meeting

8. Assessor completes Referral Form

9. Email automatically sent to student - this can encompass software provision, support and training with the delivery of online training resources.

Preparation Questionnaire

Prior to calling in for a needs assessment, the student is required to complete a preparation questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to encourage students to reflect on their current relationship with technology. Questions include:

— How much of a difference do you think using technology effectively would help you learn?

— How would you rate your computer skill level?

Students also rate, using the Likert scale, agreement with statements such as:

— I often feel that the lecturer talks too fast.

— I find it hard to listen to and understand everything in a one hour class.

— I am more comfortable talking about a subject than writing about it.

1. Student Completes Preparation Questionnaire

2. Recommendations automatically generated

3. Needs Assesment

4. Assesor completes Referral Form

5. Email

Support

Training

Equipment / Software Provision

Automated Recommendations

After the student completes the form, recommendations based on their answers are generated using algorithms developed from working with hundreds of students. The answers are stored in an online database. Assessors can refer to these answers during the needs assessment. A student may be recommended for note taking software, like Livescribe or Audio Note taker, for example. Alternatively, they may be recommend for text to speech software.

The assessor can also see what the student's attitude toward technology is - whether it's positive, neutral or negative in its role in their education.

They can also see whether they should book an appointment. This recommendation is based on how confident the student is to try the technology themselves.

Referral and Automated Emails

For each technology the student is referred for, they are sent an email immediately. The email gives a brief description of the tool's purpose and benefits, as well as information on how to download or access the tool. It also provides a link to a learning resource where the student can learn about how to use the tool effectively. This allows students who are confident with technology to explore the online materials and download the software immediately.

Appendix A: Livescribe Case Study

— Livescribe is a note-taking tool. Before Livescribe, there was no alternative for students with difficulty taking notes, except for employing the services of a note taker.

— A Livescribe pen with all the accompanying accessories costs €180, a small fraction of the cost of employing a note taker for the full duration of a student's course.

— Students referred for the Livescribe pen receive an email with a link to a short video that demonstrates its use. They also receive instructions on how to collect the pen.

— Further instructions on using the Livescribe pen are available through online learning resources.

— This enables students who are confident to try the technology to immediately begin using it, seeking advice and feedback when necessary.

Author

Pauric Holleran

Pauric Holleran is the Assistive Technology Officer in UCD. He advises students on the use of digital tools to help them achieve their educational goals based on the student's digital skills and learning environment. He provides training and support to students on the use of these digital tools on a one-to-one and group basis. Pauric has delivered workshops on digital tools for learning to a wide range of student cohorts, including first-year students, mature students, and PhD students. He is passionate about educational technology and excited about the opportunities to use technology to enhance pedagogy, in particular using technology to encourage active learning through autonomous learning and peer learning.

Using Structured Debating for In Class Assessment

Dr Conor Buggy

Dr Conor Buggy, Assistant Professor in Occupational and Environmental Studies, Centre for Safety and Health at Work, School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science. conor.buggy@ucd.ie

Abstract

Structured debating was incorporated into the in-class activities and assessment strategy of a postgraduate module in order to improve student's communication capabilities and awareness of the value of self-reflection. The debate process was designed using the principles of universal design to provide all students with an equitable chance of participation.

Introduction

Verbal communication, while maintaining composure with someone who may have a diametrically opposing view or opinion, can be a significant issue for scientists. Many scientists are averse to communicating science at a basic and understandable level with non-scientists and this has been a key issue with how the climate change argument has progressed in recent years.

Designing debate into a module

Debating has been incorporated successfully into the in-class activities and assessment strategy of a postgraduate module introducing students to the science of climate change. The students undertaking this module come from a wide variety of backgrounds, professionally, economically, and nationally and many do not have a scientific background. Ensuring that they could succeed in successfully communicating scientific information to such a sceptical audience is our primary aim for incorporating debate into the module. A secondary aim is to make the module more interesting, with active participation from all students, as well as ensuring that they could use the debate learning process as a way to self-reflect on what and how they learned through the module.

When students create bodies of work for their assessment that have a specific practical purpose, they are learning as they progress through them and such actions are a multisensory experience (Castley, 2006). In this regard, incorporating the communication mechanism of debating into the assessment strategy, the learning becomes such an

experience. Through active learning in a debate scenario that has a specific purpose, students directly discover how knowledge can be utilised, and that through observation of knowledge in action the student does not have to rely on their lecturer's knowledge (Jenkins et al., 2003).

This class exercise (half day) is a summative form of assessment that leads to a self-reflection assessment for all students. The debate is held on the last day of the module (an intense two week 5 credit module) and is used to demonstrate the student's knowledge of the climate change science they have learned, as well as how to effectively communicate climate change information, which is often a contentious issue with climate change "deniers". The debate performance is assessed and the self-reflection of the learning process is also assessed (10% for each; 20% of the module grade).

Incorporating a formalised debate into the module as a specified learning activity that is part of the assessment allows all students the opportunity to practice communication of scientific facts regarding climate change to a wider audience. This is useful when one considers that as professionals they may be required to communicate to those that are sceptical of the science of climate change and deny that it is taking place and / or is a result of the actions of man. The debate instruction is designed to be simple, straightforward, and accessible by all students in the class that come from a wide array of educational, professional, and national backgrounds with a diverse range of abilities.

The class will take part in four distinct debates and will be split accordingly into different groups. The groups will rotate through the debates and take on different roles during each debate. In any of the three debates, the class groups will take on one of these categories:

— "The For" Group;
— "The Against" Group; and
— "The Questioning Audience".

Eight groups will be allocated on the second Monday of the module. Therefore, during the three hours of debating, each group will have a chance to take on these roles.

Each team must nominate a spokesperson to present a 5 minute team position. A coin toss will determine which team goes first in each debate. Each team can have a 2 minute rebuttal after both teams have presented their initial 5 minute team position. The rebuttal can be by any team member. There will then commence the questions from the audience. In the interest of fairness, no presentation slides will be allowed; this debate will entirely be through verbal communication.

After each question from the audience, a single member of the team that is questioned (whoever from the group that considers they can answer most effectively) must answer and the corresponding team must provide a rebuttal. Each member of the audience must provide at least one question. At the end of the answering of the question, the audience member must state which group they consider provided the better answer and why. Questions are permitted for thirty minutes.

For each debate, one student from "The Questioning Audience" must volunteer to moderate the debate. Three members of the academic faculty will be the assessors and will grade each student based on their overall performance throughout the three hours. All three academics may interject as they desire during the course of the debate to add professional perspectives to the debate. The three academics will determine the vote with the class to determine the winning side in each debate.

The range of debate topics will be provided on BlackBoard and the class can vote via an online discussion forum on the four chosen topics.

Box 1: Template student debate protocol provided in advance

The debates are for all students working together to prepare and then communicate both individually and as teams during the debate process. This helps to create a productive and positive community of learners. Students vote on debate topics in advance in the online learning environment, so they direct the topics they wish to debate. The debate is moderated by three faculty members and occasionally guest academics interested in communication exercises in teaching and in conflict resolution. The debate process takes place in a relaxed and convivial instructional climate but students are impressed upon by their faculty on the expectations for good verbal communication and how to utilise it professionally to effectively engender change.

