Students with Disabilities Engaged with Support Services in Higher Education in Ireland 2018/19

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creating inclusive environments in education
and employment for people with disabilities

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Foreword

By Dara Ryder, CEO, AHEAD

It is my pleasure to introduce the results of the AHEAD Survey on the number of students with disabilities engaging with support services in higher education in Ireland for the academic period 2018/19. AHEAD has been surveying the participation rates of this cohort of students for the past 26 years. While the findings of a single survey are a snapshot in time, observing the cumulative findings of the AHEAD surveys offers the opportunity to study the flows of students with disabilities entering into the higher education system over time and a chance to identify emerging patterns and trends and thus, the resulting data is a very useful tool to those involved in the delivery and management of our higher education sector.

In the academic year 2018/19 students with disabilities engaging with support services represented 6.2% of the total student population, remaining unchanged since the previous survey. However, the number of students with disabilities participating in higher education in 18/19 was up 7% on 17/18 (due to an increase in overall enrolments in the HE system). Taking a look at the trend over a period of time, there remains a consistent year on year increase in the number of students with disabilities in higher education since surveys commenced (93/94). The last ten years alone has seen a reported 77% rise in the student population of participating institutions of higher education (from AHEAD survey 08/09 to 18/19) but an over 200% rise in the number of students with disabilities engaging with support services (4,853 in 08/09 – 15,696 in 18/19) in the same period. All staff working on access to higher education should be commended for the great strides made in recent years in terms of increased access, but it may now be time to look more closely at the effect the huge rise in numbers is having on how we provide support and examine whether the models of support provision are fit for purpose and future-proofed.

Unfortunately, this general trend of growing at a significantly higher rate than the general student population does not hold for all students with disabilities and, in particular, for students with sensory disabilities, that is students who are listed under the Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Blind/Visually Impaired categories. In the academic period 18/19 students with sensory disabilities collectively represented 4.4% of the population of students with disabilities, while ten years ago it stood at 7% (AHEAD Survey, 09/10). AHEAD has raised and publicised (2015) this issue in the past and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) has identified both categories as target groups to promote their advancement in education. AHEAD would welcome an opportunity for all levels of the education system to come together to examine the specific issues affecting the progression of these cohorts to higher education.

AHEAD has equally raised the issue of undertaking part time vs full time courses by people with disabilities. AHEAD welcomes the HEA's review of the fund for students with disabilities and its subsequent agreement in 2019 to extend the fund to cover part time courses. In advance of that decision coming into force, 2018/19 figures show there was a 4% increase in the number of students studying full time and a 20% increase studying part time. However, the rate of participation of students with disabilities studying part time as a percentage of the student population was relatively low at just 1.4% and we hope that the new availability of the fund to this cohort of students will have a positive impact in terms of participation and progression.

This survey is made possible only with the support of the staff in the participating institutions and the HEA's support for AHEAD's core activities. On behalf of AHEAD I offer our thanks and appreciation to you all. I encourage the dissemination of the survey findings and its insights and revelations contained therein.

Introduction

AHEAD is an independent, non-profit organisation whose mission is to create inclusive environments in education and employment for people with disabilities. This annual research report on the participation rates of students with disabilities engaging with support services in higher education is part of AHEAD's efforts to achieve this goal.

This research is made possible by the substantial work of the staff in the participating higher education institutions who supply statistics yearly and also through the consistent support provided by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as part of their commitment to further the promotion of equal opportunity in higher education (HEA, 2015). This research also plays an important role in aiding The Department of Education and Skills to respond to the needs and raise the aspirations of all students as outlined in a recent strategy document, Empowering through Learning (DES, 2019).

The research on participation rates provides an accurate measure of the number of students with disabilities registered with disability support/access services in higher education in Ireland in a given academic year and also provides a snapshot of their progression. This survey report on the participation rates of students with disabilities in higher education is part of now annual research conducted by AHEAD which began in 1993. The survey findings support the work of AHEAD along with key stakeholders by giving insight into key areas for potential targeting to enhance the quality of the experience and overall access of students with disabilities.

AHEAD is focused on building inclusive learning environments in higher education that embed flexibility and equality into learning and assessment practices across the sector. AHEAD seeks to achieve its mission by pursuing three core strategic themes (AHEAD strategic Plan 19/22):

— To influence national policy to impact positively on the inclusion of students and learners with disabilities in all learning environments.

— To sustain the organisation of AHEAD to promote inclusion in education and employment through the building of networks and collaboration with key strategic partners in all learning environments.

— To promote the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by creating an understanding of UDL in all learning environments.

Survey Method

The AHEAD survey on the participation rates of students with disabilities in higher education in Ireland for the academic period 2018/19 was carried out with the support of participating institutions of higher education and, in particular, with the support of Disability/Access Officers therein. A survey questionnaire was sent out to the disability/access office in each of the higher education institutions involved.

Participating institutions were selected on the basis that they are funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and are included in the HEA's annual statistics on the general student population in higher education in Ireland, with one exception– the National College of Ireland. The National College of Ireland, although funded by the Department of Education and Skills, is included in the AHEAD survey because it hosts a large student population and is therefore deemed too significant to omit.

AHEAD compares the results of its annual survey on the participation rates of student with disabilities in higher education with that of the HEA's statistics for the same corresponding period. 27 institutions were approached to partake in the survey. The 27 institutions which responded are listed here.*

* Some institutions were unable to complete all sections of the survey. Where this occurs, information will be provided in the footnotes in each of the relevant sections. 3 of the Higher Education Institutions listed, namely Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) and Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT) merged in January 2019 to form one university, Technical University Dublin, however, for the purpose of the research on the 2018/2019 data they have been treated as three separate institutions.

- University College Cork (UCC)
- University College Dublin (UCD)
- National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG)
- Trinity College Dublin (TCD)
- Maynooth University (MU)
- Dublin City University (DCU)
- University of Limerick (UL)
- Mary Immaculate College (MIC)
- Marino Institute of Education (MIE)
- National College of Art and Design (NCAD)
- Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI)
- St. Angela's College (St. Ang.)
- Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT)
- Cork Institute of Technology (CIT)
- Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)
- Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (DLIADT)
- Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)
- Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)
- Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB)
- Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC)
- Institute of Technology Sligo (ITS)
- Institute of Technology, Tallaght (ITT)
- Institute of Technology, Tralee (ITTRA)
- Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT)
- Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT)
- National College of Ireland (NCI)
- Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)

Findings

Please note that when the phrase 'students with disabilities' is used in this report, it refers specifically to students with disabilities registered with disability support/access services in higher education, which is the cohort captured and analysed here. AHEAD acknowledges that there is a sizeable cohort of students with disabilities studying in higher education which have not disclosed a disability to their institution or registered for support and it is important to note that these students are not captured or represented in the findings which follow.

Participation Rates of Students with Disabilities

Across the 27 responding higher education institutions, there were 15,696 students with disabilities registered with disability support services for the academic year 2018/2019, representing 6.2% of the total student population in these institutions (253,178). The number of students with disabilities registered in 2018/2019 represented a 7% increase on the previous academic year 2017/2018. However, when comparing last year to this year's survey results, students with disabilities as a percentage of the total student population in higher education, remained unchanged at 6.2%, due to a corresponding 7% year on year growth in the total student population of the responding institutions. Nonetheless, the consistent growth in the numbers of students with disabilities registering with supports services in higher education, an increase of over 200% in the last ten years (from 4,853, AHEAD Survey, 2008/2009), illustrates the substantial progress made in providing better access for students with disabilities to higher education as illustrated in Figure 1.

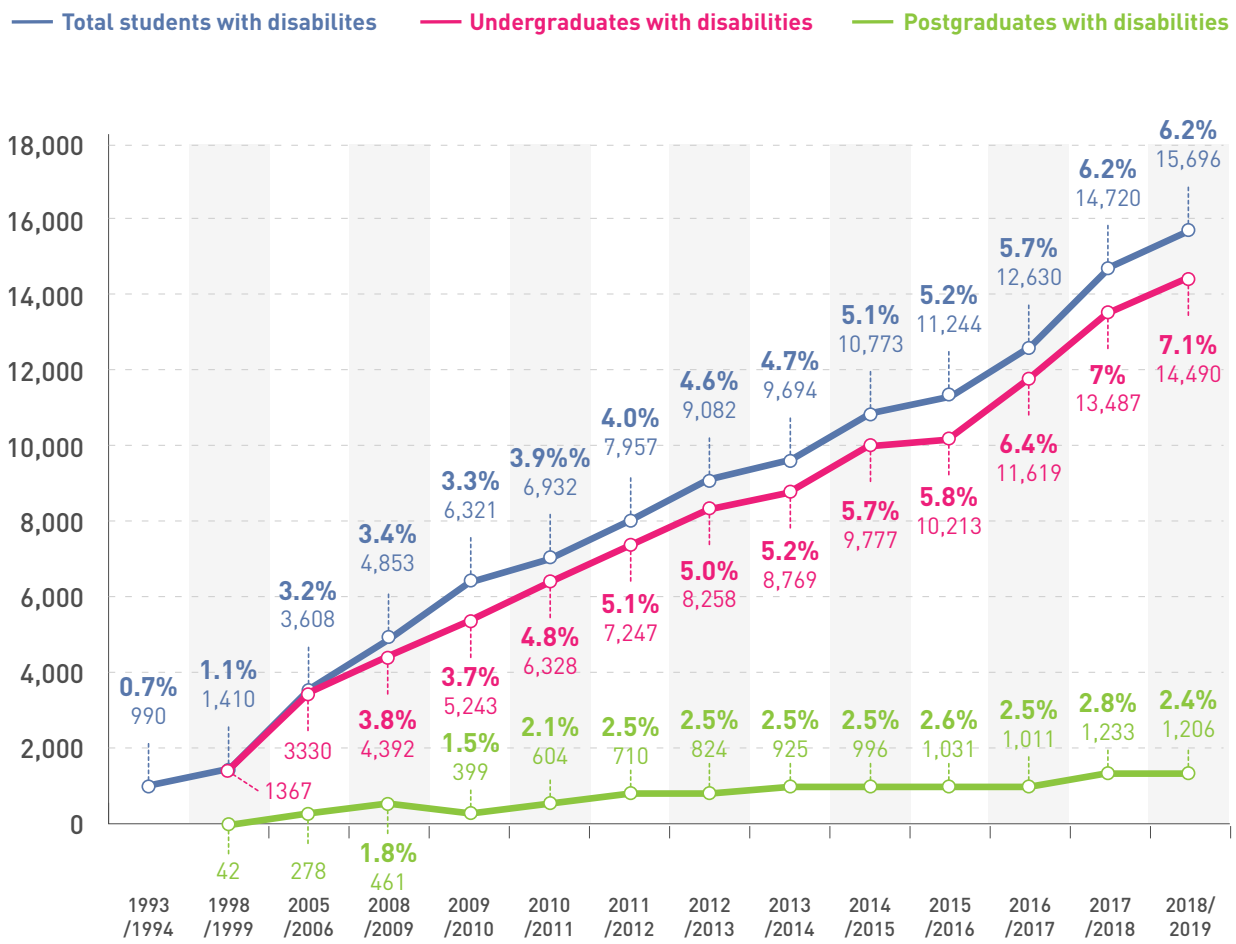


Figure 1. Number of students with disabilities in higher education (and percentage of total student population they represent) since 1993/94

In 2018/19, the number of students with disabilities in the IT/Other Sector was 6,591 (6.2%), representing an overall increase of 182 (2.8%) students with disabilities from the previous year which was 6,409 (6.5%). The number of students with disabilities in the university sector was 9,105 (6.2%) representing an overall increase of 794 (9.6%) from the previous year at 8,311 (6%).

