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creating inclusive environments in education
and employment for people with disabilities



AHEAD
Annual Report
2019

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Foreword



It is my pleasure to introduce the Annual Report of AHEAD for 2019. As a year of action it has been a successful one. In some areas, the growth in activities is a reflection of AHEAD's investment in

engagement with networks across further and higher education and across the public and private employment sectors in order to sustain and develop the organisation.

Leading AHEAD and all of its undertakings is CEO Ann Heelan. However, Ann will retire at year end having served 17 years as the CEO of AHEAD. I have worked closely with Ann since my appointment to the Board in 2009 and very closely since becoming Chairperson in 2015. Ann has been Trojan in her endeavours to unite the staff and BOD to pursue the aims and objectives of AHEAD. When she took up the role the organisation was at a low ebb having lost key personnel but grasping the situation and building on its successes Ann developed AHEAD into the strong and vibrant organisation it is today. Under her stewardship, AHEAD has had a major positive impact on the systems, policies and practices that support people with disabilities to succeed in tertiary education and graduate employment, and that is due, in no small part, to Ann's integrity, vision and leadership. Through her achievements she leaves behind a great legacy and a united team. She will be missed and we wish her all the best with her retirement plans.

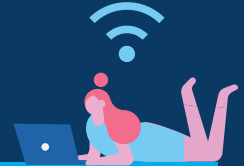
Going forward the Board are delighted to announce the appointment of Dara Ryder as the new CEO following an open recruitment process. Dara will officially take up the position in January 2020. The Board, look forward to supporting him in his role and with the implementation of AHEAD's current strategic plan, the implementation of which, the Board feel, will benefit from his experience and insight. We equally wish Dara every success.

Changing times for the organisation but with change comes new opportunities and I, for one, have no doubt that AHEAD and its dedicated Board and team of staff will continue to strive and lead the way in building inclusive learning environments in education and employment.

Professor Michael Shevlin

Chairperson of the Board

AHEAD's Year in Numbers 2019



50



graduates placed through our WAM paid, mentored work placement programme

231,520

website page views in 2019

171



graduate interviews organised & supported

94

digital badges awarded as part of our national digital badge for universal design in teaching and learning

future digital badge course facilitators trained to roll out the digital badge in their own institution/ETB

27



1,313

attendees participated across our 10 key events in education and employment

1,004

trained through provision of direct tailored training sessions to disabled students, graduates and staff in education/employment



21

AHEAD Journal articles published featuring best practice in inclusive education and employment

68

participants completed our 8 week introductory course on supporting students with disabilities

Executive Director Summary



This report outlines the key activities undertaken by AHEAD in 2019. These undertakings are driven by the central mission of AHEAD to pursue the creation of inclusive learning environments in education and employment for people with disabilities as outlined in its latest strategy plan 2019-2022. As you will see from the

report it has been a busy year for AHEAD. One in which priority was given to the linking up of the educational experiences of students with disabilities making the transition into, within and out of further and higher education while working with the experiences of professionals and staff charged with the delivery of learning in those same settings. This includes exploring study abroad options via the European Erasmus Programme which entails collaboration and exchange with European student and educational staff networks.

I retire from AHEAD at the close of 2019. I have been CEO of AHEAD for 17 of its 31 years. During my tenure AHEAD has grown and developed into an organisation that has been instrumental in shifting attitudes from a medical model to a human rights model in a changing education system in Ireland. When I took up the role of CEO, AHEAD's central mission was to promote full access to and full participation in higher education for students with disabilities. The AHEAD survey of the participation rates of students with disabilities in higher education informed that in 1997/98 students with disabilities represented **1.1%** of the undergraduate population. In the latest survey (academic year 18/19) it stands at over **6.2%**.

The introduction of equality legislation coupled with the provision of dedicated funding has assisted many students to successfully navigate the transition into and out of the higher education system. Nonetheless, the evolution of this system of provision of support, which now includes the further education sector, has been haphazard and, as it currently stands, has become a model of 'add-ons' struggling to meet the pressure of current demands.

The make-up of the student population in further and higher education has changed radically from one of relative homogeneity to one where **50%** of students in higher education now come from diverse backgrounds. Meeting the needs of these diverse groups is challenging for staff against the backdrop of rising student numbers, staff cutbacks and reductions in the fund for students with disabilities. It explains AHEAD's strategic shift in focus from one of 'access to' education and employment to one of 'inclusion in'. More importantly, it clarifies why a core strategic goal of AHEAD is the promotion of universal design for learning (UDL) as a framework that embeds difference and diversity in the design of the mainstream learning experience offering a choice of routes for all learners to reach learning outcomes while supporting staff in the process.

I have seen AHEAD through some of its most challenging times but I have done so with the backing of a great team of staff and the wonderful commitment and enthusiasm of its Board of Directors. These are demanding times for the education sector. I hope that my legacy leaves AHEAD well placed to develop and grow and I wish my replacement and the wider team every success in its endeavours. It has been a pleasure.

AHEAD

creating inclusive
environments in
education and
employment
for people with
disabilities

VISION STATEMENT

shaping a future
where students
and learners with
disabilities can
succeed

AHEAD VALUES

- A rights-based approach to the inclusion of students, learners and graduates with disabilities in education and employment.
- The relationship of trust with its stakeholders and partners.
- Engagement and collaboration with key external partners.
- The incorporation of the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) into all learning environments.

CORE STRATEGIC THEMES

AHEAD seeks to achieve its vision by pursuing the following strategic themes:

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

Theme B 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.

Theme C To promote the principles of universal design for Learning (UDL) by creating an understanding of UDL in all learning environments.

Theme A – National Policy

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

The following section outlines key strategic activities undertaken relating to Theme A of our strategic plan.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN 2019

Numbers of Students with Disabilities Studying in Higher Education in Ireland 2018/19 (published 2020)

AHEAD conducts annual research on the participation of students with disabilities registered with disability support services in higher education institutions. This research report has been part of a project that scales back over twenty years of examination on this topic to 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.

[Full report and interactive data centre available here.](#)

Summary of Key Findings 2018/19

A synopsis of the key findings and observations listed below are 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 (published 2020):

- 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).

- 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.
- 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 post-graduates with disabilities totalled 1,233, representing **2.8%** of the total post graduate population and this dropped to 1,203 (**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 it has increased only modestly from **1.8%** to **2.4%** in that period.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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 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%**.
- 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).
- 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 in 2011/12 (AHEAD, 2012). The number of students per learning support staff member rose **95%** in the same period.
- **72%** of disability support staff did not believe that they had enough resources to collaborate with other departments on inclusive practice on campus.

AHEAD ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019

Journey to Oz: Travelling Together Towards Inclusive Education

The central theme of AHEAD's 2019 international conference was the growing diversity in the student population and it addressed ways to develop inclusive learning environments that would support staff and students alike. The 2-day event was designed to cater for opportunities, formal and informal, to learn, network, share experiences and also to have some fun. Ultimately, the aim was to bring the latest international research and practice to an Irish audience in order to positively influence national policy and encourage participants to reflect on their work.