Implementation

When approaching a module design from the outset, irrespective of the delivery innovations, it is the assessment of student's learning which often proves most problematic (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2001). Gaining student "buy-in" to any assessment is also a significant factor in how a student responds, while also ensuring that the assessment strategy the students "buy-in" to is aligned with the learning outcomes (Biggs, 2003; North, 2016).

Prior to the commencement of the module, students are informed that the concluding day of the module will be one for discourse in the morning and debate in the afternoon. Students are thus prepared for this process well in advance. At the half way point in the module, students are provided with a range of potential debate topics in an online discussion forum in a learning management system (e.g. BlackBoard or Moodle). For this module, eight arguments were presented for the students to choose from, allowing for flexibility in use. Students as a class then are required to discuss and decide which four topics are to be debated. Potentially, a vote can be conducted using an online voting tool such as GoogleDocs or Doodle.

Two days before the debate, students are randomly selected into groups for each debate regardless of their gender, level of ability, educational, or national background. They are placed into three groups for each debate: "FOR", "AGAINST", and "AUDIENCE". Each group has instructions for participation in the debate in the overall debate instructions provided at the start of the module (as seen in Figure 2), making the process as simple and intuitive as possible. Students thus have 48 hours to prepare for the debate and the roles they must undertake. Each student has at least two roles; being in a debate team or being part of the audience. This allows for equitable use in the distribution of tasks and learning opportunities. The third role is that of voluntary moderator from the audience. Each role is defined in the debate protocol (Box 1).

The debate should be assessed by a minimum of two faculty members that lecture within the module or are at least familiar with the module and / or the student cohort (Box 2). The faculty members must commit to a full day of interaction with the students (discourse and discussion in the morning and debate in the afternoon).

Box 2: Procedure for assessing the debate

Each of the four debates is 45 minutes in duration. Students must rotate positions in the room after each debate. Figure 1 outlines the layout for the room, so it is essential that the debate be conducted in a room that can be reconfigured relatively easily.
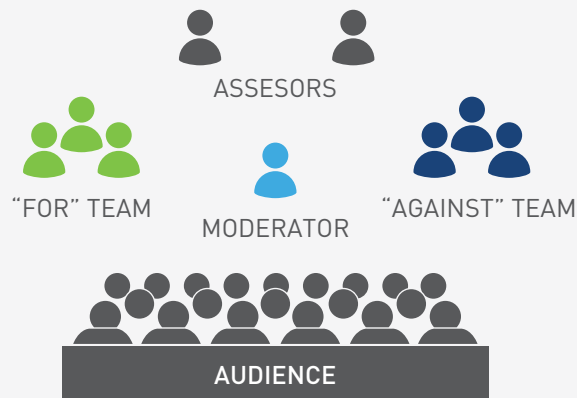

Figure 1: Debate layout

All students must be visible to each other, so the debate teams must be in staggered formation; in this fashion, no student can hide behind another. The faculty members should be outside of the triangle formed between the two teams and the audience. The grading criteria are provided below:

1. Did the student present the opening statement? Yes / No

2. Did the student present the rebuttal? Yes / No

3. Did the student present the closing statement? Yes / No

4. Did the student volunteer to act as a Moderator? Yes / No

5. Did the student answer a question posed by the audience? Yes / No (indicate how many)

6. Did the student ask a question while being in the audience? Yes / No (indicate how many)

7. Did the student ask a question of the opposing team? Yes / No (indicate how many)

8. Did the student answer a question from the opposing team? Yes / No (indicate how many)

A self-reflective essay is submitted by the students 48 hours after the debate and is graded (10% of the module) with the provision of feedback.

Results

Based on the participation, the grading process and the comments received in feedback for the debate and self-reflection, the debate process maps with the learning outcomes for the module very effectively:

— Students understand the value of verbal discourse but also of self-reflection;

- Students understand that they must be able to communicate effectively at all levels and with people with opposing opinions and attitudes;
- Students understand the value of self-reflection of the learning process rather than just solely on the knowledge they accumulated in the process; and
- Comments received from the student during evaluation and via email after the module were enthusiastic and all enjoyed it as a learning experience.

Advice for Implementation

This process has been implemented in another module as a non-gradable component with adult learners – it is effective as a mechanism for learning, and enjoyed by them – but they really need to know the value of it professionally, in advance. Thus, bringing in external experts from professional bodies to moderate and discuss the process of verbal discourse with them has proven valuable.

Having all of the instructions prepared well in advance and a sequence of learning prepared for the students over the course of the module building up to the debate is essential; if it is a gradable component, it should be held at the very end of the module after all of the learning materials have been provided. In addition, some discussion with the students on the merits of debating and providing them with a purpose for the exercise is critical to get buy-in from them.

Having the assessment in between 20 and 30% gives the students incentive to take part but doesn't foster nervousness amongst students that may consider themselves weak or afraid to speak up which they would be if the assessment was a higher value.
For further information, please refer to Chapter 11 of Universal Design for Curriculum Design (Buggy, 2017).

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Dr. Conor Buggy is the Programme Coordinator for the Masters in Occupational Safety and Health and Professional Certificate in Environmental Management. Conor teaches undergraduate and postgraduate modules covering a wide range of topics in the School of Public Health (both traditional and blended online learning modules) and for the School of Politics Masters in Development Practice. Conor is actively involved as a supervisor for both MSc and PhD students. Conor's primary research interest lies in environmental education and how technology can enhance curricula. In 2017, he was awarded a College Teaching Excellence Award.

All Aboard: Building Digital Knowledge, Skills and Confidence for Higher Education

UCD Teaching and Learning

This chapter introduces a series of open educational resources developed by the All Aboard project, which can be used by academic faculty, access professionals, and other support professionals to help students to develop the digital knowledge, skills and confidence that will enable them to flourish in higher education. All Aboard was developed in partnership between NUI Galway, University College Dublin, the University of Limerick, and Mary Immaculate College Limerick, and funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. All Aboard resources are available under a Creative Commons Licence from the project website, www.allaboardhe.ie

Learning Journeys and Navigational Tools

All Aboard adopts the metaphor of learning as a journey and offers its resources as a set of tools that can help students (and staff) to navigate the digital landscape of higher education. These include:

— A national digital skills framework for higher education;

— An online 'digital confidence' self-assessment tool;

— Online lessons to develop digital knowledge, skills and confidence;

— Digital badges to recognise the development of digital knowledge, skills and confidence; and

— 'Travel cards' as mini-curricula.

The National Digital Skills Framework

Building on existing digital literacy frameworks, All Aboard has developed a National Digital Skills Framework that maps the digital skills required to flourish in higher education, and is very easy to use. It was developed through engagement with staff and students across the higher education sector in Ireland, and was designed to be flexible and sufficiently appealing to encourage individuals and

groups in developing their digital confidence. It identifies six categories of skill, or areas of competence (see Table 1), and depicts these as 'lines' on a metro map infographic (see Figure 1), with each line comprising a number of 'stations', and each 'station' representing a specific skill. You can use this metro map with students to introduce them to some of the tools and technologies that they may expect to engage with during their higher education studies.