At an institutional level the participation rates of students with disabilities varies across the responding institutions, with students with disabilities representing anywhere from 2.5% to 11.4% of their total student population. In 2018/19 The National College of Art and Design recorded the highest representation of students with disabilities at 11.4% of the total population, followed by Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology at 11.1%, and Trinity College Dublin at 9.2%. There is a full breakdown of the participation rate of students with disabilities by institution listed in Appendix 1.

220%

increase in the number of students with disabilities registering with support services in higher education in the last 10 years

Undergraduate and Postgraduate

This section examines the participation of students with disabilities at undergraduate and postgraduate level for 2018/19. In the last number of years of AHEAD research there was has been a steady increase in the rate of students with disabilities represented at undergraduate level, however there has been a persistently low representation at a postgraduate level. The 2018/19 data shows that this trend continues.

The number of undergraduate students with disabilities registered with disability support/access services across the responding institutions was 14,490 representing 7.1% of the student population at undergraduate level, a 7% (1,003) increase in numbers in this category compared to the previous year when the number was 13,487 (7%). The number of postgraduate students with disabilities registered was 1,206 representing 2.4% of the total postgraduate student population, down 2% from 1,233 (2.8%) in 2017/18.

In 2018/19, postgraduate level continued to have a significantly lower participation rate of students with disabilities than at undergraduate level across the responding institutions as in previous years of this survey (AHEAD 2019, 2018; 2017; 2016; 2015; 2013; 2012; 2011). The scope of The AHEAD Survey is not designed to capture the reasons for the persistent low representation of students with disabilities at postgraduate level, however AHEAD acknowledges that there may be a range of variables, both personal and systemic, which influence this finding and which may require further research to determine why this is the case.

Full Time and Part Time

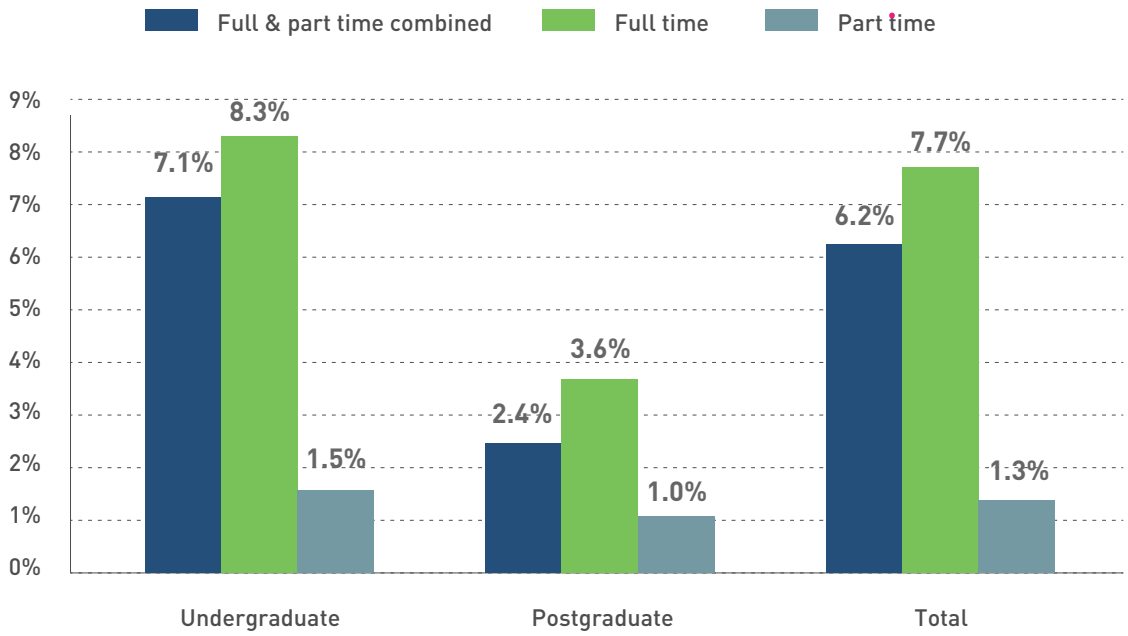
27 of the responding institutions provided a breakdown of the number of students with disabilities registered with support services enrolled in full time and part time education in 2018/19. The research found that there were 14,911 students with disabilities in full time study, representing 7.7% of the total student population studying full time programmes. Within the same period, there were 785 students with disabilities registered with support services who were enrolled in part time studies, representing 1.3% of the total student population studying part time.

The number of students with disabilities studying in both full and part time courses increased from the previous year, 2017/18. The 2018/19 figures represent a 6% (838) year on year increase in the number of students with disabilities studying full time and a 21% (138) increase in those studying part time. Despite the increase in numbers of students with disabilities studying part time, the percentage they represent of the total part time student population actually fell from 1.4% in 2017/18 to 1.3% in 2018/19 due to a significant increase in participation in part time learning amongst the general student population.

Historically, the low participation of students with disabilities in part time study is a persisting issue which has been highlighted by these annual surveys over the years (AHEAD, 2019; 2017; 2016; 2015; 2013; 2012, 2011).

Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown of students with disabilities (as a percentage of the total student population) studying full and part time courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well as the overall combined totals for 2018/19.

Figure 2. Percentage of students with disabilities in full time and part time education as a percentage of the overall student population 2018/19



New Entrant Undergraduates with Disabilities

From the responding institutions[1], there was a total number of 3,960 new entrants (i.e. students entering their first year of studies at third level) in 2018/19. The number of new entrants represented 26% of the total student population with disabilities, a decrease from the previous year at 29%, however the number of new entrant students with disabilities year on year increased by 54 (from 3,906 in 2017/18).

1 GMIT did not provide data for this section of the survey

New Registrations

New Registrations are students who register with disability services for the first time in their higher education institution during the academic year, including students who are not in their first year of study. This data allows AHEAD to deduce if there are students with disabilities who have gone through at least one or more years of study without receiving designated disability support.

In 2018/2019, there were 5,484 new registrations across the disability services in the 26 responding institutions. Of the new registrations, 1,524 were not in their first year of study, making up 28% of all new registrations to the disability services for the academic year 2018/2019 and representing 10% of the total population of students with disabilities. There was a significant increase of 17% (223) in the number of new registrations who were not in their first year of study in 2018/19 compared to the previous year (1,301), which continues a rising trend in this cohort in recent years (2017/2018; 2015/16; 2013/14).

Mature Students

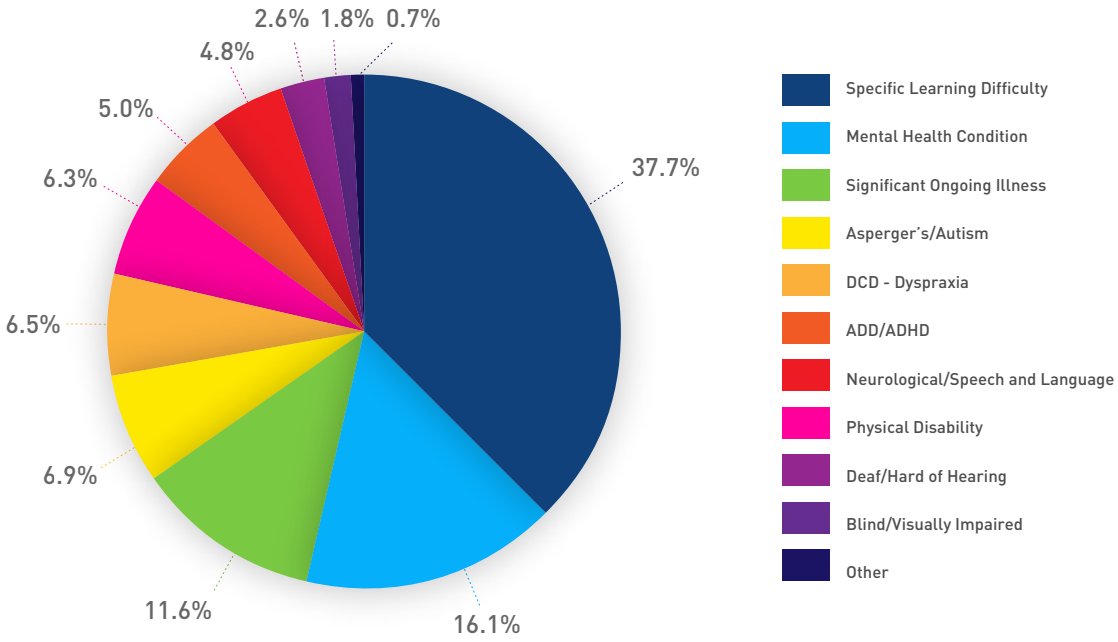
In 2018/19, there were 1,919 mature students with disabilities registered with a disability support/access service identified across the 27 responding institutions, representing 12% of the total population of students with disabilities. There was an increase of 9% (158) in the number of mature students with disabilities in comparison to 2017/2018.

International Students

In 2018/19, there were 592 international students with disabilities recorded across the 27 responding institutions, which represents 3.8% of the total population of students with disabilities. There was a 2% (12) decrease in the numbers of registered international students with disabilities in this academic year's survey in comparison to the survey of 2017/18 when the figure was 604 (4.1%).

Nature of Disability

Figure 3. Breakdown of students registered with disability support/access services by category of disability 2018/19



The categories of disability which are applied as part of this study are based on the categories of disability applied by the Higher Education Authority in the Fund for Students with Disabilities guidelines for higher education institutions, with an addition of the Other category which is added to cater for any additional registrations with the disability service that do not fall under the HEA specified categories. Students are categorised by their primary disability only, regardless of whether more than 1 disability is present.

The **Figure 3** illustrates the breakdown of 15,180 students with disabilities by category of disability in the responding institutions[2] in 2018/19. The largest category of disability was the Specific Learning Difficulty at 37.7% (5,718) of all students with disabilities within that academic year, the second largest was Mental Health Condition at 16.1% (2,442), followed by Significant Ongoing Illness at 11.6% (1,763).

2 GMIT did not provide data for this section of the survey

6.9% (1,055) of students with disabilities were registered in the Asperger's/ Autism category, 6.5% (984) in the DCD - Dyspraxia category, 6.3% (953) in the Physical Disability, 5% (756) in the ADD/ADHD category, 4.8% (728) in the Neurological/Speech & Language category, 2.6% (396) in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing category, 1.8% (273) in the Blind and Visually Impaired category and 0.7% (112) in the Other category.