This international conference featuring over 50 different sessions, delivered by more than 70 contributors, spanning 5 continents of the world explored the questions:

- How can our college services respond to an increasingly diverse student population and help them to release the potential within as they travel the yellow brick road towards graduation?
- How can our teachers and academics, recognising the journey that they themselves are on, adapt their practice in our evolving inclusive institutions and like Dorothy, be the catalyst our diverse students need to help them realise their aspirations?
- How do our Disability Service Staff share their knowledge, expertise and best practice with academics and wider student services to help them to 'find their way home' in this changing landscape?

[Conference keynote videos are available here.](#)

The Conference Key Speakers:



Conference Opening - Dr Paul O'Toole, Acting Head, Higher Education Authority, Ireland



My Student Experience - Alannah Murray, post graduate student, Ireland



Exploring and Clarifying the Definitions of Inclusion We Use in Higher Ed: Moving towards a common discourse - Frederic Fovet (Royal Roads University), Canada



Paving the Yellow Brick Road: Centring the curriculum - Pauline Hanesworth (Advance HE), United Kingdom



A Vision for Inclusive Further Education - Mary Liz Trant (SOLAS), Ireland



Closing Vision: Student Success – How you can play your part - Dr Terry Maguire (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning), Ireland

[Conference keynote videos are available here.](#)

Breakout Sessions totalled **33** that showcased national and international contributions from students and staff from across the further and higher education sectors that broadly covered the evolving world of mainstreamed inclusion across campus; role models of inclusive teaching and learning; flexible curricula and creating a sense of belonging where inclusion is everyone's job.



5 Workshops were delivered covering the following:

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – an introduction** - Karen Buckley (Dublin City University) and Lorraine Gallagher (AHEAD), Ireland
- **How Disability Support Talk to Faculty about UDL** - Cultivating Culture Change: A department wide journey. Lisa Mauro-Bracken (University of Worcester), United Kingdom
- **Creating Interdisciplinary Processes Around UDL with Faculty** - Frederic Fovet (Royal Roads University), Canada
- **Slow Burn or Big Bang – Institutional Roll Out of UDL** - Dr. Abigail Moriarty & Phil Scarffe (De Monfort University), England
- **Using Action Learning to Build a Community of Practice** - Ann Heelan (AHEAD) & Carol Neenan (Colaiste Stiofain Naofa), Ireland



The Conversation Corner allowed for small scale conversations that matter. Topics discussed included:

- **Writing Process for University? Oh, I Meant Scrum** - Maureen Fitzsimmons (Loyola Marymount University) United States
- **Cultivating Culture Change: A department wide journey** -Lisa Mauro-Bracken (University of Worcester)
- **Inclusion of Students with a Visual Impairment at Third Level** - Eliona Gjecaj (NUI Galway) & Gillian Stafford (Maynooth University), Ireland
- **Coaching Students in Inclusive Teamwork: Sharing good practice** - Sofie Vergauwe (Odisee University College), Belgium
- **What #ReleaseYourPotential Means for Students with Disabilities** - Suzanne Holland & Helen Carey (Cork College of Commerce), Ireland



Conference poster sessions and exhibitors



Sharing the learning and having some fun



International book launch

'Transforming Higher Education through Universal Design for Learning: An International Perspective' edited by Dr Sean Bracken and Katie Novak was also launched during the conference.

[For more information on how to purchase the book launched at the conference please click here.](#)



LINK – EUROPEAN LEARNING NETWORK

LINK is a learning network, coordinated by AHEAD, and is made up of partners from seven EU countries, all of which share knowledge, best practice and experience with the aim of raising the quality of service for third level students with disabilities across Europe. Countries represented include Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, and the UK. By learning about what is happening in other countries and how similar organisations are achieving their aims, we seek to broaden our understanding and better inform our contributions to policy and practice.

This network is very important to the work of AHEAD since it is the only independent network that is looking at inclusion in education and universal design for learning at a European level. Three meetings took place during 2019. The first in Dublin in March to coincide with the AHEAD International Conference, the second was an on-line meeting in July and the third was a face-to-face planning meeting held in London in November where the future role and development of the Network was explored. As a result of the meeting in London, four 'learning groups' were established to find out what is happening in each member country around individual topics including – research, universal design for learning and inclusive mobility.

KEY COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT ON POLICY

- **Higher Education Authority** – The HEA calls on AHEAD to consult and provide data/contextual information in order to ensure their policy decisions are well informed and supporting best practice. A good recent example is in the changes to the Fund for Students with Disabilities in higher education and eligibility for part-time learners. Up until recently, the Fund has only applied to students undertaking full-time courses. AHEAD contributed to discussions and consultations over the previous few years to advocate the inclusion of student with disabilities undertaking part-time courses, particularly since for those with particular disability types, part -time learning may be the only viable option (e.g. chronic fatigue). It was recommended by AHEAD and other bodies that part-time learners receive the same funding and supports as full-time learners and this measure was accepted and brought into effect in 2019.
- **Department of Education** – National Access Plan Advisory Group. As a member of this advisory group, AHEAD directly impacts on the planning and delivery of national access measures by bringing research and evidence to its' members, raising issues we are seeing on the ground and delivering this feedback to the Department. Our role is to bring to committee dealings the voice and experiences of students with disabilities and ensure that the delivery of the current National Access Plan and the development of the next one is well informed and includes positive measures for students with disabilities.

- **SOLAS, the Further Education & Training (FET) Authority** – In pursuant of its strategic goal of Active Inclusion SOLAS has commissioned AHEAD to develop a framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for FET along with the writing of guidelines to support the implementation of UDL in FET. A UDL in FET Advisory Group was established to support and direct the work that AHEAD is undertaking. The UDL framework is now completed and the accompanying guidelines that will support practitioners, managers and support staff with their endeavors to create inclusive learning environments for all FET learners, including those with a disability, will be delivered in 2020.

- **Irish University Association** - IUA Access Steering Group. As a member of this steering group, AHEAD contributes to the development of access policy across the university and Institute of Technology sectors affecting admissions (e.g. Disability Access Route to Education policy) and student experience measures. Our engagement with this group enables us to contribute directly to institution policy and practice across the sector.

- **National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning** - Professional Development Advisory Group. AHEAD is represented on this group that looks at the professional development of staff in higher education and how inclusive practice can feature in both models of professional development and as a domain in models of recognition/accreditation currently being developed for staff in higher education.