Teach and Learn	How to get the most out of technologies and materials to encourage engaged learning and make sense of new knowledge.
Tools and Technologies	The technical and practical aspects of the range of tools and technologies available and useful in the support of learning, teaching, research, managing and thriving in the digital age.
Communicate and Collaborate	Connecting with each other and sharing ideas, regardless of distance or time.
Create and Innovate	Being confident and empowered over the use of technologies to make new resources, express yourself, and take opportunities to develop new approaches and ways of interpreting ideas and the world around us.
Find and Use	The skills and literacies needed to find relevant information and data and how to apply such information in an effective way and subject it to scrutiny, whether for effective learning or for research, scholarship and professional purposes.
Identity and Wellbeing	Understanding the nature of your online self, data and information, privacy and protection, and taking care of yourself, others and information, in ways that are ethical and respectful.

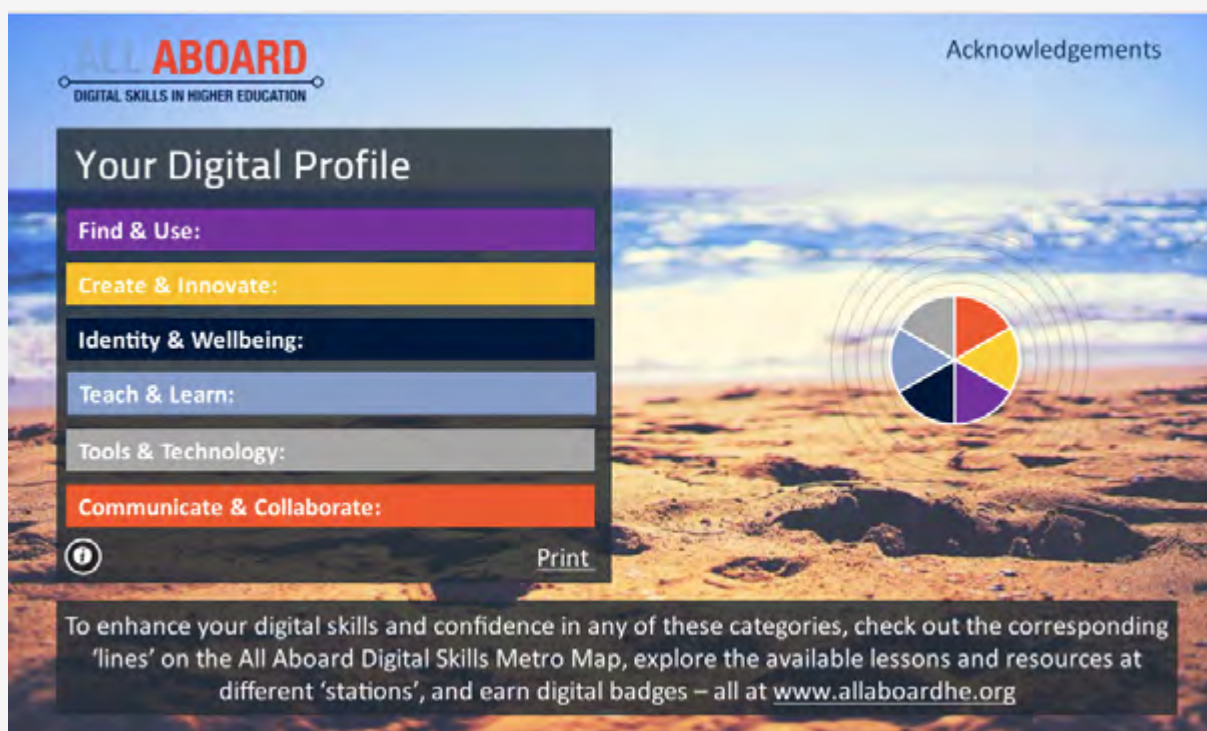Table 1: National Digital Skills Framework Categories

Figure 1: National Digital Skills Framework - 'The Metro Map'
http://www.allaboardhe.ie/map/

Digital Confidence Profiler

All Aboard has also developed a Digital Confidence Profiler, a simple online tool that you can use with students when introducing them to the skills framework. It helps them to self-assess their current level of knowledge, skills, and confidence in each of the six areas identified on the metro map, and it takes less than five minutes to complete. The student identifies their current confidence level for each category in the framework by choosing the description that most sounds like them. It then displays the results as a 'digital confidence profile' chart, which can be printed off or saved and used to facilitate discussion about possible development routes.

Figure 2: The Digital Confidence Profiler tool
http://www.allaboardhe.ie/AAlessons/profiler/story_html5.html

Online Lessons

Next up, there are interactive, multimedia lessons at sixteen of the stations on the metro map. Each easy-to-use lesson covers the key ideas of a particular topic, which students can walk through on their own, or you could use them as part of a facilitated workshop. Each lesson takes about 30 minutes to complete and includes a short quiz at the end. Each lesson also comes with a list of useful links to further information on the topic, including additional training, resources, websites, and articles. Lessons that will be particularly helpful to students in the early stages are:

— Tools for Learning
— The Virtual Learning Environment for Students
— Presentation Skills & Tools
— Introduction to Digital Research Skills
— Systematic Searching
— Referencing, Citations, Publications

Digital Badges

For each online lesson that a student successfully completes by achieving a score of 80% or more in the end-of-lesson quiz, a digital badge is awarded. A relatively new concept, digital badges were introduced in the All Aboard project as a way to recognise the development of specific digital knowledge and skills by learners, and to help build confidence. They are composed of an image, and details about the badge, including the issuer and the criteria

Figure 3: Presentation Skills digital badge

for the award (see Figure 3). They can be displayed and shared online by the recipient, for example, in e-mail signatures, social media platforms, online resumes, and e-portfolios etc. Recipients can develop collections of badges that represent their learning experiences. All Aboard badges are issued by NUI Galway through Open Badge Factory. Students can collect and display their badges using free platforms such as Open Badge Passport or Mozilla Open Badges

TravelCards

Further extending the journey metaphor, All Aboard uses 'travelcards' as a way of specifying mini-curricula for different groups or purposes. The idea is that each travelcard specifies a number of stations to visit. When someone has earned a badge for each of these stations, they qualify for the travelcard. The first travelcard is 'Student – Zone 1', which represents some suggested stations (see Figure 4) that are perfect for those

starting out in using technologies to support their learning.