There was some significant year on year changes in the overall percentage breakdown of students with disabilities across the categories of disability and the actual numbers in those categories. In particular, the number of students with disabilities registered under the category of 'Other' dropped by 70.8% from 384 in 2017/2018 to 112 in 2018/2019, representing 0.7% of students with disabilities in comparison to 2.6% in the previous period. In contrast, the number of students with disabilities in the Asperger's/Autism category rose by 21% from 870 in 2017/2018 to 1,055 in 2018/2019. In the Mental Health category, the number of students with disabilities rose by 10% from 2,217 (15.1%) in 2017/2018 to 2,442 (16.1%) in 2018/2019 and in the Neurological/Speech & Language category, the number of students with disabilities rose by 17% from 624 (4.2%) in 2017/2018 to 728 (4.8%) in 2018/2019.

New Entrants Disability Breakdown

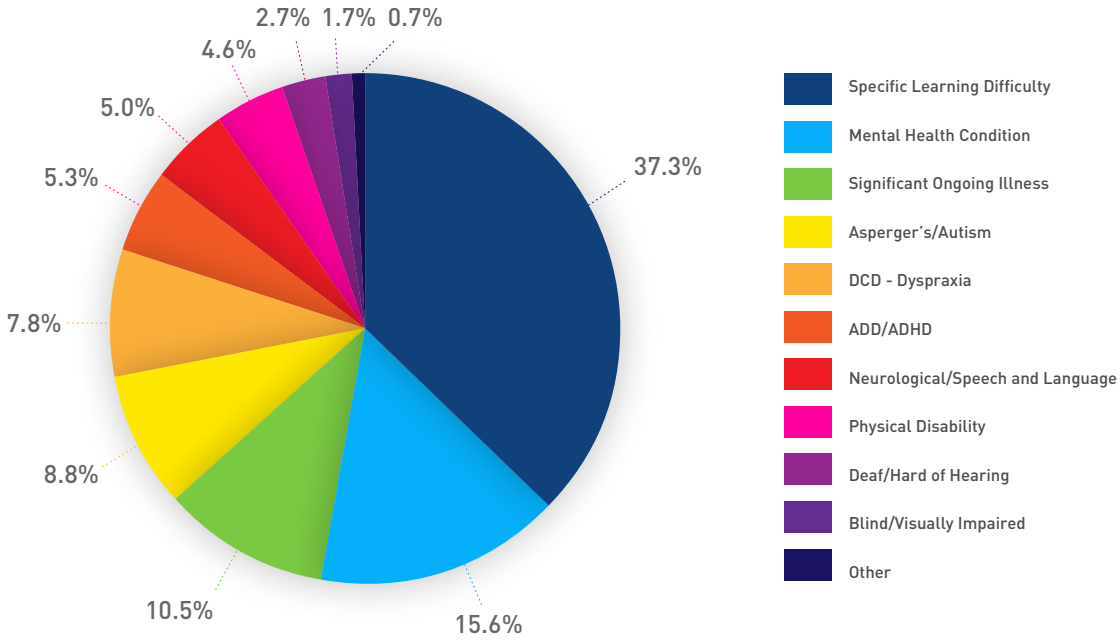
The responding institutions[3] provided the breakdown by disability of 3,960 new entrants with disabilities. Broken down by category, 8.8% (347) were in the Asperger's/Autism category, 5.3% (211) in the ADD/ADHD category, 1.7% (68) in the Blind/Visually Impaired category, 2.7% (106) in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing category, 7.8% (309) in the DCD - Dyspraxia category, 15.6% (619) in the Mental Health Condition category, 5% (198) in the Neurological/Speech & Language category, 10.5% (416) in the Significant Ongoing Illness category, 4.6% (182) in the Physical category, 37.3% (1,478) in the Specific Learning Difficulty and 0.7% (26) in the Other category.

By category of disability, there were some notable differences in the new entrant disability profile compared to the previous year, including a 29% increase in the category of Deaf/Hard of Hearing category (to 106 from 82 in 2017/18), an 18% increase in the Asperger's/Autism category (to 347 from 294 in

3 GMIT did not provide data for this section of the survey

2017/18) and a 17% increase in the Neurological/Speech and Language category (to 198 from 169 in 2017/18). There were also some notable decreases year on year including a 77% decrease in the Other category (to 26 from 111 in 2017/18), an 11% decrease in the Significant Ongoing Illness category (to 416 from 470 in 2017/18) and a 2% decrease in the number of students in The Specific Learning Difficulty (to 1,478 from 1,507).

Figure 4. Breakdown of new entrant students by category of disability in 2018/19



Undergraduate Disability Breakdown

The responding institutions[4] recorded 13,977 undergraduate students with disabilities in 2018/19. Of those, 37.6% (5,253) were in the category of Specific Learning Difficulties, the largest cohort of students with disabilities in undergraduate education that year. The next largest category of undergraduate students represented were in the Mental Health Condition category at 16.2% (2,262), followed by Significant Ongoing Illness at 11.5% (1,601), Asperger's/

4 GMIT did not provide data for this section of the survey

Autism at 7.2% (1,005), DCD/Dyspraxia at 6.8% (946), Physical Disability at 5.9% (824), ADD/ADHD at 5.1% (709), Neurological/Speech and Language Difficulties at 4.7% (663), Deaf/Hard of Hearing at 2.6% (365), Blind/Visually Impaired at 1.7% (239), and the Other category at 0.8% (110).

Overall, there was an increase in the number of students with disabilities at undergraduate level across the responding institutions apart from the categories of Specific Learning Disabilities where the numbers remained much the same (4 less than in 2017/18) and the 'Other' category, where the number of students fell by 70.9% (268). The most significant year on year increases were a 12% rise in Mental Health Condition category (to 2,262 from 2,017 in 2017/18), a 20% rise in the Neurological/Speech & Language category (to 663 from 552 in 2017/18) and a 22% rise in the Asperger's'/Autism category (to 1,005 from 826 in 2017/18).

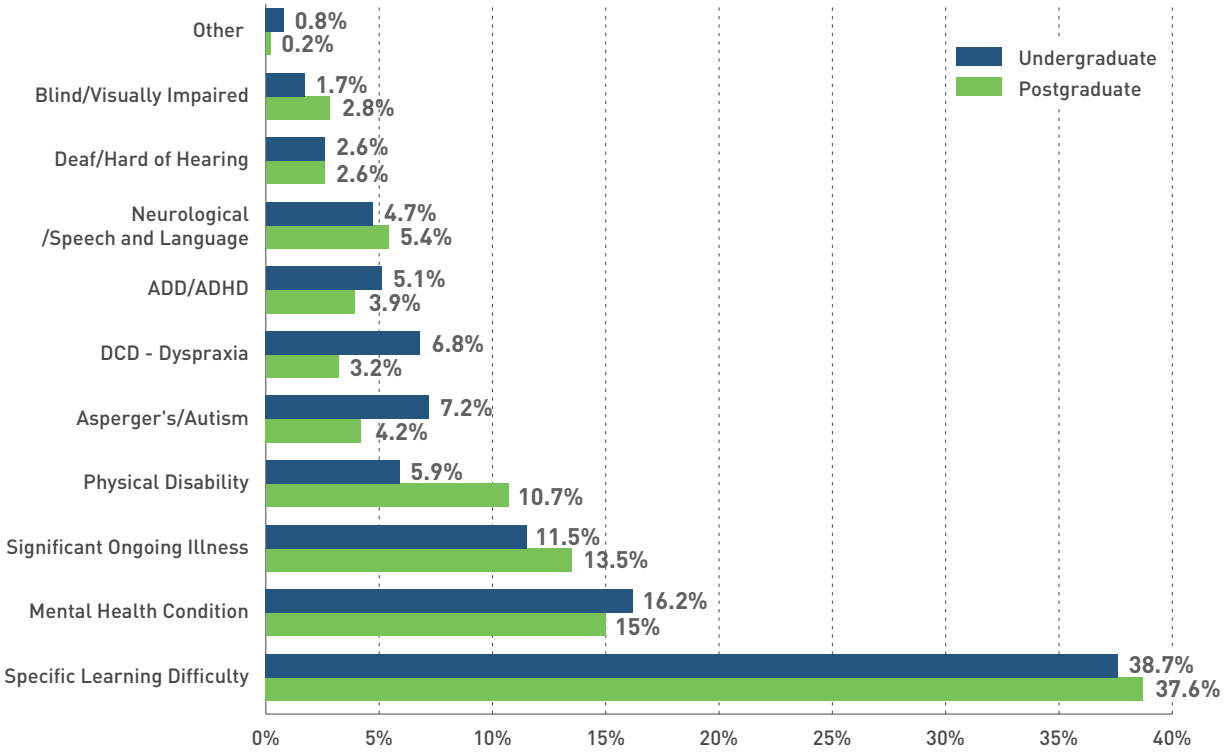
Postgraduate Disability Breakdown

The responding institutions[5] reported a total of 1,203 students with disabilities registered with disability support/access services that were studying at postgraduate level in 2018/19, a 2% decrease from the previous year (from 1,233 in 2017/18). Students in the Specific Learning Difficulty category represented the largest cohort of students with disabilities studying at postgraduate level at 38.7% (465), followed by Mental Health Condition at 15% (180) and the Significant Ongoing Illness category at 13.5% (162), the same three largest categories as at undergraduate level. The next largest categories were Physical Disability at 10.7% (129), Neurological/Speech Language at 5.4% (65), Asperger's/Autism at 4.2% (50), ADD/ADHD at 3.9% (47), Blind/Visually Impaired at 2.8%(34), Deaf/Hard of Hearing at 2.6%(31) and DCD-Dyspraxia at 3.2%(38). The category with the lowest percentage at postgraduate level in 2018/19 was the 'Other' category at 0.2% (2).

There were some significant changes noted year on year in the number of post graduate students with disabilities by category with the largest year on year decrease being in the ADD/ADHD category, down 36% (from 73 to 47) and the largest increase being in the category of Significant Ongoing Illness up 16% (from 140 to 162).