- **National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning** - Student Success Advisory Group. As part of the HEA Performance Framework, every institution will soon have to produce a student success policy and demonstrate what measures they are taking to promote and support student success. In 2019, the Forum invited AHEAD to sit on their 2020 Student Success Advisory Group. Our position on this group will ensure that inclusive measures targeting students with disabilities are represented in the Forum's resources and supports for institutions around student success. In particular, it will enable us to directly promote Universal Design for Learning (UDL) measures as a key tool in achieving student success.
- **Dublin City University (DCU)** – AHEAD was invited by the Head of Teaching and Learning Enhancement to provide comments and feedback to DCU on the production of their policy on UDL. Having engaged with DCU on this topic over recent years, AHEAD congratulates them on their progress. UDL is now firmly on the agenda in DCU and supported by its' strategic vision, looks to pursue their future goal to fully embed the principles of UDL in all teaching, learning and assessment.
- **University College Cork** – AHEAD was invited to participate as a consulting partner in the development of a university wide campaign aimed at encouraging staff to incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning in their practice. This campaign will roll out in early 2020.
- **Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN)** – AHEAD has a strong relationship with the DAWN Network. In 2019, AHEAD staff met several times with the DAWN leadership and presented to and discussed with their larger network meetings on issues arising in the sector.

- **AHEAD Membership Forum** – AHEAD’s membership is representative of institutions/education & training boards from across further and higher education. This gives AHEAD a direct link to member institutions to support them in developing inclusive policy and practice. Our information line is a resource available to member institutional staff enquiring about best practice or policy in a variety of areas relating to the inclusion of students with disabilities.
- **WAM Employer Network** – Through the WAM Initiative, AHEAD has access to a host of major national employers. The strong relationships we build with these employers enable us to impact on their diversity, recruitment and progression policies and practices. A good example would be where, for example, in 2019 AHEAD was asked by a major financial institution to review their in-house diversity training programme for staff.
- **The Civil Service (CS)** – AHEAD, via its WAM Work Placement Programme, participated in the consultation meeting on the Civil Service’s new Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- **Union of Students in Ireland** – AHEAD collaborates with USI on an on-going basis to build knowledge and understanding to support and engage with students with disabilities through their work e.g. AHEAD’s provision of annual training to Student’s Union Officers via USI.

Theme B – Promoting Inclusion, Networks & Collaboration

**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**

The following section outlines key strategic activities undertaken relating to Theme B of our strategic plan.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN 2019

Into and out of education

Learners/Student/Graduate/Employer Connect

AHEAD seeks to promote the employment opportunities of graduates with disabilities by focusing on the transition of students with disabilities to, within and from higher education through the following initiatives:

Better Options College

– Marino Institute of Education

You can find out more about Better Options by visiting the webpage.

Better Options is an annual college fair organised by AHEAD, for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties considering their post leaving cert educational options. The location for this year's event was the Marino Conference Centre in Dublin and Dr Teresa O'Doherty (right), President of Marino Institute of Education, gave the event's opening address.

Over 250 students, parents and guidance counsellors attended the event and got the chance to engage directly with on-the-ground staff from college support services about courses and access routes open to them, including the Disability Access Route to Education.

Colleges nationwide were represented in the exhibition hall along with stands focusing on apprenticeship access, and student engagement (e.g. Spunout). Talks ran concurrently, covering topics such as the DARE application process, making the most of one's college experience (preparation, exploring clubs and societies etc.) and choosing the right course.

Additionally, attendees got the opportunity to try out different types of assistive and mainstream learning technologies to explore what might prove useful to them in their studies. In the run up to the event a number of blogs were posted to provide information about access to college and generate interest in the event. One good example was a [blog entitled 'Accessing Disability Support Services at Third level'](#) by Caoilinn Kennedy, Student Support Officer for students with disabilities at UL.



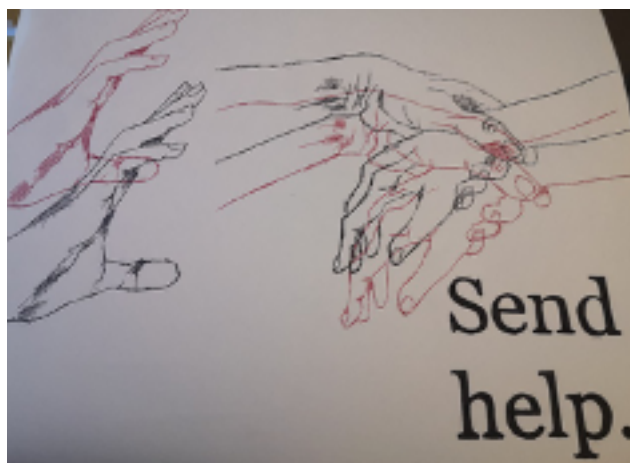
Capture a moment - AHEAD Student Photo Campaign – Coming your way

AHEAD wants to showcase the unique experiences of individual students with disabilities currently in further and higher education in Ireland and are exploring various avenues to provide students with more of a platform to tell their story and provide vital context for the sector.

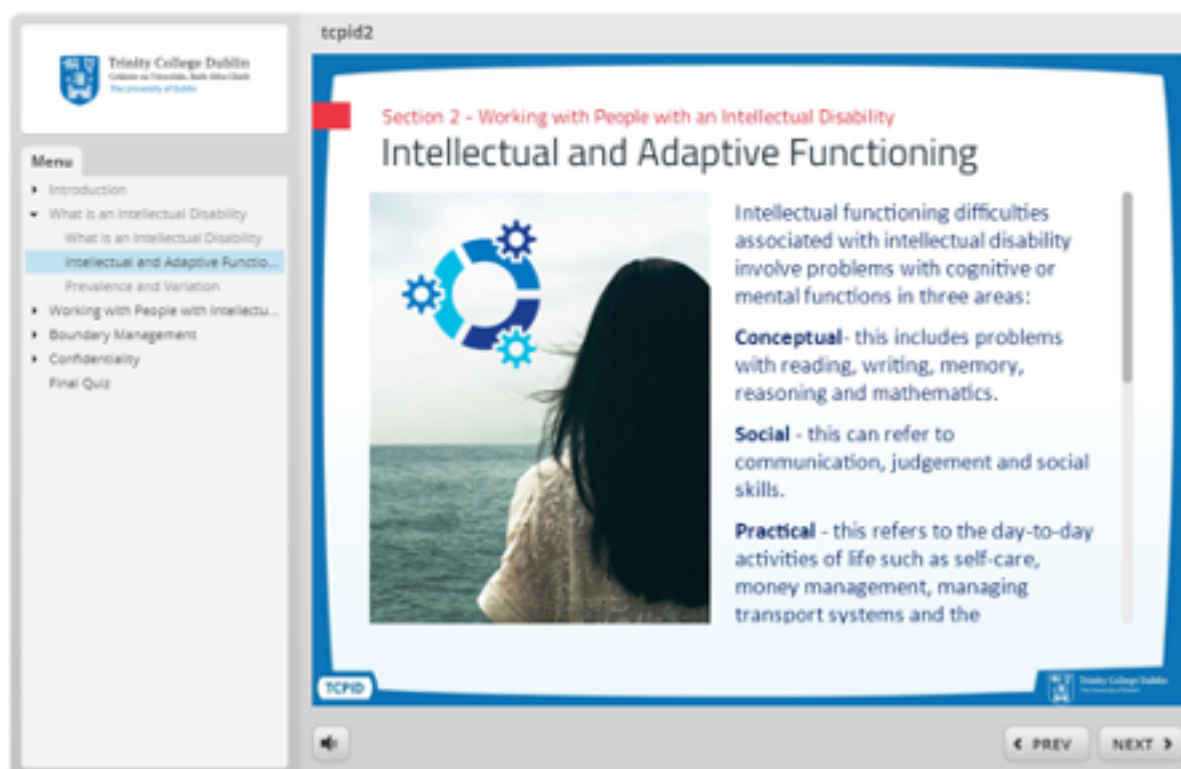
One piece of work which begun in 2019 saw AHEAD call on students to submit images and answer a few questions on what it means to be a disabled student.