Visitor and Residents Framework

Finally, the Visitors and Residents online lesson will be helpful to staff in preparing for work with students. The lesson challenges the popular idea that students are 'digital natives' and staff 'digital immigrants'. Instead, it introduces the Visitors and Residents framework as a more helpful way of exploring how we all use and interact with online tools and services for different purposes. The framework can be used with students to explore the ways in which they are already engaging with technology for personal use, for example, Skyping relatives, keeping in touch on Facebook or using mobile phones. A mapping exercise, explained in the lesson can help to open up discussion about the difference between using technology for personal use and for academic uses, in particular through comparing student and staff maps

Figure 4: Student Zone 01 Travelcard

Further information

For further information on the development of the All Aboard framework read:

All Aboard 2015. Towards a National Digital Skills Framework [Online] Available from:
http://allaboardhe.org/DSFramework2015.pdf

Author

UCD Teaching and Learning

From the margins to mainstream - adapting programmes for part-time learners

Bairbre Fleming

Abstract

This paper outlines a process of moving part-time provision from the margins of UCD to the mainstream. The paper describes UCD's attempt to expand and deliver part-time courses for adults in the context of diminishing resources. Open Learning was devised to harness existing resources by opening up Horizons modules to adult learners. At the time it was piloted there was a dearth of part-time options in UCD and elsewhere (Darmody and Fleming, 2009). The process offers part-time learners the same access and opportunities as all other students and offers schools an opportunity to widen participation. This strategy reflects the national policy for enhancing and expanding part-time and flexible provision in higher education. It also demonstrates the value of creativity and flexibility in developing alternative solutions to widening participation

Introduction

The expansion of Irish higher education has been well documented and celebrated. However the flip side of Part-time provision in Irish higher education has remained poorly resourced and fragmented. While participation rates in Irish higher education have expanded considerably for full time students, the same has not been the case for part-time provision in the sector (Higher Education Authority, 2012). 'The Cinderella status of adult education is the result of fragmentation in every aspect of the service' (Murtagh, 2009). This fragmentation extends to part-time provision in higher education. To borrow the Cinderella analogy, those students who wish to study in university on a part-time basis have difficulty getting to the ball. Extending the analogy further, the Ugly Sisters of the piece are the absence of state funding and the rigidity of the systems and structures. It is in this climate that the subject of this paper emerged.

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The status of part-time education in Ireland to date is poor and has been undermined by the absence of coherent policy or resources to develop structured provision for part-time learners.

"

MaDarmody and Fleming, 2009

Context

There were limited resources available in UCD during the economic crisis to subsidise or develop additional part-time programmes. In addition there was no national funding available to subsidise of support part-time programmes in Irish higher education. In that climate a range of existing certificate and diploma courses were cancelled as they were not financially sustainable or viable.

The rationale for withdrawing part-time programmes ran counter to the policy imperatives which identified under-represented groups in HE, including those studying part-time (Higher Education Authority, 2015). Paradoxically, the possibility of studying part-time would be an attractive and appropriate option for those students being targeted in the Access Plan – students with a disability, first-generation entrants and mature students with a range of familial and employment duties. The 'stage' for this Open Learning project was therefore the gap of part-time options in a university that had been innovative in modularising all its programmes so that it offered extensive modules across all disciplines.

The 'Eureka' moment was the recognition that the gap could be filled by modules that were already on offer during the day to full-time undergraduates. The change in perspective recognised the merit and potential of treating all students as students, as opposed to offering alternative courses and services to part-time students. Our challenge was to persuade others of the merits and value of moving Cinderella from the margins and in to the mainstream. This change in mindset obviously needed to be accompanied by a range of structural and attitudinal changes.

Moving Cinderella from the margins

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The higher education system is viewed as very rigid both in terms of the manner in which a degree can be acquired (in terms of time commitments and the structure of courses) and in terms of the possibility of movement between institutions

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- Fleming and Finnegan, 2011, 10

The systems and structures in UCD had been developed for full-time students who were registered to specific programmes.

They were therefore relatively rigid, although the structure had been modularised. This architecture was the critical pivot on which Open Learning could turn. We were essentially moving our thinking from a system of selection and relative compliance of a homogenous school-leaver cohort, to a system of recruitment and flexibility for potential learners who need a system to be responsive and intuitive.

A Steering Group was established during the pilot phase of the project and chaired by the Registrar of UCD. Key stakeholders from across the university were invited to participate in identifying and addressing the various challenges and opportunities that emerged as we rolled out the project.

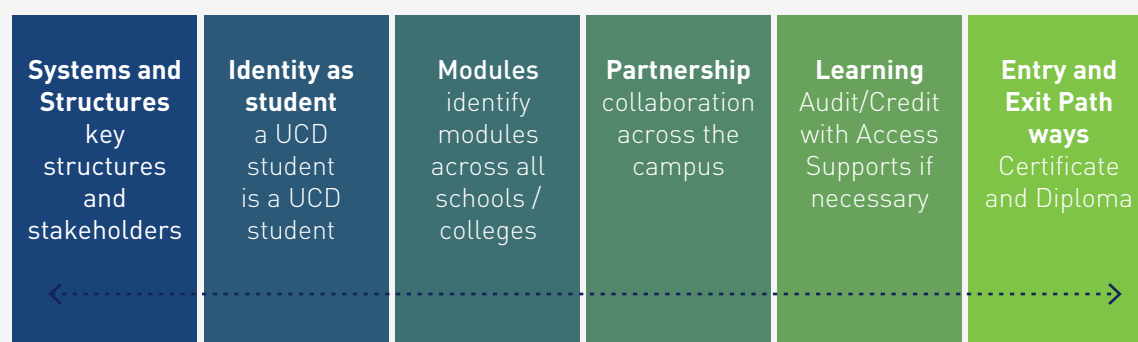| Systems and Structures key structures and stakeholders	Identity as student a UCD student is a UCD student	Modules identify modules across all schools / colleges	Partnership collaboration across the campus	Learning Audit/Credit with Access Supports if necessary	Entry and Exit Path ways Certificate and Diploma

Figure 1: Key element of the process - SIMPLE

Consequently we reviewed the systems and supports to determine how they could be adapted to include part-time students who were not entering UCD through the CAO process. We needed to establish protocols and procedures for how to 'flex' the systems. For example, we needed to establish how to facilitate students to register to a modular programme where no major had been identified.

The administrative challenges then led on to more systemic and strategic considerations. We considered how we could facilitate students accumulating credit. In the pilot we developed a Recognition of Studies transcript for participating students. Three years after the pilot we launched two exit awards – the Certificate and Diploma in Open Learning. Participating students can accumulate a number of modules for either award across all disciplines. What is now emerging is that students tend to focus their module selection in clusters – favouring particular disciplines or cognate subjects. The emerging OL trajectories are therefore more thematic and subject specific than anticipated.

Allied to the development of the systems and structures was the deliberations around the governance of the programme. The new structure of the programme prompted us to question if students are registered to modules, but not to the programme, who monitors and supports

them? The governance of the programme has been resolved and structures put in place to monitor the assessment and administration of the programme. In the long term we aim to mainstream these procedures and locate them in the schools/colleges.