5 GMIT did not provide data for this section of the survey

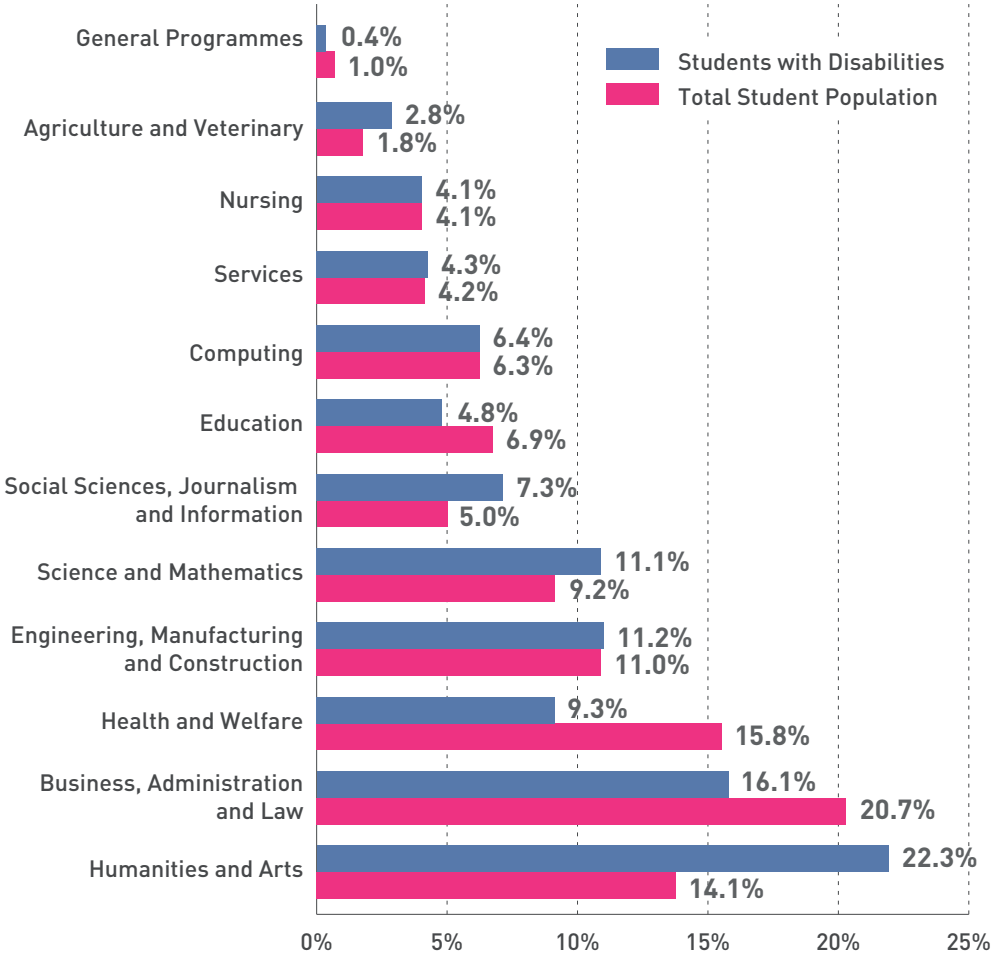
Figure 5. Disability profile of undergraduate and postgraduate students with disabilities in 2018/19



Fields of Study

The following section breaks down the fields of study of the 15,696 students with disabilities identified in the 27 responding institutions. Each institution was given the subject breakdown in line with the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) classifications of subjects with some minor adjustments by AHEAD to categorisation[6]. **Figure 6** illustrates the comparison of the students with disabilities' fields of study in comparison to the general student population across each field of study in 2018/19. The statistics on the breakdown of fields of study of the total student population for comparison were provided by the Higher Education Authority[7].

Figure 6. Breakdown of fields of study of students with disabilities compared to the total student population



6 This study has combined 'Law' as part of the 'Business and Administration' category reflecting the categorisation used by the ISCED, with the exception of 'Nursing' which AHEAD, unlike the ISCED, list as a field in its own right distinct from 'Health and Welfare'.

7 The HEA data did not include Trinity College Dublin.

The Field of 'Humanities and Arts' had the highest percentage of students with disabilities once again in 2018/19 with 22.3% (3,508) of students with disabilities studying in this field. This was followed by 'Business, Administration and Law' with 16.1% (2,521), 'Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction' with 11.2% (1,751) and 'Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics' at 11.1%. The least common fields of study for students with disabilities were 'Generic Programmes' with 0.4% (56) of students with disabilities, followed by 'Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, and Veterinary' with 2.8% (445) and 'Nursing' with 4.1% (636).

The biggest differences between the percentages of the overall student population studying a field compared to the percentage of students with disabilities, were in the fields of 'Arts and Humanities' and 'Health and Welfare'.

9.3% of students with disabilities studied in the field of 'Health and Welfare' in comparison to 15.8% of the general student population, while 22.3% of students with disabilities studied in the field of 'Humanities and Arts' in comparison to just 14.1% of the general student population. The trend of students with disabilities having a higher average representation in the field of 'Humanities and Arts' and a lower representation in the field of 'Health and Welfare' remains consistent over many years of AHEAD's survey findings (AHEAD, 2019; 2018; 2017; 2016).

Fields of Study Breakdown by Disability

26 of the 27 responding institutions[8] provided information on the participation of 15,180 students with disabilities, by category of disability and field of study in 2018/19. The following sub sections examine the fields of study of students in each category of disability, with accompanying tables and two to four findings on the representation of each category of disability in comparison to other students with disabilities and to the general student population[9] in 2018/19. Because of the diverse nature of the conditions in the 'Other' category, no analysis is provided here.

The fields of study included in this section are based on the ISCED Classifications.

8 GMIT did not provide data for this section of the survey.

9 TCD data not included in general student population.

ADD/ADHD

Table 1 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the ADD/ADHD category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all students with disabilities (SWDs) and for the student population in general

5.0% All SWDs are in ADD/ADHD	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers ADD/ADHD Studying Field	% Students ADD/ADHD Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field ADD/ADHD
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	4	0.5%	7.1%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	15	2.0%	2.0%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	201	26.6%	5.8%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	66	8.7%	5.8%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	144	19.0%	5.9%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	85	11.2%	5.1%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	40	5.3%	4.1%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	87	11.5%	5.2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	17	2.2%	4.1%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	66	8.7%	4.6%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	11	1.5%	1.8%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	20	2.6%	3.3%
Total			756		

— Students in the ADD/ADHD category were almost twice as likely to study in the field of Arts and Humanities and half as likely to study in the field of Health and Welfare as students in the general student population.

— Students in the ADD/ADHD category were more than three times less likely to study in the field of Education when compared to the general student population and less than half as likely when compared to other students with disabilities.

— Students in the ADD/ADHD category were less than half as likely to study in the field of Nursing than both the general student population and other students with disabilities.

Asperger's'/Autism

Table 2 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Asperger's/Autism category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all students with disabilities (SWDs) and for the student population in general

6.9% of all SWDs are in Asperger's/Autism category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers Asperger's/ Autism Studying Field	% Students Asperger's/ Autism Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field Asperger's/ Autism
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	20	1.9%	2.7%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	341	32.3%	9.9%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	47	4.5%	4.2%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	132	12.5%	5.4%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	173	16.4%	10.3%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	182	17.3%	18.9%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	98	9.3%	5.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	12	1.1%	2.9%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	22	2.1%	1.5%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	2	0.2%	0.3%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	26	2.5%	4.3%
Total			1,055		

— Students in the Asperger's'/Autism category were more than two and a half times as likely to study in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTS) as those in the general student population and to other students with disabilities.

— Students in the Asperger's'/Autism category were significantly more likely to study in the field of Arts and Humanities compared to the general student population and to other students with disabilities.

— Students in the Asperger's'/Autism category were very significantly less likely to study in the field of Nursing and the field of Health and Welfare when compared to both to the general student population and to other students with disabilities.

— Students in the Asperger's'/Autism category were very significantly more likely to study in the fields of Information and Communication Technologies, Arts and Humanities and Science when compared to the general student population and other students with disabilities, but were less likely to study in all other fields.

Blind/Visually Impaired

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

1.8% of all SWDs are in Blind/Visually Impaired category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers Blind/Visually Impaired Studying Field	% Students Blind/Visually Impaired Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field Blind/Visually Impaired
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	2	0.7%	3.6%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	19	7.0%	2.5%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	70	25.6%	2.0%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	21	7.7%	1.9%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	50	18.3%	2.1%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	26	9.5%	1.5%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	21	7.7%	2.2%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	13	4.8%	0.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	2	0.7%	0.5%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	33	12.1%	2.3%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	4	1.5%	0.6%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	12	4.4%	2.0%
Total			273		

- Students in the Visually Impaired category were almost twice as likely to study in the Humanities and Arts field as the general student population.
- Students in the Visually Impaired category were less than half as likely to study in the fields of Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary and Nursing when compared to the general student population and to other students with disabilities.
- Students in the Visually Impaired category were more likely to study in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) when compared to the general student population and to other students with disabilities.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Table 4 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all students with disabilities (SWDs) and for the student population in general

2.6% of all SWDs are in Deaf/Hard of Hearing category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers Deaf/Hard of Hearing Studying Field	% Students Deaf/Hard of Hearing Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field Deaf/Hard of Hearing
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	3	0.8%	5.4%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	22	5.6%	2.9%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	100	25.3%	2.9%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	21	5.3%	1.9%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	59	14.9%	2.4%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	41	10.4%	2.4%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	21	5.3%	2.2%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	32	8.1%	1.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	10	2.5%	2.4%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	50	12.6%	3.5%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	22	5.6%	3.5%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	15	3.8%	2.5%
Total			396		

— Students in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing category were significantly more likely to study in the field of Arts and Humanities in comparison to students in the general student population and more likely in comparison to other students with disabilities.

— Students in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing category were significantly more likely to study in the field of Nursing than students in the general student population and other students with disabilities.

DCD-Dyspraxia

Table 5 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the DCD-Dyspraxia category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all students with disabilities (SWDs) and for the student population in general

6.5% of all SWDs are in DCD - Dyspraxia category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers DCD-Dyspraxia Studying Field	% Students DCD-Dyspraxia Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field DCD-Dyspraxia
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	2	0.2%	3.6%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	34	3.5%	4.5%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	223	22.7%	6.5%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	58	5.9%	5.1%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	187	19.0%	7.7%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	107	10.9%	6.4%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	101	10.3%	10.5%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	109	11.1%	6.6%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	29	2.9%	7.1%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	71	7.2%	5.0%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	14	1.4%	2.2%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	49	5.0%	8.1%
Total			984		

— Students in the DCD-Dyspraxia category were less than half as likely to study in the field of Nursing when compared to the general student population and other students with disabilities.

— Students in the DCD-Dyspraxia category were very significantly more likely to study in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) when compared to the general student population and other students with disabilities.

— Students in the DCD-Dyspraxia category were less likely to study in the field of Generic Programmes and Qualifications when compared to the general student population and other students with disabilities.

Mental Health Condition

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

16.1% of all SWDs are in Mental Health Condition category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers Mental Health Condition Studying Field	% Students Mental Health Condition Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field Mental Health Condition
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	11	0.5%	19.6%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	99	4.1%	13.2%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	780	31.9%	22.7%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	268	11.0%	23.7%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	308	12.6%	12.7%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	321	13.1%	19.1%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	105	4.3%	10.9%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	115	4.7%	6.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	56	2.3%	13.7%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	205	8.4%	14.3%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	117	4.8%	18.8%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	57	2.3%	9.4%
Total			2,442		

- Students in the Mental Health Condition category were less than half as likely to study in the field of Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction compared to the general student population and other students with disabilities.
- Students in the Mental Health Condition category were more than twice as likely to study in the field of Arts and Humanities, and the field of Social Sciences, Journalism and Information when compared to the general student population, and significantly more likely to study in these areas than other students with disabilities.
- Students in the Mental Health Condition category were significantly less likely to study in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) when compared to the general student population and to other students with disabilities.