We are collating submissions from 46 disabled students from all around the country into a multimedia exhibition which will be displayed at the AHEAD Conference in March 2020. The submissions give a rich picture of the different physical and emotional experiences of students with disabilities in Ireland.



Trinity College Dublin/Intellectual Disability Mentoring Course Project (TCPID)



AHEAD partnered with the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities to support them with the development of an online Mentoring Course for their business partners engaging with student placements. As part of their academic studies, students with intellectual disabilities are sent on a work placement and are mentored on that placement by staff from the host employer.

The mentoring course is based on the AHEAD WAM online Mentoring Model for the mainstream workplace with adaptations made to fit with the particular needs of this cohort. 12 new videos were produced specifically for this mentoring course featuring both students and previous mentors.

Five short modules were produced to guide mentors in their work with the students:

- 1 INTRODUCTION TO TCPID AND THIS COURSE
- 2 WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY
- 3 MODEL OF MENTORING
- 4 STAGES OF MENTORING
- 5 CLOSURE & MOVING ON

This online course was launched at an event in November and made available to the Centre's Business Partners at that time.

Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) – A work placement initiative

Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) is a work placement programme which aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities and build the capacity of employers to integrate disability into the mainstream workplace.

Participating employers (WAM Leaders) collaborate with WAM to offer mentored, paid, work placements for graduates with disabilities. This partnership brings graduates with disabilities and employers together so that both can benefit from each other - ensuring genuine learning opportunities for all.

WAM is unique in that it seeks to engage and support employers in order to simultaneously develop the potential of employers to be inclusive and to offer graduates with disabilities fantastic career opportunities in a supportive environment.

Since 2005, The WAM Programme has provided over 400 placements for graduates with disabilities involving engagement with a dynamic network of employers.

In 2019, the AHEAD WAM Initiative had its busiest year ever doubling the number of work placements on offer to graduates with disabilities. 50 paid placements were active and supported with other potential internships currently going through the recruitment process (WAM's working year runs April-March) and 54 Needs Assessments (NA) were carried out on site with participating employers. This involves the participating manager, participating graduate and on occasion, other related staff.



50

Placements
supported



103

Placements
advertised

558

Applications
received

171

Interviews
Organised and
supported

100

Employees trained
pre placement

Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) Employer Networking Events

Through our WAM initiative, AHEAD organised several events and networking opportunities for employers in 2019.

WAM Breakfast Seminars

Two Breakfast Seminars were held during the year to promote the WAM Initiative to new employers. The aim of these seminars is to provide information to employers about the work of the programme and to outline what is involved in offering a WAM placement as well as to provide opportunities for potential new employers to pose questions to both WAM staff and employer representatives currently offering placements.

Making the Mainstream Inclusive - is your company recruitment practices accessible and inclusive?

Sponsored by Bank of America Merrill Lynch this event showcased WAM programme methodologies that employers participating in the AHEAD WAM Initiative have embedded into their graduate programmes and which are now part of their permanent training positions within their companies.

The event was an opportunity for employers to share learning and exchange practical advice. The topics discussed were; psychometric tests, assessment centres, group interviews and reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

[You can find out more info about this event on the event webpage.](#)



The AHEAD WAM Leaders Awards – 2019

These annual awards are presented by AHEAD to nominated employers in recognition of their contribution in promoting the employment of graduates with disabilities through their work with WAM. This year's award ceremony was hosted and sponsored by Bank of Ireland and took place in the historical setting of the House of Lords in the heart of Dublin city centre.



Companies who received WAM leaders award at this event included Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Bank of Ireland, Central Bank, Citi, Civil Service Staff (on behalf of various participating Departments), Dell Technologies, Enterprise Rent-a-Car, ESB, HSE (Health Service Executive), Irish Life and Canada Life, Port of Waterford, NTMA (National Treasury Management Agency) and Salesforce.org.

[You can find out more info about this event on the event webpage.](#)



Neurodiversity in the Workplace – Creating an inclusive and positive workplace for neurodivergent employees



The term 'neurodiversity' is now being used as an umbrella term to describe autism and other developmental and learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, OCD, mental health etc.

It's estimated that around **10%** of the population is neurodivergent in some way. In 2017/18 there were over 11,000 'neurodivergent' students enrolled in higher education registered with the disability office; employers choosing to ignore this, could be missing out on talent!

In response to this growing awareness AHEAD ran a training event on the topic of neurodiversity in the workplace which included a discussion panel and explored best practices in raising awareness with hiring managers and HR staff, accommodating neurodivergent employees in the workplace, and mentoring. The event was hosted by Dell at their Cork Campus.

[You can find out more info about this event on the event webpage.](#)

Winter Wonderland... Let it Sparkle with Inclusion Gems



WAM's annual Christmas event for 2019 focussed on how to create a workplace culture that genuinely values people with disabilities and promotes inclusion through employee networks, in particular, employee disability networks.

Many companies provide opportunities for employees to participate in groups that bring together co-workers with shared interests. These groups are often referred to as ERGs (employee resource groups) or employee networks. Topics addressed within these networks can range from women in business, LGBTQ+ employees, ethnic-minorities, parents and disability/accessibility to name but a few. They provide a space for employees to connect with one another and also to ensure the workplace welcomes and supports them.

Networks are the first step to a space where employees can stop and think about the culture and attitudes that prevail in an organisation for those that may feel marginalised. As employers appreciate the benefits such networks can bring to the whole organisation, they are increasingly supporting their establishment.

This event showcased what our WAM employers are doing to promote the disability agenda in their workplaces while providing opportunities for attending employers to exchange and share good practice. The event was highly interactive and attendees took part in speed-networking sessions with AHEAD's WAM Employers Network in a world café style format following presentations by Central Bank's, BankAbility Network and Dell Technologies, TrueAbility Network.