One of the key aspects of the process that we included from the outset was the creation of 'a face and a place'. We know anecdotally that potential learners found the size and scale of campus activity potentially overwhelming. On that basis we were anxious to display an obvious 'shopfront' where potential learners would only have to ask a question once, and could then be referred to the appropriate classroom or service. We wanted to address the possible gap some students experience who don't have the 'hot knowledge' required to negotiate the higher education landscape (Ball and Vincent, 1998). This approach has been well received by students who appreciate having a central starting point as they negotiate their Open Learning programme. They are encouraged to join the Mature Student Society and other societies, and to participate in ALL Chat Café and related student activities. The students also are invited to a bespoke Orientation programme, can attend free Study Skills lunchtime workshops and get support from our Digital Ambassadors.
The following section outlines the timeline and growth of the process

Timeline

In September 2013 UCD offered a Flexible Learning option for adults who wished to sample a degree level module in Horizons. With the co-operation of the School of Archaeology two different modules (ARCH10010 Exploring Archaeology and ARCH10050 The Archaeology of Ireland) were opened up to an adult audience. The process was called 'Flexible Learning'
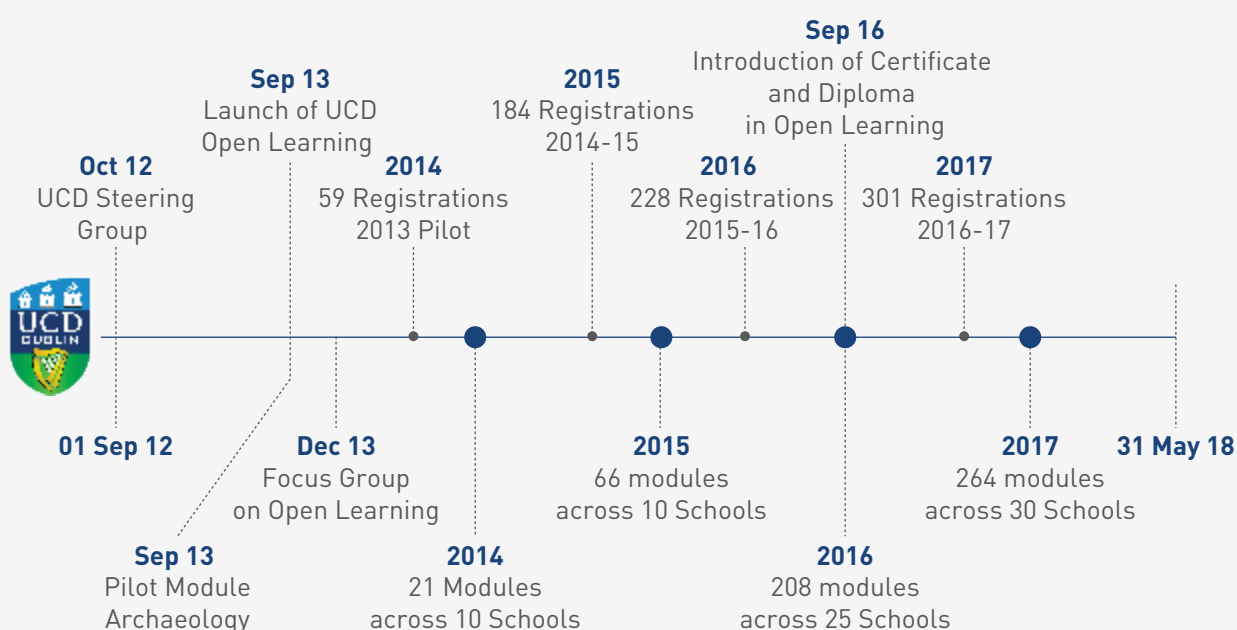

Figure 2: Timeline of Open Learning in UCD

to capture the design and potential opportunities it offered. However, the term 'flexible' was regularly interpreted by potential applicants as 'online' or 'blended'. Consequently we renamed it 'Open Learning' from 2014/15. The Open Learning initiative has expanded considerably since its launch in 2013. Figure 1 outlines the growth in registrations since its launch in 2013.
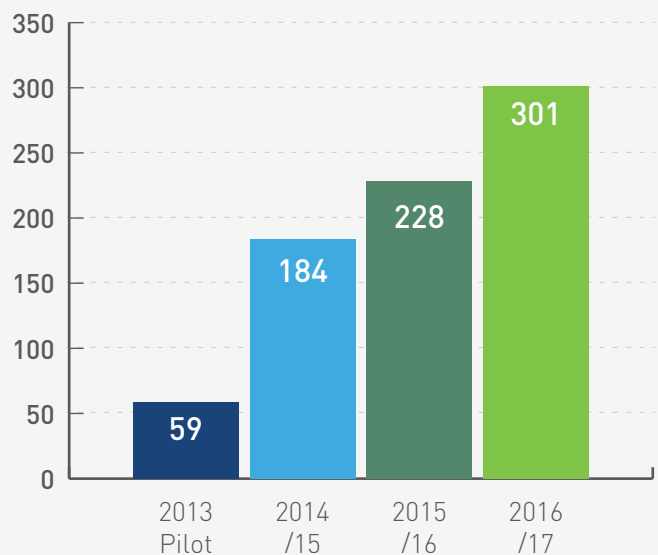

Figure 3: Growth of OL registrations since 2013

The initial pilot was based on modules in Archaeology. As the process scaled up we referred to patterns of course options for mature students to guide the expansion. During the pilot year we reviewed the courses mature applicants were opting for in the BA programme and recognised that History, English, Sociology and Politics were the most popular options. We tested these assumptions with a Focus Group and with colleagues. Students on the pilot programme also indicated an interest in Classics, Languages, Science and Maths.. As the programme has expanded we have invited all UCD schools to participate in the programme.
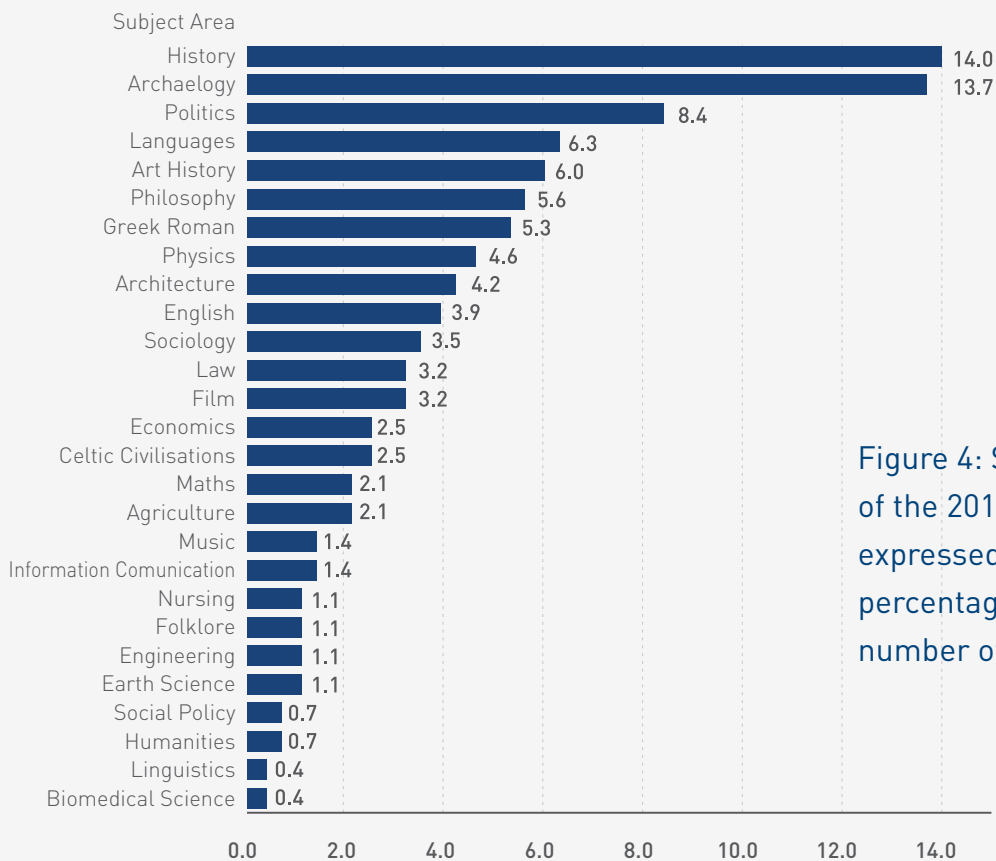

Figure 4: Subject choices of the 2016-17 cohort, expressed as an overall percentage of the total number of registrations.