Neurological/Speech and Language

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

4.8% of all SWDs are in Neurological/ Speech and Language category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers Neurological/ Speech and Language Studying Field	% Students Neurological/ Speech and Language Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field Neurological/ Speech and Language
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	8	1.1%	14.3%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	37	5.1%	4.9%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	155	21.3%	4.5%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	63	8.7%	5.6%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	120	16.5%	4.9%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	85	11.7%	5.1%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	33	4.5%	3.4%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	63	8.7%	3.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	24	3.3%	5.9%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	74	10.2%	5.2%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	31	4.3%	5.0%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	35	4.8%	5.8%
Total			728		

- Students in the Neurological/Speech and Language category were almost twice as likely to study in the field of Arts and Humanities when compared to the general student population.
- Students in the Neurological/Speech and Language category were significantly more likely to study in the field of Social Sciences, Journalism and Information when compared to the general student population and notably more likely when compared to other students with disabilities.
- Students in the Neurological/Speech and Language category were notably less likely to study in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and the field of Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction when compared to the general student population and to other students with disabilities.

Significant Ongoing Illness

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

11.6% of all SWDs are in Significant Ongoing Illness category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers Significant Ongoing Illness Studying Field	% Students Significant Ongoing Illness Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field Significant Ongoing Illness
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	7	0.4%	12.5%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	138	7.8%	18.4%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	358	20.3%	10.4%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	143	8.1%	12.6%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	301	17.1%	12.4%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	232	13.2%	13.8%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	81	4.6%	8.4%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	128	7.3%	7.7%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	38	2.2%	9.3%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	216	12.3%	15.1%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	85	4.8%	13.6%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	36	2.0%	5.9%
Total			1,763		

- Students in the Significant Ongoing Illness category were less than half as likely to study in the field of Services when compared to the general student population and to other students with disabilities.
- Students in the Significant Ongoing Illness category were notably more likely to study in the field of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics when compared to the general student population and to other students with disabilities.
- Students in the Significant Ongoing Illness category were notably less likely to study in the field of Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction, and the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) when compared to both the general student population and to other students with disabilities.

Physical Disability

Table 9 - Breakdown by field of study for students in the Physical Disability category compared to the breakdown by field of study for all students with disabilities (SWDs) and for the student population in general

6.3% of all SWDs are in Physical Disability category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers Physical Disability Studying Field	% Students Physical Disability Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field Physical Disability
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	4	0.4%	7.1%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	53	5.6%	7.1%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	219	23.0%	6.4%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	70	7.3%	6.2%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	181	19.0%	7.5%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	115	12.1%	6.8%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	63	6.6%	6.5%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	54	5.7%	3.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	21	2.2%	5.1%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	106	11.1%	7.4%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	40	4.2%	6.4%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	27	2.8%	4.5%
Total			953		

— Students in the Physical Disability category were significantly less likely to study in the field of Services when compared to the general student population and other students with disabilities.

— Students in the Physical Disability category were approximately half as likely to study in the field of Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction compared to the general student population and to other students with disabilities.

Specific Learning Difficulty

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

37.7% of all SWDs are in Specific Learning Difficulty category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers Specific Learning Difficulty Studying Field	% Students Specific Learning Difficulty Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field Specific Learning Difficulty
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	15	0.3%	26.8%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	312	5.5%	41.5%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	960	16.8%	27.9%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	351	6.1%	31.0%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	936	16.4%	38.6%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	493	8.6%	29.3%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	310	5.4%	32.2%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	951	16.6%	57.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	192	3.4%	46.8%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	580	10.1%	40.5%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	296	5.2%	47.4%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	322	5.6%	53.1%
Total			5,718		

— Students in the Specific Learning Difficulty category were almost twice as likely to study in the field of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary when compared to the general student population and notably more likely than other students with disabilities.

— Students in the Specific Learning Difficulty category were significantly more likely to study in the field of Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction when compared to the general student population and other students with disabilities.

— Students in the Specific Learning Difficulty category were notably more likely to study in the field of Arts and Humanities when compared to the general student population and notably less likely when compared to other students with disabilities.

Other

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

0.7% of all SWDs are in Other category	% Total Students Studying Field	% Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers Other Studying Field	% Students Other Studying Field	% SWDs Studying Field Other
Generic Programmes and Qualifications	1.0%	0.4%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Education	6.9%	4.8%	2	1.8%	0.3%
Arts and Humanities	14.1%	22.3%	30	26.8%	0.9%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	5.0%	7.3%	24	21.4%	2.1%
Business, Administration & Law	20.7%	16.1%	9	8.0%	0.4%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	9.2%	11.1%	5	4.5%	0.3%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	6.3%	6.4%	7	6.3%	0.7%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.0%	11.2%	9	8.0%	0.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	1.8%	2.8%	9	8.0%	2.2%
Health and Welfare	15.8%	9.3%	8	7.1%	0.6%
Nursing	4.1%	4.1%	2	1.8%	0.3%
Services	4.2%	4.3%	7	6.3%	1.2%
Total			112		

Exam Accommodations

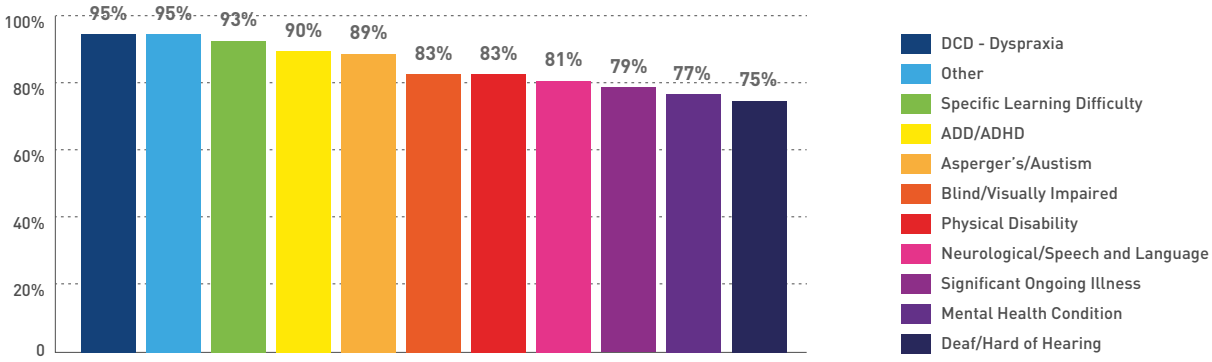
The responding institutions[10] provided information on the number of students with disabilities who received exam accommodations in 2018/19 along with a breakdown of this figure by disability and the types of exam accommodations received. The responses identified a total of 13,129 students with disabilities given one or more exam accommodations in 2018/19, representing 86% (15,180) of the total population of students with disabilities in the responding institutions. When compared to survey results of 2017/18 (12,256, 82%) there has been a yearly increase of 7% (873) in the number of students with disabilities receiving one or more exam accommodations.

Exam Accommodations by Category of Disability

In 2018/19, the responding institutions provided a breakdown of exam accommodations by category of disability. The data on exam accommodations indicated that across all categories of disabilities 75% or more of students in each category were in receipt of one or more exam accommodations. The lowest percentage of students in receipt of exam accommodations by category was in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing category at 75% (297). Similar to the previous year, the DCD-Dyspraxia category has the highest percentage of students in receipt of one or more exam accommodations with 95% (934). The 'Other' category also had 95% (106) of students receiving exam accommodations, while the third highest percentage of students by category of disability in receipt of one or more exam accommodations was the Specific Learning Difficulty category with 93% (5,290).

10 GMIT did not provide complete data for this section of the survey

Figure 7. Breakdown of exam accommodations received by % of disability category 2018/19

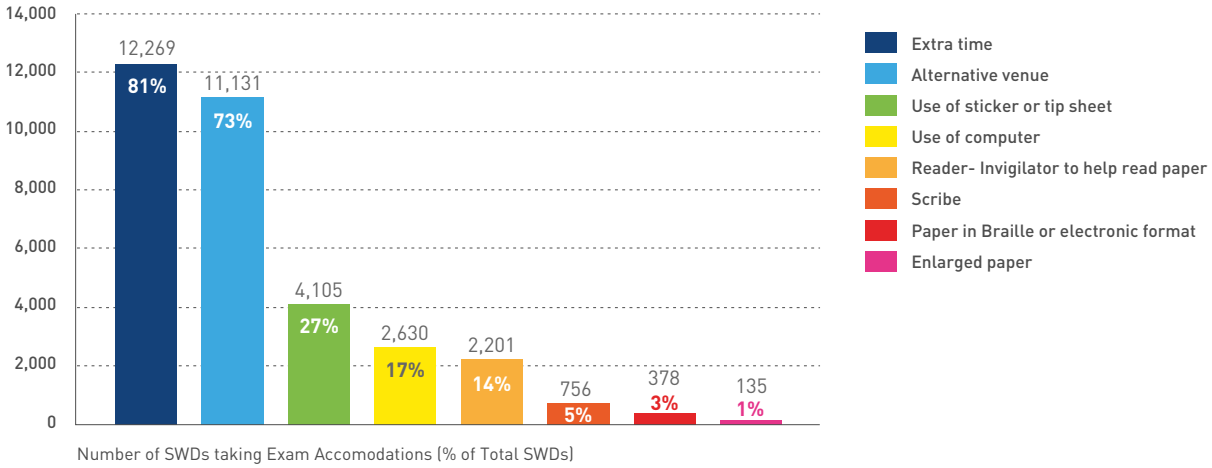


Exam Accommodation by Type

The responding institutions provided information on the type of exam accommodations that students with disabilities received in 2018/19. Institutions provided information on the number of the following types of exam accommodations received by students within that academic year; extra time, use of an alternative venue, use of computer, Reader - Invigilator to help read paper, scribe, enlarged paper, use of sticker or marking tip sheet, exam paper in braille or electronic format.

The chart below illustrates the percentage of students with disabilities who received these accommodations across the institutions who provided this information. The highest availed of exam accommodation, as found in previous years of this research (AHEAD 2019; 2018; 2017), was extra time with 81% (12,269) of students with disabilities across the responding institutions receiving this accommodation. This was followed by alternative venue which was used by 73% (11,131) of students with disabilities in 2018/19. The next most popular type of accommodation was use of a sticker/tip sheet at 27% (4,105) followed by use of a computer at 17% (2,630), use of a reader at 14% (2,201), use of a scribe at 5% (756), exam papers in braille or electronic format at 3% (378) and enlarged paper at 1% (135).