Dara Ryder CEO of AHEAD

WAM Companies hosting speed networking tables included Bank of America, Bank of Ireland, Central Bank of Ireland, Citi, Dell Technologies, Deutsche Bank, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Enterprise, ESB, Irish Life, NTMA – National Treasury Management Agency, Public Appointment Service, Salesforce.

The event was hosted by the Central Bank of Ireland, formally opened by Mr Gabriel Makhlouf, Governor of the Central Bank and 110 staff representatives from across the public and private mainstream work sectors participated.

[You can find out more info about this event on the event webpage.](#)

Get AHEAD – Student Experience and the Transition to Work

Get AHEAD is a Project of AHEAD which engages with students with disabilities and aims to support their transition to the workplace and help to prepare them for their job search. Get AHEAD runs frequent events and training sessions with students and graduates to upskill them in areas such as:

- Interview Preparation
- Disclosing Your Disability
- Resilience in the Workplace

Additionally, Get AHEAD engages with student bodies (USI, local students unions) to provide training which aims to improve the experience of students with disabilities in further and higher education seeking to engage in extracurricular activities such as clubs and societies.

Examples of training topics covered include how to run accessible events and ensuring your club/society is inclusive. The aim is to ensure that students with disabilities have more opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities which research has shown improves employability and outcomes.

Get AHEAD also runs a number of key larger events outlined below.

Get AHEAD Events – Stepping stones from Education to Employment

Assistive Technology Event



Hosted by Dell the debate took place on Dell Dublin Campus. 60 third level students from Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown (ITB) and 19 transition year students participated in an Assistive Technology challenge.

Students were presented with accessibility problems faced by people with disabilities in different aspects of their everyday life including commuting, in work, and at airports and the participating students were asked to work together to propose potential technological solutions to these challenges. In preparation with the students, Get AHEAD facilitated pre event workshops on disability awareness, Universal Design for Learning and assistive technologies.

Building the Future Event – A unique Careers Event for Students and Graduates with Disabilities

This annual public event, now in its eighth year, took place in the working environs of Citi Bank. The event is designed to nurture the mutual learning exchange between participating employers and students/graduates as a means of building and developing inclusive working environments, all while offering graduates with disabilities exciting career opportunities with supportive employers. At the event, employers get the opportunity to connect to a huge pool of often untapped talent and graduates get to network directly with hiring companies, build their job seeking skills and get useful practical takeaways to bring to their job search.

Seventeen employers from across the public and private sectors exhibited and participated in the event and preparations involved the delivery of disability awareness training to 30 employer staff members.

Over 140 students/graduates attended with approximately 90 staff representatives from a variety of employers from across public and private sectors. As well as the 17 exhibiting employers, Building the Future offered a range of opportunities as follows.



Workshops

- **‘Choosing Your Career Path’** – AHEAD focused on how to navigate all the different options available upon graduation.
- **‘Personal Branding and Social Media’** – Dell Technologies focused on the specific actions one can take to enhance their personal brand. How to harness the power of social media, build and develop rewarding networks and best practices on LinkedIn.
- **‘Interview Preparation’** – Enterprise Holding focused on tips on how to be prepared for any interview and explored tools that offer confidence building when pursuing jobs participants actually want.
- **‘Presentation Skills’** – Central Bank of Ireland focused on developing confidence in attendees’ ability to present in a work setting, whether to a group of colleagues or at a team meeting.



Mock Interviews, CV Clinics and Get a Headshot

70 of the participating students and graduates attended CV clinics. In these clinics, HR professionals from participating employers gave participants feedback on the content/structure of their CV and advice on how to improve it.

54 of the participants undertook mock interviews with participating employers which aim to better prepare students/graduates for real life interview situations. These interviews gave the participating students/graduates a chance to experience an interview with HR professionals and get valuable feedback and advice on interview performance in a safe environment.

60 attendees availed of opportunities provided to get a professional headshot taken for their LinkedIn/online job seeking profiles.



The Worries & Jobs Walls at Building the Future

Participating students and graduates were encouraged to reflect on and share their concerns and worries about seeking and retaining employment as a disabled graduate by posting them on the 'Worries Wall'. AHEAD followed up on questions raised by taking to its social media and explored via blog possible ways to overcome some of the common anxieties expressed. A sample of worries posted are:

- 'Not being able to find employment because I have a disability'
- 'Will my supports take a long time to get funding for?'
- 'Trying to explain huge gaps in my CV'
- 'Will I be able to keep up?'

A blog was produced exploring issues raised at the worries wall which can be viewed [here](#).

Additionally, the event featured a 'Jobs Wall' with currently available WAM positions posted on it, allowing participants to easily see the range of WAM opportunities currently open for applications.



Additional 'Think Twice' Workshops

- **'Disclosure and the WAM Programme' with HEADWAY**

As part of a job coaching and upskilling programme Headway were running with their members, GetAHEAD facilitated a workshop on disclosure.

- **'Networking Masterclass' with Salesforce**

This event included workshops on networking and personal branding and how to kick-start a career in technology plus the opportunity to network with different employees from within Salesforce.

- **'Preparation for Interview' with ESB**

Graduates who applied for ESB placements were invited to ESB to take part in this interview skills workshop which covered disclosure, competency based interview tips and the ESB interview process with ESB representative Niall O'Hanlon.

GradIreland Collaboration

AHEAD sponsor the GradIreland Diversity & Inclusion Award and assisted with judging of employer applications. AHEAD staff representatives attended the GradIreland Awards Ceremony in the Mansion House where the 2019 Diversity and Inclusion Award was presented to Accenture.

At the GradIreland fair, WAM staff facilitated a panel discussion on 'disability in the graduate workplace' on which 3 employers from the AHEAD WAM Employer Network participated for the first time.

AHEAD Start Course – Supporting students with disabilities in further and higher education

AHEAD Start is a blended on line training course on supporting students with disabilities aimed at staff responsible for delivering supports in further and higher education. The course is run twice yearly (beginning of Semester 1 & 2) and takes a blended learning approach, which includes a full day (optional) pre-term seminar, coupled with an 20-25 hour online course completed over an 8 week term.

The interactive online part is broken into four modules:

- Disability, Attitudes, Policy and Legislation – A History
- Understanding Disability and It's Educational Impact
- Supports and Reasonable Accommodations
- Needs Assessment and Funding

68 members of staff from across the further and higher education sectors undertook the course in 2019 and completed a mock needs assessment as their final course assignment. Additionally, AHEAD undertook a major review and update of the online course content in 2019 adding new text and video contributions on many topics including the National Access Plan, the UNCRPD, the Web Accessibility Directive, the ISL Recognition Act, the latest in assistive technologies, latest stats on participation of students with disabilities and changes to the funding mechanisms for supports for students.



This course remains one of our key resources for the professional development of staff involved in delivering supports for students with disabilities in further and higher education.

[For more insight on the course, watch this promotional video.](#)

Digital Accessibility Webinar Series

In 2019, AHEAD began a new online venture by hosting its' first Webinar Series. Webinars offer us a new and flexible way to engage and collaborate with the further and higher education sector, delivering knowledge and best practice to them where and when it suits them.