The selection of modules by subject area is indicated in Figure 2 table below, with the preferences expressed as percentages of the overall number of registrations to the progamme in 2016-17.

As the Open Learning programme has evolved an increasing number of schools have expressed an interest in the process. The participating schools have offered modules across an ever-increasing number of subjects. Participating schools are reporting positive engagement with the process and are enjoying the increase in the number of Open Learners and their positive contribution to the programme. One colleague described the experience of receiving a hand-written thank you note and others report how enthusiastic and attentive the Open Learners are in their classes.
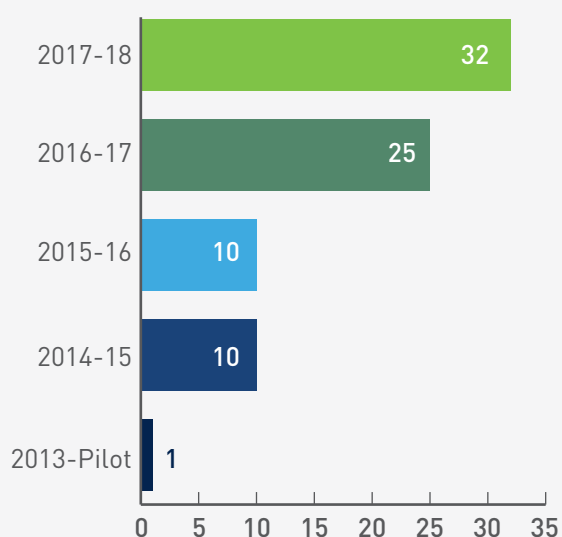

Figure 5: The evolution of Open Learning as expressed through the number of UCD schools involved, and the number of modules on offer

Student Demographics

The students who are studying part-time in UCD Access and Lifelong Learning tend to be resourced, and have time and capital to spend on their lifelong learning. In a previous study, we surveyed students who were registered to our lifelong learning programme. Typically they have engaged with higher education before, with almost 80% of the cohort indicating that they had a third level (Fleming and Wynne, 2013). Those adult learners indicated a high level of engagement with the UCD Adult Education programme, with two thirds of the respondents taking more than one course with the centre. This suggested that once recruited there is a high probability that the learners remain and persist with the programme. A similar pattern is emerging with the Open Learners, who return to complete additional modules.
The mean age of the respondents on the UCD Lifelong Learning programme was 51.58 years. The mean age of the students on the two pilot modules in 2013-14 was higher, at 59 years. Since the pilot, the marketing approaches have been amended in an attempt to broaden the age ranges to make the courses more attractive to other age groups. With the expansion of Open Learning, the age range has altered, with the average age of the 2016 cohort 53.5years. The youngest in the group was 19 and the eldest was 83.
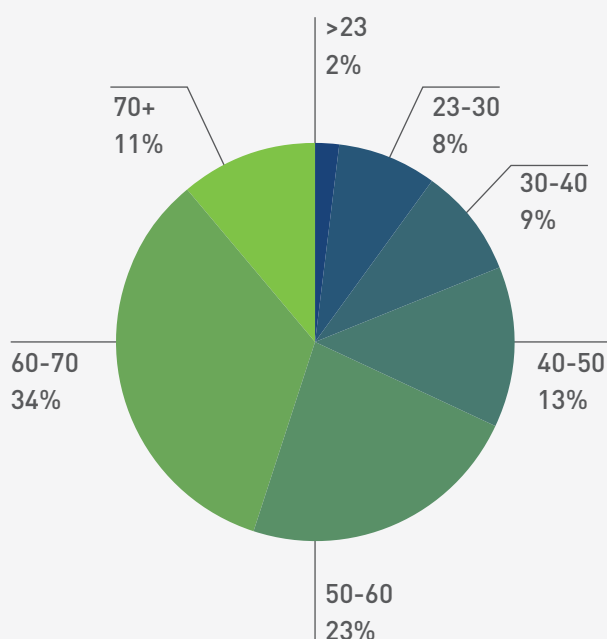
Figure 6: Age Range
OL Cohort 2016-2017

Over half the 2016-17 group (55.8%) of the cohort were female. The same cohort were predominantly Irish (87.5%%) with the remainder from both EU (France, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Cyprus, Sweden) and International (India, Canada, Korea, US).

Logistics

The rationale for all concepts in the Open Learning project was to treat all students the same. Consequently we based the fees per module on the fee already established for the modules. The fee for an Arts module during the pilot phase was €485. This was therefore agreed as the cost for the module. This fee was then increased in line with the fee increase in the university the following year to €500 per module. The fee

for the module covers every aspect of the students' engagement with the university. The students get tuition for the module, including seminars, tutorials and laboratory work. They receive an IT account and full access to the Library. They also can access all other UCD services, including the Sports facilities. The issue of student services and how they would be used and allocated was initially controversial and challenged in some areas. Access to the Sports Centre has been inconsistently recognised and understood. However, the fee structure is based on a modular system where students pay a proportion of all charges when they pay their fee. During the focus group and in subsequent feedback, students have reported that the biggest incentives for them are access to their preferred subjects and access to the library.

When we were developing the project we were also anxious to include an audit option for those students who wished to participate but did not wish to be assessed. We felt that an audit option would encourage reluctant or anxious applicants. The audit fee was set at €250 for audit and €500 for credit. However, the pilot group presented with considerably more credentials and evidence of engagement with the system than was anticipated. In the initial group over 80% of the participants had a primary degree, and a large proportion of those had postgraduate qualifications. In reviewing the structure we recognised that the 'half-price' audit option was set too low and did not cover

the cost of the tuition and facilities on offer. Consequently the gap between audit and credit has been narrowed over the last three years.

The process also involves a redistribution of student fees, where a proportion of the revenue is used to cover advertising and associated costs. The remainder of the fee is transferred to each participating school (pro rata basis).

Lessons learned from the margins

Open Learning has been an interesting metaphor for our aspirations and impetus to widen participation. The process has opened up our approaches and our recognition of all students. There is clear evidence that we are attracting motivated learners to participate in UCD modules. It has facilitated our widening participation ambitions. The process has also illustrated the wider benefits of learning, and how students value the learning as much as the outcome.