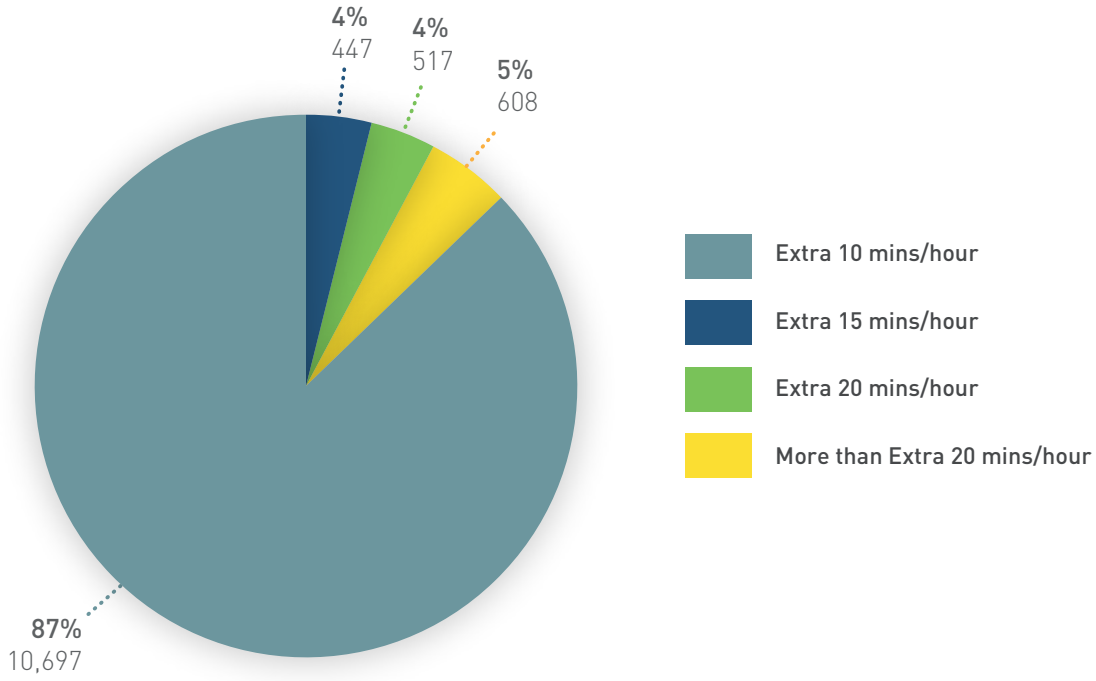
Figure 8. Breakdown of exam accommodations availed of by students with disabilities in 2018/19



Extra Time Breakdown

Of the 13,129 students with disabilities that received one or more exam accommodations in the responding institutions in 2018/19, 12,269 (93%) received extra time for exams. Of those who received extra time as an accommodation, 87% (10,697) received an extra 10 minutes per hour, 4% (447) received 15 minutes extra per hour, and 4% (517) received 20 extra minutes per hour while 5% (608) received more than an extra 20 minutes per hour. **Figure 9** illustrates the breakdown of extra time received by students with disabilities recorded by the responding institutions for 2018/19.

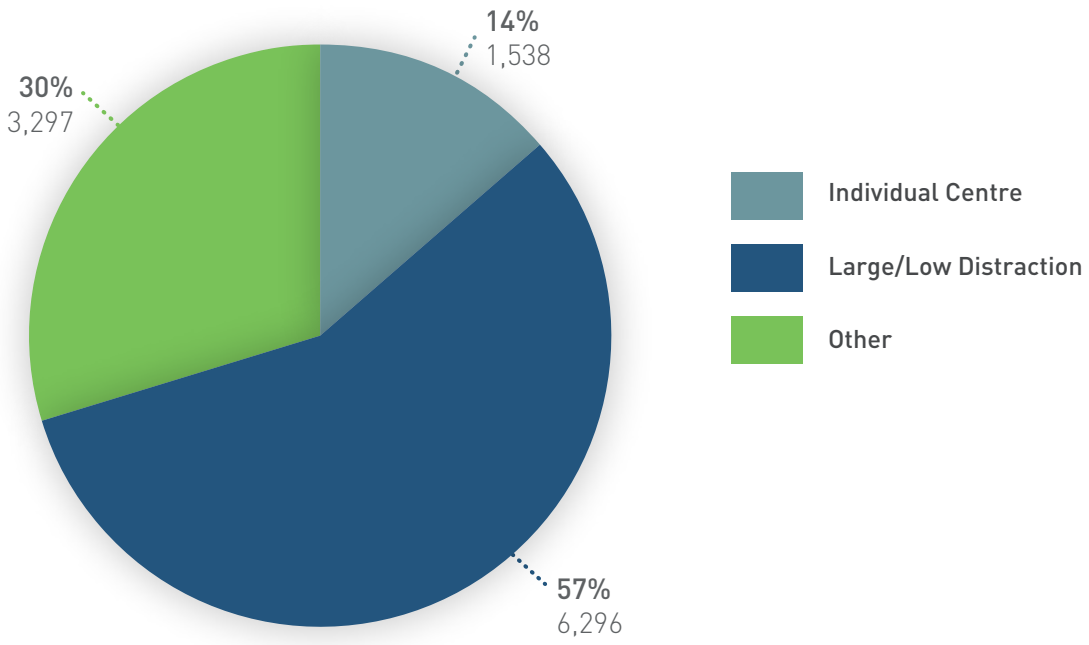
Figure 9. Number of students with disabilities receiving varying amounts of extra time per hour in examinations 18/19



Alternative Venue Breakdown

The number of students with disabilities who availed of an alternative venue as an exam accommodation in the responding institutions in 2018/19 was 11,131, which represents 85% of the total number of all students that received one or more exam accommodation. Of those who availed of an alternative venue for exams, 14% (1,538) used Individual Centres, 30% (3,297) used an alternative venue marked as 'Other' and 57% (6,296) used Low Distraction Rooms. The breakdown of alternative venue types used in 2018/19 is illustrated in **Figure 10**.

Figure 10. Number of students with disabilities who undertook examinations in different types of alternative venues 2018/19



Inside Services

AHEAD asked responding institutions to provide information about the numbers of staff with responsibility for supporting students with disabilities and the number of learning support staff employed by the responding institutions[11]. AHEAD use this data to calculate the number of students per staff member.

Across all 27 responding institutions, there were 620 students per learning support staff member and 179 students per disability support staff in 2018/19. The total number of students per support staff member (disability and learning support combined) was 139.

The number of students per disability support staff in University Sector was 164 compared to 206 in the IT/Other Sector.

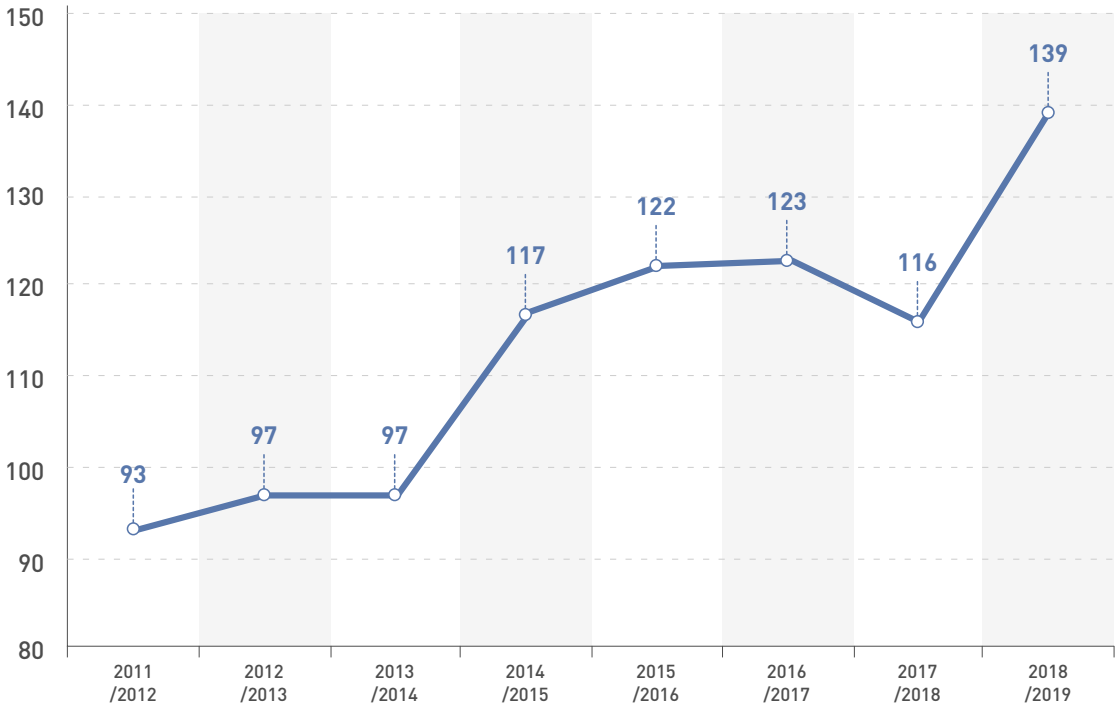
Over a 7 year period of AHEAD's research in this area, there has been a 37% increase in the number of students per disability support staff member, up from 131 in 2011/12 (AHEAD, 2012) to 179.

11 Methodology: Responses were delivered as a decimal number where one full time (5 days a week) staff member = 1, and part time staff members were included as a pro rata fraction of 1. For example, a college with one full time staff member working 5 days a week and one part time staff member working 2 days a week would report 1.4 staff members. Where staff members had shared responsibility over students with disabilities as well as other student groups, they were asked to estimate how much of their remit was dedicated to students with disabilities.

37%

increase in the number of students per disability support staff member in the last 7 years

Figure 11. Number of students per disability support staff member in the HEIs from 2011/12 - 2018/19

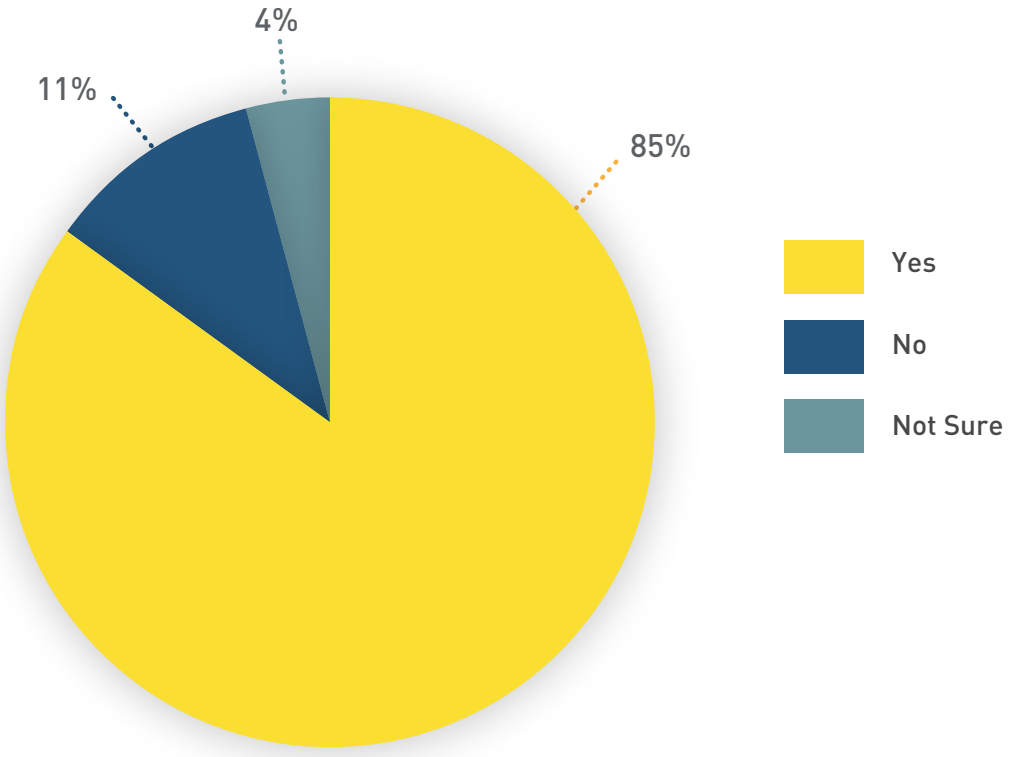


In the same period, the number of students per learning support staff has increased by 94%, up from 319 students per learning support staff member in 2011/12 (AHEAD, 2,012), although this may be related to the increased use of externally contracted learning support provision.