With the new EU Web Accessibility Directive coming down the track, this webinar series for AHEAD members will span the academic year 2019/20. It will examines different areas of digital accessibility that colleges need support and advice on, with the aim of giving college staff working in different roles across campus the information and skills needed to improve the accessibility of the digital environment our students learn in – including everything from books, to the main web infrastructure to the documents shared everyday by teaching staff.

Webinar 1 titled 'Digital Accessibility and the ePub Revolution' was viewed by 55 professionals in the sector. In this webinar, Donal Rice (National Disability Authority) explored the legislative responsibilities of education providers regarding digital accessibility and introduced the EU Web Accessibility Directive which is currently awaiting transposition into Irish Law.

Richard Orme of the DAISY consortium followed with an examination of the importance of reading in modern learning and showed how modern technology has changed the way our students interact with textbooks. He discussed the evolution of the eBook and how ePubs offer huge opportunities to provide all of our learners – not just those with print disabilities - with flexible, accessible and dynamic reading experiences. Lastly

Richard took a look at what colleges can begin to do to improve the provision of digital, accessible reading materials on their campus. This webinar also featured a publisher's perspective with a contribution of Martin Kloppstock of Kogan Page publishing house.

More webinars in the series planned for 2020 include:

- 2 Modern Digital Reading – Flexible and Accessible – Jan 2020
- 3 Web Accessibility Statements - Using a Legal Requirement as a Lever for Cultural Change – Feb 2020
- 4 Creating Accessible Documents – TBC later in 2020
- 5 Using Accessible Communications – TBC later in 2020

An interesting feature of this series is that it is bringing our work to an audience we have previously not successfully engaged with, with webinar #1 seeing participation from Library Services and ICT managers as well as Disability Support staff.

[You can find out more detail about the series on the webpage.](#)

The AHEAD Journal - A Review of Inclusive Education & Employment Practices

The online AHEAD Journal is a space in which professionals and students/graduates can share experiences and good practice, air ideas, raise concerns and explore what is going on in the world of inclusive education and employment.

In 2019, the journal was upgraded to a newly fully web-based format. All articles now have their own individual web page making it easy to share single articles with colleagues and friends and to post directly from the Journal to your social channels by featuring a handy share bar in the navigation pane at the side of each article. Additionally, the responsive, accessible design will fit any web browser on any device making it ideal for reading on the go or in the office.

The Journal has become a key method of dissemination and sharing of good practice for AHEAD and an important space to discuss issues arising in the sector. It also offers us another great opportunity to collaborate with key stakeholders in education and employment and offer them a platform to highlight their good work.

Edition 9, viewable at [this link](#), featured the following articles:

- Director's Corner: Building an inclusive mainstream from school to higher education and the workplace
- Universal Design for Learning to support nursing students: Experiences in the Field

- A Study on the Impact of Life Coaching in enhancing the potential of young adults with diagnosis of Autism to better manage transitions
- Ireland's first Technological University: A personal reflection
- Employers Journey with WAM: The first steps to inclusive employment
- CookMeetEat - a recipe for support
- Outcomes for students with disabilities in Trinity College Dublin
- The journey towards Universal Design in the Teaching and Learning Environment in Hungarian Higher Education
- My Experience and Tips on Post Graduate Study Abroad
- What happens when you support staff to reflect on their practice? - AHEAD's Digital Badge in UDL and the John Kelly Award
- Cars, Education and UDL
- Impressions from the AHEAD conference 'Journey to Oz' at Croke Park, Dublin in March 2019

Edition 10, viewable at this link, featured the following articles:

- Director's Corner: Looking to the long-term
- Universal Design for Learning in Dublin City University
- First Day Contact Initiative at Maynooth University
- Communicating with disabled people – let's discuss the connotations
- How a Universal Design Mindset Can Support Learning in the Workplace
- Are apprenticeships working for disabled students?
- Developing resilience in the workplace - WAM Resilience Day 2019
- Voice technologies as means to improved communication and more inclusive teaching practice – the case for Live Transcribe, Google's Voice-to-Text app (2019)
- Outcomes from the DESIGNS Erasmus+ European Project

Theme C – Promoting UDL

**To promote the principles of
universal design for learning (UDL)
by creating an understanding of UDL
across all learning environments**

The following section outlines key strategic activities undertaken relating to Theme C of our strategic plan.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN 2019

Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching and Learning

In 2017, as part of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning's open access digital badge initiative, AHEAD and UCD Access & Lifelong Learning teamed up to create the digital badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning – a 25 hour introductory course covering an introduction to UDL (Universal Design for Learning) and supporting staff to make their first UDL implementation. Staff in the sector can undertake the course directly with us through our national roll outs of the badge, and can also participate in training to become course facilitators themselves and roll out the badge locally in their own institutions using the facilitators pack provided.

AHEAD undertook a major review and update of the digital badge course content. In 2019, 94 staff members in further and higher education completed the AHEAD/UCD Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning. Some completed the course directly through AHEAD while others completed an iteration of the course ran by an AHEAD trained course facilitator. Our 2019 national roll-out of the online course (Oct-Dec 2019) was booked out in just 4 days which highlights the success of the course itself and the general demand across the sector for more knowledge and understanding of UDL.

34 participants completed AHEAD's national roll out of the badge and 27 of these participants also completed the Facilitator's Badge for this course, which validates and enables them to roll out the course in their own institutions in 2020 using the Facilitator's pack created by AHEAD/UCD. Every participant who undertakes and completes the course with a registered facilitator (i.e. one who has the facilitator's badge) also receives the official digital badge from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

This online course and the associated train the trainer model, which immensely widens its reach, is key to our strategy of promoting the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by creating an understanding of UDL in all learning environments.

[For more info on the digital badge, visit the webpage.](#)

The John Kelly Award for UDL in Further & Higher Education

In 2018, AHEAD celebrated 30 years of shaping a future where students with disabilities can succeed. The origins of the organisation started in University College Dublin in 1988 when then Registrar Professor John Kelly decided to do something about the challenges facing students with disabilities in his institution. Professor Kelly led a movement right from the beginning which developed into the founding of AHEAD and he remained central to the organisation as Chair of the Board of AHEAD until 2005. In 2019, AHEAD launched the John Kelly Award for Universal Design in Teaching and Learning in honour of his work in the field.

The John Kelly Award for Universal Design for Learning recognises the innovative practice of teaching staff in further and higher education engaging with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to deliver a more inclusive learning experience for their students. It is targeted at practitioners who have demonstrated their emergent commitment to UDL by undertaking the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning and making exciting changes to their practices as a result of their participation in the digital badge.