The most valuable element of the Open Learning project has been the lessons we have learned about adapting and reinventing ourselves. The mainstreaming agenda has been both challenging and rewarding as it can be a narrative about new opportunities, rather than a tale of loss or restriction. Consequently, the story UCD can now tell about part-time provision is not a story about how courses have ceased. Rather it is an evolving tale of new modules, emerging paths and engaged, diverse learners being part of an emerging community of part-time learners. Cinderella has an open invitation to the ball.

"

Now off you go. For you shall go to the ball.

"

-Fairy Godmother

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Dr Bairbre Fleming is Director of Adult Education in UCD Access and Life Long Learning. She has extensive experience working with under represented students through the UCD Access programmes with particular emphasis on mature students and part-time programmes. Her PhD drew on a sociological analysis of the experiences of mature students in higher education.

Conducting a conversation with Access Graduates

Gavin Jennings

When Anna Kelly asked me to help out at this year's UCD's Access Symposium, to talk to students about their experiences at University, I accepted without hesitation. I had attended and addressed the final session of the European Access Conference 2016 at UCD as a last minute stand-in for a colleague and was honoured and deeply impressed at the work of Access to open UCD up to more people. Nearly 2 decades have passed since a university campus was the centre of my life, but walking into UCD still evokes a world of memories; I spent 8 years as a student in Galway – then UCG and now NUI, Galway. I still get quite lost any time I visit UCD, but the world of lecture halls, bicycles, coffee filled corridors, and stuffed noticeboards is as familiar as it was in the 1990's.

University changed me, challenged me, and offered me the opportunity to pursue the career I enjoy today, with the help of my family, government grants, a scholarship, friends, and strangers. The Leaving Cert and the points system offered me a level playing field to an education where I found

no door that, if pushed, couldn't be opened. The stories of Colin, Charlotte, Anne, Billy, and Elaine, below, show entry into third level education and the opportunities it affords is possible through other doors that sometimes have to be pushed a little harder. We had a public conversation to highlight their experience of enrolling and participating in university where they each recounted their entry into UCD, their lives at University, their achievements and their thoughts on how to broaden access to University to those who are still fearful to pursue a third level education or those who feel that access remains closed or denied.

Colin Keogh told us about not following his father into the family business of car mechanics and being the first from his extended family to have any experience of third level education - **"I'm now in my eleventh year in University"**. Currently studying for a PhD in Engineering, Colin told us how he sometimes found the **"structures"** of university to be **"daunting"** but that the input of a first year student is often as

valuable as an experienced professor. He told the audience that when local communities are invited into UCD and "engaged with", sometimes through hands on demonstration, more people can be encouraged to pursue a university education.

Sitting beside Colin, Charlotte Byrne readily agreed and pointed to the example of her 16 year old son who, having met Colin at a UCD Open Night, is aiming for an education in engineering. A Masters Student, Charlotte told us how she was thrilled to discover, through Access, a route into "a real university and a real degree", years after leaving school without having to return to the Leaving Cert and the Points system. Working part time with the Refugee Council, studying for a degree, and parenting 3 children, she told us that the "volume of reading" can be very challenging and that "being a mature student, you feel like other students are looking at you like you're their mother!" She said that she still heeds advise given to her to "hold her head high" because she "belongs" in University.

Fellow Masters Student, Anne Hayden told us how a diagnosis of dyslexia when she was 5 was never an impediment. Daunted by the prospect and the scale of University, she was helped by the DARE programme and told us "things are a little bit more difficult but you find a way around", adding "As my father says, the impossible just takes a little longer".

Billy Sines told us how he left school in London at the age of 15 with no qualifications, came to Ireland on a 2 week holiday and stayed. However, after the financial crash here, he lost his job, his house, and fell very ill. A friend invited Billy to UCD for a cup of coffee and introduced him to the Access programme. Billy adds: "I signed up and I loved it!", that "The support is there. You can get it and you can do it".

Elaine Harvey told us about coming to UCD in the 1980's with impaired vision when there was no Access Programme at UCD and limited help for students with disabilities. She recorded her lectures, helped set up a society for students with disabilities "to sort the college out" and wrote over 600 letters to all lecturers, advising them how to accommodate students with a variety of disabilities. She told us how UCD is a "world away" now for students with disabilities but the ongoing challenge of challenging "lower expectations" remains.

Charlotte reminded the audience that while access needs to be widened "not everyone needs to go to third level...not everyone needs to be shoved into college". Billy and Anne pointed out that as more and more people enter third level education, the sheer number of students on campus can pose challenges, including "trying to find a seat", as Billy said. Remembering campus life in the 1980s and 90's Elaine recalled how "it was huge then and its huge now", adding -

"

Find a community that works for you here to make it your community.

"

Author

Gavin Jennings

Gavin Jennings has presented Morning Ireland on RTE Radio 1, Ireland's most listened to radio programme for the past 7 years. He has presented news and sports programmes on national radio for two decades and is one Ireland's most recognised voices. Gavin started his broadcasting career on community radio in Galway while completing degrees in medicine and science at NUI, Galway before combining work as a doctor with fronting news and sports programmes on BBC Northern Ireland. A native of Navan, Gavin spends his spare time trying to coach football and hurling to under 8 girls in his adopted home of northside Dublin.

One cup of coffee...

Billy Sines

As an early school leaver, the doors to university had always seemed securely locked. The UCD Access course was, not only an open door, but also the key to unlocking new opportunities. Being invited to the UCD Access symposium as part of the graduate panel is an example of how third level education and the support of university staff can expand your horizon and create opportunities that previously seemed impossible.

When I was initially asked to join the panel, I was unsure as to why I was being asked. Despite the best efforts of my Access tutor, Bairbre Fleming, I still suffered from the Imposter Syndrome. Why would anyone be interested in my story? Perhaps I was only being asked because nobody else would take part. As radio host Gavin Jennings introduced the rest of the panel, I felt even more undeserving of the opportunity. I was sitting with students who had overcome learning difficulties, established support networks for other disadvantaged students, who worked with communities to encourage learning, and an engineer who had made the Forbes list for people to watch out for. I had just finished my first-year exams and wanted to be an Archaeologist. As the microphone made its way around the panel and my time to contribute approached, the Imposter Syndrome was stronger than ever. However, as I began to talk and tell my story, seeing the audience sitting and listening with genuine interest, the fear and doubt started to settle.

I learned several things during the symposium that have since boosted my confidence and has helped to rid the feeling that I do not belong at UCD, once and for all. Students who return to learning through alternative entry come from every corner of society and each brings a new perspective with them. I can apply my own life experiences to my learning which benefits my abilities to think critically about the things I am learning. By hearing the stories of the other graduates, although they stem from a different path, their perspectives also help me to see that individuals on the opposite end of the social scale can also suffer from the same difficulties that effected my previous learning experiences.

I also realised as I looked in to the audience that a large number of people were

genuinely interested in helping people who want to return to learning. I had spent the previous academic year sitting and listening to my lecturers and tutors, so seeing my archaeology lecturers sitting in the audience and the roles reversed seemed strange. It is encouraging to see that the people I hope to work alongside in the future were actively engaged in ensuring that every student at UCD, regardless of their entry method, gets the support they need to feel that they belong.