On the Ground - Opinion

Responding institutions were asked if they believed they had support from their university/IT/Other institution to collaborate in an advisory capacity to share their expertise on disability and inclusive practice on campus. All the responding institutions engaged with the question on collaboration; 4% (1) were unsure, 11% (3) disagreed that they had institutional support and 85% (23) agreed they had which is illustrated in **Figure 12**. AHEAD also asked respondents if they believed they had sufficient resources in their department to provide supports to other departments on inclusive practice; 26 of the 27 institutions responded to this question. Of the responses received on resources, 28% (7) said yes, they believed they had sufficient resources to collaborate while 72% (18) said no, that they did not believe they were sufficiently resourced to collaborate. The responses to the second question are illustrated in **Figure 13**.

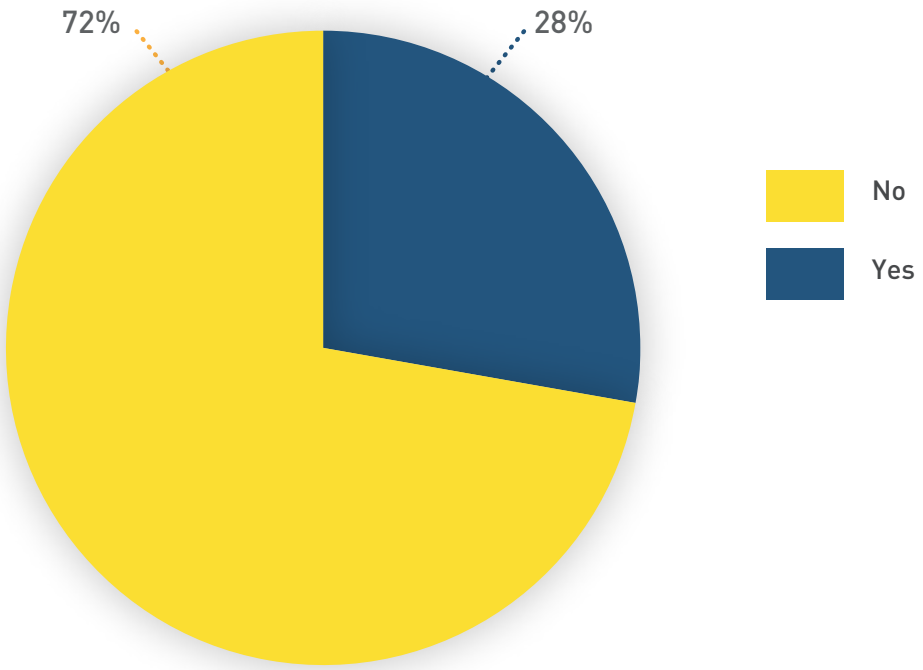
Figure 12. Breakdown of colleges which responded 'yes' and 'no' to whether the respondent believes their colleges support them collaborating with other departments on campus on inclusive practice



72%

believe they do not have sufficient resources in their department to collaborate on inclusive practices across their institutions

Figure 13. Breakdown of colleges which responded 'yes' and 'no' to whether the respondent believes their colleges has given them enough resources to support other departments on inclusive practice



The survey questionnaire provided space for respondents to submit additional comments to the 'on the ground' questions. A small selection of representative comments is listed below and the full list of comments can be seen in Appendix 4 and 5.

Selected Comments

"In order to make myself more available to the wider university I would need someone to take over some of my roles. The service comes first and must, so work around the college cannot be prioritised or engaged in. I just don't have the time."

"In the past two years my role has expanded to include an advisory and training capacity as we roll out our whole-institution approach to inclusion. However, additional resources would allow this to be done more effectively. We strongly believe that each student with a disability should receive a one-to-one needs assessment with a member of our team. To do this and also fulfil a wider institutional role is difficult with current resources."

"Inclusive teaching, learning and assessment is sporadic and not driven centrally. There are clear policies on accessible information and provision of reasonable accommodations but these are seen to be disability related not a UDL policy. National guidance on this to impact the compacts is required."

"Our department will share expertise on disability with academic departments on request. There is no requirement from the University for departmental staff to attend disability awareness training, and these have been poorly attended in the past and have been discontinued as a result. The question on sharing expertise on inclusive practice is separate, as this is in development by the unit responsible for the learning and teaching environment, with input requested relating to disability. The University has not made a strong commitment to becoming an inclusive or UDL community and this is why we responded with No to this question."

"The DSS have been engaging on a strategic level with staff, mostly through the HEI's Teaching and Learning Unit and using the forums that they have created, to engage with staff on UDL, the inclusive curriculum, practical tips for lectures etc. The TLU are supportive of the work of the DSS and include us in most aspects of their staff outreach work. The DSS would like to be in a position to further build on this going forward but we need the resources and budget to enable us to complete work in this space. The DSS are leading by example in terms of UDL and inclusivity and more value should be placed on the expertise that lies within this service. By having access to funds, such as RGAM, this could only help in terms of the DSS having extra resources to lead on these strategic issues in the future and make positive changes to our students' experiences in third level education."

"Inclusive practices and UDL have been carried out voluntarily by the Assistant Access Officer to date. Management have not supported facilitating this role with the institute."

"Working part time is proving to be very difficult … with huge demand on the service. With increasing numbers of students this is proving to be almost unmanageable. The learning support officer is also part time which again restricts the service. "

"I have answered yes to question B above. However, as I believe is the case in many HEIs, our resources are stretched at certain points of the year."

Summary

AHEAD has identified the following key findings and observations based on the analysis of the data collected from the responding higher education institutions on the participation rates of students with disabilities in higher education for the academic year 2018/19:

- **AN INCREASE, OF OVER 220% (10,843) IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES REGISTERING WITH SUPPORT SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE LAST 10 YEARS (AHEAD, 2009).** The academic year 2018/19 marked another year of continued growth in the participation of students with disabilities registered with support services in higher education and there are now 15,696 students with disabilities representing 6.2% of the total student population in the responding institutions. This figure represents a 7% rise in the number of students with disabilities in higher education year on year and is a 223% increase over the last 10 years of AHEAD's research in this area (AHEAD, 2009).

- **AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES STUDYING PART-TIME IN HIGHER EDUCATION.** 2018/19 witnessed a 21% increase in the number of students with disabilities studying part time courses compared to the previous year. However, this increase is against the backdrop of an even greater year on year percentage increase in the general part time student population and students with disabilities represent just 1.3% of the total student population studying part time in 2018/19.

- **A DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.** In 2018/19, while there was a 7% (14,490) increase in the number of undergraduate students with disabilities engaging with support services across the responding institutions there was a 2.4% decrease reported in the number of students with disabilities studying at postgraduate level. In 2017/2018 the numbers of postgraduates with disabilities totalled 1,233, representing 2.8% of the total post graduate population and this dropped to 1,206 (2.4%) in 2018/2019. While the actual number of students with disabilities undertaking post graduate studies has increased significantly over the last ten years (AHEAD, 2009), as a percentage of the total post graduate student population they have increased only modestly from 1.8% to 2.4% in that period.

- **THE NUMBER OF NEW REGISTRATIONS TO SUPPORT SERVICES FROM STUDENTS NOT IN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF STUDY CONTINUES TO RISE.** According to the last five years of AHEAD research, there has been an ongoing increase in the number of new registrations with disability support services of students not in their first year of study (AHEAD, 2019; 2018; 2016; 2014). In 2018/19, new registrations of students with disabilities not in their first year of study was 1,524 compared to 1,301 in 2017/18 and this cohort now represent 28% of all new registrations with support services.

- **INCREASE OF 21% IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE ASPERGER'S/ AUTISM CATEGORY IN 2018/19.** The responding institutions reported 1,055 students in the Asperger's/Autism category registered with their services, representing 6.9% of the total population of students with disabilities in 2018/19, which is a 21% increase in the numbers of students in this category from the previous year, 870 (representing a rate of 5.9%). The numbers in this category have grown enormously in the last ten years from 62 in 2008/09 (AHEAD, 2009) to 1,055 in 2018/19.

- **LOW REPRESENTATION OF STUDENTS WITH SENSORY DISABILITIES IN 2018/19.** The number of students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category registered with HE support services in 2018/19 was 273 and the number in the category of Deaf/Hard of Hearing was 396. In the last ten years, the numbers of students with sensory disabilities has grown at less than half the rate of students with disabilities more generally. While numbers of students with disabilities has grown by 223% in that period, numbers in the Blind/ Visually Impaired category have grown 104% and numbers in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing category, just 92%.

- **86% OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN 2018/2019 RECEIVE EXAM ACCOMMODATIONS.** 13,129 students with disabilities in 2018/19 received one or more exam accommodations, representing a 7% (873) increase year on year (12,256 in 2017/18). The numbers of students with disabilities receiving exam accommodations has risen more than 70% in the last five years, up from 7,608 in 2013/14 (AHEAD, 2015).

— **37% INCREASE IN NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER DISABILITY SUPPORT STAFF MEMBER IN LAST 7 YEARS.** Across all 27 responding institutions, there was an average of 179 students registered per disability support staff member in 2018/19. Over 7 years of AHEAD research in this area, the number of students with disabilities per disability support staff member has increased by 37%, up from 131 2011/12 (AHEAD, 2012). The number of students per learning support staff member rose 95% in the same period.

— **OVER TWO THIRDS BELIEVE THEY DO NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES IN THEIR DEPARTMENT TO COLLABORATE ON INCLUSIVE PRACTICES ACROSS THEIR INSTITUTIONS.** 72% of disability support staff did not believe that they had enough resources to collaborate with other departments on inclusive practice on campus.

Recommendations

1. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIs) SHOULD INCREASE LEVELS OF RESOURCING TO DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES TO ENSURE QUALITY AND SUPPORT A WHOLE COLLEGE APPROACH TO INCLUSION.

To be truly inclusive of students with disabilities and promote the mainstreaming of support to students in line with the goals of the UNCRPD, HEIs must ensure that they have a well-resourced disability support service which is capable of both providing high quality individual reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, and of working collaboratively with other departments and services to share their expertise and advice. Support services need to be sufficiently resourced and empowered to collaborate and promote more inclusive practice in the mainstream delivery of programmes and services underpinned by the principles of universal design for learning (UDL).