The winner of this inaugural award was Helena Farrell whose submission on good practices operating in her work setting was available to all in attendance at the award event to observe and share. The selection process took place live at the AHEAD Annual Conference to give maximum exposure to examples of good practices that are in place and working in educational settings. The judging panel of experts featured Dr. Terry Maguire (Director of National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning), Dr. Abigail Moriarty (Head of Teaching and Learning, De Montfort University) and Allanah Murray (Postgraduate Student).

The winner, Helena Farrell, is pictured here receiving her award from Prof John Kelly. The award comes with €1,000 towards her continuing professional development in this field.

[Videos presenting the amazing UDL work of all three finalists can be viewed here.](#)



Transition year and third level students from Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown (ITB) work together in an AHEAD Assisted Technology Challenge hosted by Dell to address and propose potential technological solutions to accessibility problems faced by people with disabilities in different aspects of their everyday lives.

A Framework of UDL for FET



The Irish Further Education and Training (FET) sector provides community-based education and training opportunities in hundreds of different facilities using a variety of settings, programmes and approaches. SOLAS commissioned AHEAD to conduct research and develop guidelines on inclusive learning environments using Universal Design for Learning

(UDL) as a framework for the Irish FET Sector. The research, which commenced in 2018 and completed in 2019 proposed a conceptual framework for Irish FET. This document is currently awaiting publication.

Work has begun on the next phase of the project which is to produce guidelines for practitioners on implementing UDL in FET. The guidelines will be launched in 2020 and AHEAD will support SOLAS in disseminating them as well as actively engaging with staff to promote their use.

AHEAD has built up extensive experience in this area through our work at grass roots and professional levels in higher education and are well placed to support the capacity building of staff in further education. AHEAD operates on the principle of shared learning and it envisages that its work in further education will generate learning and resources that will also benefit staff in higher education thus creating a synergy for the promotion of mutual learning and exchange.

Throughout the year SOLAS, together with the UDL for FET Advisory Committee worked closely with AHEAD to produce the initial publication 'A Conceptual Framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for the Irish Further Education and Training Sector – Where Inclusion is Everyone's Business'.

The guidelines which are to follow in 2020 will support SOLAS in their strategic goal of Active Inclusion and will be developed to assist practitioners, managers and support staff to make learning environments more inclusive for all FET learners, including those with a disability.

THINK UDL Podcast Contribution

An AHEAD member of staff was interviewed for an episode of a worldwide Universal Design for Learning (UDL) podcast entitled 'Think UDL'.

The podcast is hosted by Lilian Nave of Appalachian State University (ASU) and looks predominantly at how practitioners promote and implement UDL in further and higher education environments.

The episode entitled 'UDL is Looking AHEAD in Ireland' talked about AHEAD's work influencing policy and practice around UDL and how AHEAD is leveraging eLearning partnerships to increase the knowledge and understanding of UDL in Irish institutions.

[You can listen to the full episode here.](#)

Symposium - Transform Your Further Ed Campus with Universal Design for Learning

Further education by its nature is a hugely diverse space in our education system. Coming through its doors are increasing numbers of learners with disabilities, mature learners, learners for whom English is not a first language, LGBT learners and learners from the travelling community - and that is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the diversity of people served. This event explored the question of how our further education campuses can respond to the needs of this huge range of learners and provide a high quality educational experience with active inclusion at its heart.



AHEAD invited US expert **Dr Thomas Tobin** to Dublin to explore with FET stakeholders the potential of implementing the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework and discuss how to leverage the power of mobile learning to help them to achieve it. Dr Tobin shared his experiences of UDL implementation in the community college sector (similar to PLC sector here) in the US and discussed the value

of such an approach in FET here in Ireland. Additionally, AHEAD updated attendees on the UDL for FET project.

47 FET practitioners from across the country attended this symposium.

EU Projects

Enhancing a Thought-Out Policy and Framework on Inclusive Mobility across Europe



EPFIME Committee

AHEAD is a partner in this Erasmus+ co-funded project titled 'Establishing a thought-out Policy Framework for Inclusive Mobility across Europe' (EPFIME). The aim of the project is to promote the participation of students with disabilities in mobility programmes. A key activity undertaken by AHEAD in 2019 was to conduct a literature review of already existing research on students with disabilities and study abroad. Additionally, AHEAD supported the dissemination of three large scale surveys to three key stakeholders in the sector including:

- A survey targeting students with disabilities looking at barriers to study abroad and past experiences of students on study abroad programmes
- A survey of institutions looking at their current practices on hosting study abroad students with disabilities
- A survey of government ministries looking at study abroad from a policy perspective

These surveys have been disseminated by partners in each of their respective domains and the results will give us a broad perspective on all of the relevant issues. In 2020, AHEAD will produce a guideline for institutions around inclusive mobility measures informed by the outcomes of the survey results/ literature review, which will highlight good practice and provide resources for staff involved in international exchange.

Erasmus Student Network (ESN) Disabled Youth Mobility Project

AHEAD is also partner in this smaller project which is exploring 'Mobilities and Youth'. As part of our 2019 work on this project, AHEAD completed a focus group of students with disabilities and conducted a survey of student's experiences.

In 2020, AHEAD will produce a toolkit for youth NGOs and other organisations hosting young people with disabilities on mobility programmes that will encourage them to anticipate challenges they are likely to face and arm them with resources that will assist them to get the most out of their experiences abroad.

Designs Project

AHEAD was delighted to participate as a consortium partner in DESIGNS, an Erasmus+ project running from January 2017 until August 2019. The aim of this project was to promote and create improved access for deaf sign language users in employment settings. To achieve this goal, the DESIGNS team brought together seven partners from four EU countries: AHEAD, the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI), the European Union of the Deaf (EUD), Humboldt University (HU) of Berlin, Interesource Group (Ireland) Limited, Trinity College Dublin (TCD), and Heriot Watt University (HW) in Scotland.

The partners together identified a series of gaps in societal and policy structure which contribute to the significant barriers that Deaf individuals face in employment settings. These gaps were prevalent in all countries and hold across all three stakeholder groups (Deaf people, interpreters and employers). Five particularly important gaps have been identified and are as follows:

- knowledge
- organisational culture
- experience
- feedback
- systems

These gaps have contributed to high unemployment rates of Deaf persons and Deaf youth in comparison with other population groups in the European Union.

The partners worked together to produce a set of guidelines for employers.

[For more info on the outcomes of this project, see this AHEAD Journal article on the topic.](#)

CAPACITY BUILDING ACROSS EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

AHEAD Events

10 key events (outlined elsewhere in this document) took place at which a total of 1,313 people participated. These events are designed to assist AHEAD to meet its strategic aims and objectives with regard to the building of inclusive learning environments in education and employment. Examples of key events include the AHEAD Annual International Conference, the Better Options College fair for students with disabilities, the Building the Future careers fair for students and graduates with disabilities and the WAM Programme's employer networking events.