Once the interview had ended, I was approached by several people who all said that my story was fascinating and inspirational. I had never thought of my story as an inspiration, more of a 'what not to do' guide to life. However, a few days later I was contacted to ask if I would write a blog entry for EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe). They had been in the audience at the symposium and had heard my story. The theme for their blog that month was early school leavers, and felt that my story may encourage others to return to learning.

Learning at third level gives a new outlook on life, and allows individuals to engage with issues in society in a productive and meaningful way. Those who fall out of the education system for various reasons should be reassured by the level of participation within the sector to encourage them back to learning. Students who enter through alternative means do not want to be treated differently; they just need the opportunity. I no longer feel like the imposter in the room, and I am optimistic about my future and the ability to provide a better life for my family.

My journey to UCD started with a friend and a cup of coffee, and a gentle push through the doors of the Access centre. Others may not have that opportunity and feel as though they are facing a locked door. By holding events such as the Access Symposium, and sharing student voices with adult educators, the campus doors can be pushed open.

Author

Billy Sines
Access Panel

Billy Sines is a second year mature student, studying for a BA in Archaeology in University College Dublin (UCD). After moving to Ireland at eighteen and starting a family, things took a turn during the economic crisis, resulting in unemployment and losing his home. He returned to learning by successfully completing the UCD University Access course.

Positive Changes

Elaine Howley

Being invited back to UCD to join the discussion panel with Gavin Jennings was a real honour for me last June. I was astounded by the transformation that had taken place both physically and ideologically, in UCD, with the latter becoming more evident as the afternoon discussion and reflections progressed. My mind was instantly brought back to the days of the wooden bench outside the porter's old office where there was a sign saying Disabled Students Soc, during freshers week, and later the feeling that "we had really made it" when we were moved "inside" the porters office which became the 'Liaison Office for Students with Disabilities', whereupon I was made liaison Officer. From that tiny place, and due in no small part to the commitment of Carmel Bevan in the Registration office, and the Registrar at the time, Professor John Kelly, support services for students with disabilities were delivered in UCD and expanded into a national organisation, NADSHE, now known to us as AHEAD.

But that was twenty five years ago and the support systems that are there today under the "life long Learning" programme are top notch ... and rightly so! Remarkable work is being done and opportunities created for people. The narratives of all on the panel gave voice to the difference that is being made to people's lives, so congratulations to all involved in this work and in the symposium, and 'thank you" sincerely for enabling me to be part of something so wonderful. Here is to the next twenty-five years of access, inclusion, participation, and diversity in Life Long Learning at UCD.

Author

Elaine Howley

Director of Policy & Advocacy, NCBI.

My Experience

Charlotte Byrne

When Thomond first contacted me regarding the symposium, I assumed it would be a small group sitting around a table discussing the benefits of Access, or how it could be improved and perhaps how to reach a more diverse population. Closer to the day when I saw the agenda, I realised it was a much grander affair than I had thought. When I actually arrived and saw the size of the audience and the obvious professionalism of the event, I felt very nervous.

However, the UCD staff and Gavin Jennings were very reassuring. The thing that surprised me most and which I enjoyed very much was hearing the numerous routes by which people from all different backgrounds arrive into UCD. I was aware that DARE was a support for people with challenges that we call disabilities, while HEAR was a support for people struggling with socio-economic disadvantage. Although I would be very socially aware (being a social science graduate and now a social justice post-graduate) of people around us living with social, economic or physical challenges, it was wonderful to hear the life experiences of Elaine, Billy, Anne, and Colin and what they had to negotiate to get to and through a degree. By comparison, I felt my road was an easier one to negotiate.

Given my work with the Irish Refugee Council, it was reassuring to hear that UCD were looking for ways to encourage and support people in our very slow asylum process to enter and succeed at third level education. I think the symposium was a great idea. Thank you for inviting me along and congratulations on a wonderful event.

Author

Charlotte Byrne

Charlotte joined the Irish Refugee Council in May 2015, initially for a six month period to manage an education fund. During that process, it became apparent that there was a real need for somebody to support people in the asylum process regarding their educational needs. At the same time, Charlotte completed her MSc in Equality Studies at UCD, having previously obtained a BSc in Social Science.

L - R Colin Keogh
and Dr Gavin Jennings

Imposter Syndrome

Colin Keogh

I found the UCD Access Symposium to be an excellent event, highlighting the hard work completed by all the staff, advisors, and students involved in the access program. It showed the tireless work that everyone puts into improving access for all in UCD, broadening the diverse mix of students that enter the university. The actions that have been completed and are planned will greatly increase the availability of 3rd level education to those who may not follow the traditional routes or experience problems along the road to university. The insight from access, careers guidance, and educational professionals along with those of students gave great insight into the access situation in UCD at present.

The discussion panel that I was a part of was an insightful experience, allowing me to tell my story to the attendees but also to hear the uplifting stories of the other panellists. The panellists' stories were artfully extracted by the MC, Gavin Jennings, who help us all share our stories, experiences, and insights into the UCD access experience. The discussion showed just how varied the backgrounds and needs of students can be, highlighting the difficult nature of accessing and meeting the needs of students, but it also showed the passion and determination of everyone involved in combating these issues and allowing the students to complete their studies. Panel discussions like this help normalise conversations around particular student needs, removing some of the stigma associated with asking for help and it helps to show people the supports that are available to them in an open accessible manner. Universities can be a daunting place, large in scale, at times imposing and impersonal, but events like the access symposium show the friendly welcoming experience that can be presented to potential students, which in many instances will be the deciding factor in access students embarking on their 3rd level experience.

UCD's access initiatives gave me tremendous help during my time in university, helping to solve any issue I had along the way and building a supportive environment to help me learn. I am very passionate about giving back to the groups and people from similar backgrounds as myself, helping to repay the help I was given. The discussion panel was a great way for me to give back, to show the people who support access students

what it means to the students themselves,
their families, and to show the impact it has
on further generations and other people
in the wider network of the students. You
could hear the gratitude all the students
on the panel had for the support they were
given, with all of them contributing back
to help others with complex life problems
meet their goals. I believe that utilising the
experiences and stories of access students
is key to improving the reach of the access
programs, making it more relatable to
potential students and helping them to
believe university really is an option for them,
with the right support.

Author

Colin Keogh
B.Eng M.E MIEI AMIMechE IAENG
Mechanical & Energy Engineer

Colin Keogh is former UCD Access student and current Research
Engineer in the Mechanical, Environmental and Innovation
engineering sectors. He received a B.E and M.E in Engineering from UCD and is currently
undertaking a PhD in innovation methodologies. He is one of Forbes 30 Under 30 2017, JCI's
Ten Outstanding Young People for 2017 and a 2017 Nissan Generation Next Ambassador.

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Access students with Professor Mark Rogers,
Dr Anna Kelly and Fiona Sweeney at the inaugural
Cothrom na Féinne Scholarship Award Ceremony

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University for All

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