The 37% increase in number of students per disability support staff member in last 7 years reported in this research shows that resourcing in these services has not kept pace with the growing number of students who need support. The opinion and comment collected from disability support staff in the 'on the ground' section of this report indicates that most HEIs are supportive of the disability support service collaborating with other services and departments on projects to promote universal design for learning and other inclusive practices, but that disability support services are lacking the resources to deliver on this element of their remit, which is becoming more important as the numbers of students with disabilities increases.

HEIs should increase levels of resourcing to disability support services and actively encourage collaboration with other departments and services to foster a culture where inclusion is everyone's business. This up-front investment in resourcing services to work on institutional approaches to inclusion will pay future dividends, as more inclusive practice in the mainstream will lead to a reduction in the number of reasonable accommodations required and a better experience for all students.

2. HEIs SHOULD CONSIDER USE OF BROADER SUITE OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS AND AN APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT WHICH BUILDS IN FLEXIBILITY AND CHOICE.

This report illustrates the high usage of extra time and alternative venues as exam supports for students with disabilities. With the numbers of students with disabilities continuing to rise, AHEAD believes that continuing to apply ever-increasing numbers of individual exam accommodations is an unsustainable approach and the high use of these accommodations indicates that more flexible assessment instruments, which build in choice for students in how they demonstrate learning outcomes, are required. The principles of universal design for learning, in particular the guidelines on providing multiple means of action and expression, offer institutions a quality, research-based approach to the delivery of this flexibility in assessment – one which will benefit all students.

AHEAD recommends that HEIs take an institutional strategic approach to the promotion and implementation of universal design for learning which includes reviewing and updating policy and the provision of professional development for teaching staff.

3. CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATION ON IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL ACCESS BARRIERS TO THIRD LEVEL FOR STUDENTS WITH SENSORY DISABILITES.

AHEAD's research on participation has consistently highlighted the low participation rate of students with sensory (visual/auditory) disabilities in higher education. Despite students in this category being a target group in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (HEA, 2015), a recent progress report noted that participation of students who are Blind and Visually Impaired was growing "at the slowest rate" (HEA, 2018). AHEAD's understanding from engaging with students and stakeholders is that many of the educational barriers these students experience occur at primary and secondary levels and so AHEAD recommends that the Department of Education and Skills form a cross sector working group featuring stakeholders in the education system and relevant NGOs to collectively identify the key issues and make recommendations.

4. RESEARCH REQUIRED ON ACCESS BARRIERS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITES TO POST-GRADUATE COURSES AND NATIONAL TARGETS SET.

According to An Analysis of Labour Market Earnings for Higher Education Graduates in their Early Careers (HEA, 2019), graduates with a postgraduate qualification earn more annually than those with an undergraduate degree. The continuing trend of significantly lower participation rates (as % of total undergraduate/postgraduate population) of students with disabilities at postgraduate level than at undergraduate level highlighted in this research, indicates that there are barriers to access for this cohort, which in turn impacts on their opportunities to advance their overall earnings and improvement of living conditions. Further research is needed to identify these barriers. AHEAD also recommends that the HEA sets targets within the next National Access Plan for participation for students with disabilities in postgraduate courses to provide the sector with focussed goals to achieve.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Number of students with disabilities studying within each responding higher education institution

Institution Name	Total Students with Disabilities	Students with Disabilities as a % of Total Population
AIT	373	7%
CIT	844	8%
DCU	820	5%
DIT	1,345	7%
DKIT	276	6%
DLIADT	263	11%
GMIT	516	7%
ITB	186	6%
ITC	284	3%
ITS	411	5%
ITT	197	3%
ITTRA	277	8%
LIT	581	9%
LYIT	309	8%
MIC	151	3%
MIE	71	7%
MU	895	7%
NCAD	137	11%
NCI	185	3%
NUIG	1,114	6%
RCSI	98	2%
St Angela's	71	5%
TCD	1,654	9%
UCC	1,514	7%
UCD	1,670	6%
UL	910	6%
WIT	544	6%

Appendix 2 - Fields of Study

The fields of study section illustrate a list of subjects which are analysed under each category of disability. This list is sourced from the statistics provided by the Higher Education Authority and is modified to provide specific insight into numbers studying in key areas such as nursing.

Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary

- Agriculture not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Veterinary
- Horticulture
- Crop and livestock production
- Forestry
- Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary

Arts and Humanities

- Arts not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Audio-visual techniques and media production
- Fashion, interior and industrial design
- Fine arts
- Handicrafts
- Music and performing arts
- Humanities (except languages) not further defined or elsewhere classified
- History and archaeology
- Philosophy and ethics
- Languages not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Language acquisition
- Literature and linguistics
- Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving arts and humanities

Business, administration and law

- Business and administration not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Accounting and taxation
- Finance, banking and insurance
- Management and administration
- Marketing and advertising
- Secretarial and office work
- Wholesale and retail sales
- Work skills
- Law

Education

- Education not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Education science
- Training for pre-school teachers
- Teacher training without subject specialization
- Teacher training with subject specialization

Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction

- Engineering and engineering trades not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Chemical engineering and processes
- Environmental protection technology
- Electricity and energy
- Electronics and automation
- Mechanics and metal trades
- Motor vehicles, ships and aircraft
- Manufacturing and processing not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Food processing
- Materials (glass, paper, plastic and wood)
- Architecture and construction not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Architecture and town planning
- Building and civil engineering

Generic Programmes and Qualifications

- Basic programmes and qualifications
- Literacy and numeracy
- Personal skills and development

Health and Welfare

- Health not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Dental studies
- Medicine
- Medical diagnostic and treatment technology
- Therapy and rehabilitation
- Pharmacy
- Welfare not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Care of the elderly and of disabled adults
- Child care and youth services
- Social work and counselling
- Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving health and welfare

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

- Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Computer use
- Database and network design and administration
- Software and applications development and analysis
- Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics

- Biological and related sciences not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Biology
- Biochemistry
- Environment not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Environmental sciences
- Natural environments and wildlife
- Physical sciences not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Chemistry
- Earth sciences
- Physics

- Mathematics and statistics not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Mathematics
- Statistics
- Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving natural sciences, mathematics and statistics

Services

- Personal services not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Hotel, restaurants and catering
- Sports
- Travel, tourism and leisure
- Occupational health and safety
- Security services not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Military and defence
- Protection of persons and property
- Transport services

Social Sciences, Journalism and Information

- Social and behavioural sciences not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Economics
- Political sciences and civics
- Psychology
- Sociology and cultural studies
- Journalism and information not further defined or elsewhere classified
- Journalism and reporting
- Library, information and archival studies
- Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving social sciences, journalism and information

Appendix 3 - Inside the Service Comments

Comments from responding institutions relating to the question detailing numbers of disability and learning support staff they have employed in 2018/19. Any information which may identify a particular institution has been redacted since these comments were agreed to be reproduced anonymously;

- Additional days could be included for staff outside of our service. Could this be added as question next year?
- I do not have any learning support staff as this is mainstreamed in [institution]. However, I do have 2 full time OT's and this is included in the 7.
- A new part time transitions coordinator was appointed. An additional staff member was recruited on a short-term basis to conduct needs assessments during the first semester.
- We were down an Assistive Technology Officer since Oct 2018 and a Learning Support Officer since January 2019.
- A: 1 Disability Officer, 1 Access Officer - two offices. B: Two learning Support Tutors for one-to-one assistance for students registered with Disability Service, one person works 2 days Mon & Tues, and the other 3 days Wed - Fri.
- 2 Full Time Learning Support Staff. 1 Full Time Administration post. 20 Part/time staff working in following roles: Learning Support, Academic Tutor, Educational Support Worker, Electronic Note-taker, Class Note-taker, Assistive Technology Support
- Access to shared administrative support in addition to staff above.
- We have a number of learning support staff. Learning support staff may for example work 2 days a week over 24 weeks of the academic year that equates to 2 WTE staff over a full academic year.

Appendix 4 - On the Ground Comments to Question 1

Do you believe you have the support from your university/Institution to collaborate and work in an advisory capacity to share your expertise on disability and inclusive practice across campus outside of your own department?

Comments from respondents relating to whether they considered they have institutional backing to collaborate with other department on inclusive practice and whether they believed they had sufficient resources to carry this out.

Any information which may identify a particular institution has been redacted since these comments were agreed to be reproduced anonymously.

- In the past two years my role has expanded to include an advisory and training capacity as we roll out our whole-institution approach to inclusion. However, additional resources would allow this to be done more effectively. We strongly believe that each student with a disability should receive a one-to-one needs assessment with a member of our team. To do this and also fulfil a wider institutional role is difficult with current resources.
- Inclusive teaching, learning and assessment is sporadic and not driven centrally. There are clear policies on accessible information and provision of reasonable accommodations but these are seen to be disability related not a UDL policy. National guidance on this to impact the compacts is required.
- This is a difficult question to respond to with a yes or no answer. Our department will share expertise on disability with academic departments on request. There is no requirement from the University for departmental staff to attend disability awareness training, and these have been poorly attended in the past and have been discontinued as a result. The question on sharing expertise on inclusive practice is separate, as this is in development by the unit responsible for the learning and teaching environment, with input requested relating to disability. The University has not made a strong commitment to becoming an inclusive or UDL community and this is why we responded with No to this question.
- In order to make myself more available to the wider university I would need someone to take over some of my roles. The service comes first and must so work around the college cannot be prioritised or engaged in I just don't have the time.

Appendix 5 – On the Ground Comments to Question 2

Do you believe that you have sufficient resources in your department to provide support to other departments on inclusive practice?

- The DSS have been engaging on a strategic level with staff, mostly through the HEI's Teaching and Learning Unit and using the forums that they have created, to engage with staff on UDL, the inclusive curriculum, practical tips for lectures etc. The TLU are supportive of the work of the DSS and include us in most aspects of their staff outreach work. The DSS would like to be in a position to further build on this going forward but we need the resources and budget to enable us to complete work in this space. The DSS are leading by example in terms of UDL and inclusivity and more value should be placed on the expertise that lies within this service. By having access to funds, such as RGAM, this could only help in terms of the DSS having extra resources to lead on these strategic issues in the future and make positive changes to our students' experiences in third level education.
- Extra support needed in inclusive best practice.
- Students do not receive supports for continuous assessments. These are being introduced more and more in place of formal written examinations.
- Inclusive practices and UDL have been carried out voluntarily by the Assistant Access Officer to date. Management have not supported facilitating this role with the institute.
- Working part time is proving to be very difficult … with huge demand on the service. With increasing numbers of students this is proving to be almost unmanageable. The learning support officer is also part time which again restricts the service.
- Disability Services act in an advisory capacity. It is expected that the additional resource required would be supported through the Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement strategy.
- I have answered yes to question B above. However, as I believe is the case in many HEIs, our resources are stretched at certain points of the year.

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