Tailored Training

34 tailored training sessions were delivered to 1,004 participants across the FET, higher education and across public/private employment sectors. Key themes of the training undertaken include the implementation of the universal design for learning framework, excellence in supporting students with disabilities, supporting students and graduates in making the transition to employment and inclusive recruitment and retention approaches.

Our tailored training activities can be summarised as follows:

- 14 tailored training sessions were delivered to 498 staff in further and higher education.
- 13 tailored training activities were organised and delivered to 395 students, student bodies and Student Union officers e.g. interview skills for graduates contemplating their future career paths.
- 7 tailored training sessions were delivered to 111 employer representatives on topics relating to inclusive employment. These sessions were in addition to the training undertaken as a standard part of employer participation in the WAM Placement Programme.

Please note these figures only include tailored training sessions we delivered in 2019 and do not include participation in our regular training programmes such as AHEAD Start, the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching and Learning and the training that is integral to participation in the WAM Initiative.

Contributions to External Events

Collaboration and shared learning is central to all of AHEAD's undertakings. AHEAD is committed to networking with and sharing the experiences of learners/students/graduates with disabilities and staff across education and employment.

A sample of external events contributed directly to are:

- European First Year Conference (EFYE), CIT, Cork - facilitated a workshop on UDL.
- HEADWAY workshop on Transition to Work – facilitated a workshop on 'disclosure of disability'.
- Grad Ireland – facilitated a panel discussion that involved three active WAM participating employers in the AHEAD graduate work placement programme.
- The Learning Connections Conference in UCC - presented on UDL.
- IHREC Conference on 'Achieving Equality at Work' – delivered a workshop on 'Reasonable Accommodation in Practice'.
- NDA Conference – presented on the UNCRPD.
- Central Bank of Ireland – contributed to internal discussion on Staff Policy.

Additionally, AHEAD participated actively in other external events such as:

- Adult Guidance Association Conference, Ireland
- National Association of Disability Practitioners Conference – Warwick, UK
- CAST UDL Conference, USA.
- AHECS – Employer Sub-Group Meeting
- Microsoft – 'CHAT' Assistive Technology Event

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

AHEAD's website and social media channels remain a key tool in supporting us to deliver information and advice to our key stakeholders and in raising awareness of our work.

The website features information for students on accessing college and getting the most from their college experience, for graduates on looking for work, for staff in education on best practice in supporting students and for employers on inclusive recruitment.

Key stats relating to our online presence and our stakeholder engagement with it include:

- 231,520 page views on our website in 2019 – up **16%** from 2018
- 34,526 views on our YouTube channel in 2019 – up **78%** from 2018
- 49 new videos created for our website and eCourses.
Highlights include:
 - [Creating Engaging and Accessible Presentations](#)
 - [Documentary: the Active Inclusion Network Project \(2019 doc about a project completed 2018\)](#)
 - [Students with Disabilities – How Colleges Use Your Data!](#)
 - [3 John Kelly Award finalists showcase their UDL work](#)
 - [Conference 2019 Keynote Videos](#)
 - [Animation: Fund for Students with Disabilities – Allocation Model for Higher Education Explained](#)
 - [Members Webinar: Digital Accessibility and the ePub Revolution](#)
 - [13 new videos added to the updated Digital Badge for UDL in Teaching and Learning e.g. Helena Farrell: Case Study – How I Used Multiple Means of Engagement](#)
- 6,694 total likes on our facebook page – 990 new likes in 2019
- 4,324 total followers on our Twitter Account – 517 new followers in 2019

AHEAD

Organisational Matters



Ann Heelan (left), Executive Director, retired at the end of December 2019.



Dara Ryder (right) was appointed new CEO to take effect as and from January 2020.

The AGM of AHEAD was held on December 4th. 2019 hosted by the Central Bank of Ireland, Dublin.

The 2019 Board of Directors were

- Professor Michael Shevlin (Trinity College Dublin), Chairperson
- Ms Tina Lowe (University College Dublin), Secretary
- Mr Andrew Blair (HSBC), Treasurer
- Ms Megan Reilly (Union of Students in Ireland)
- Dr Phil Halligan (University College Dublin)
- Ms Bernie O'Connor (Electricity Supply Board)
- Mr Rory O'Sullivan (Killester College of Further Education)
- Ms Marion McCarthy (University College Cork)
- Dr Larry McNutt (Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown)
- Ms Valerie Moore (Institute of Technology, Tralee)
- Ms Julie Tonge (University College Dublin)

BOD Appointments and Retirees during the year

- Ms Siona Cahill Union of Students in Ireland (USI) retired and was replaced by Ms Megan Reilly of USI.
- Ms Marian McCarthy resigned with effect from 4th December, 2019.
- Ms Phil Halligan resigned with effect from 4th December, 2019.

Our Team

AHEAD would like to recognise the huge contribution of our team of staff in delivering on our strategic goals and undertakings, a huge body of work across the year. Their commitment to quality outcomes for students and graduate with disabilities underpins all of our activities.



The AHEAD Team of Staff with members of the Board of Directors 2019.

AHEAD Membership

AHEAD recognizes the importance of support from, and collaboration with, its' member organisations, which are predominantly made up of higher education institutions, education and training boards (ETBs) and private colleges. The funding that membership fees generate and the positive engagement that results from AHEAD's relationship with its' members is vital to AHEAD in working on our mission to create inclusive environments in education.

Overview of Energy Usage in 2019

Total Energy Consumption

- Grid Electricity: 2,259 kWh TFC
- Fossil: 4,210 kWh TFC
- Renewable: 0 kWh TFC

Energy Savings

- EnPI: **6.9%** better than 2018
- EnPI: **35.9%** better than baseline
- Consumption (TPER): **6.9%** less than 2018
- Consumption (TPER): **35.9%** less than baseline

AHEAD

Financial Statement

AHEAD

Financial Statement

INCOME	2018 €	2019 €
Higher Education Authority	277,000	275,000
Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection – WAM Initiative	196,000	200,000
Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection – GetAHEAD Initiative	91,300	82,200
AHEAD Training / Research	2,700	4,690
UDLL/DEAF	10,149	-
AHEAD Start	11,980	20,200
AHEAD Conference	39,174	27,046
AHEAD Membership	34,735	36,580
Publications	13,964	6,530
Mapped	-	-
Digital Badge	(615)	12,456
Erasmus ESN	-	11,939
Erasmus EPIFME	-	15,395
SOLAS	63,621	74,379
TOTAL INCOME	740,008	766,415

EXPENDITURE	2018 €	2019 €
Wages and salaries	465,674	516,040
Training Costs	1,566	2,428
Conferences and meetings	76,474	92,724
Printing and stationery	33,497	31,798
Travel and subsistence	27,396	34,693
Office expenses	26,498	24,442
Professional fees	11,368	11,478
Web development	18,280	18,319
Other expenses	10,750	22,129
Depreciation	4,851	3,508
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	676,354	757,559

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Thank you

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creating inclusive environments in education
and employment for people with disabilities

AHEAD

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