Numbers of Students with Disabilities Studying in Higher Education in Ireland

2014/15

ahead

Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

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Foreword

By Ann Heelan, Executive Director, AHEAD

The survey report on the participation rates of students/graduates with disabilities gives us an overview of the engagement of this group within the higher education sector. The findings for the academic year 2014/2015 identify a total of 10,773 students with disabilities across 27 responding institutions representing 5.1% of the total student population. While this upward trend is extremely positive and very welcomed, the growing diversity in the student population presents its own challenges, none more so than for the on-the-ground student support staff who manage the increase in numbers without the corresponding increase in funding.

This report clearly shows that students with disabilities are getting into college in increasing numbers and that all institutions and faculties have been working to create inclusive environments in which these students can thrive. However, while this picture is encouraging, the report also recognizes a number of persistent trends and barriers which raise questions for the education sector. Firstly why are students with disabilities much more likely to be studying in Humanities and Arts than other students? Secondly why are they under-represented on part-time courses?   Thirdly, why does the data suggest that they are not progressing on to post graduate courses at the same rate as non-disabled graduates? I suggest that these students are meeting roadblocks on their journey that other students do not encounter and which will disadvantage them in achieving the same employment outcomes as other graduates.

These questions raise concerns firstly regarding the level and quality of career guidance received by students with disabilities in second level, concerns mirrored in the AHEAD research into the transition experience of students with visual impairments. The capacity and provision of guidance counselling needs to be updated and developed to be inclusive of students with disabilities. These students need to be informed and encouraged to look at the upcoming employment opportunities in occupational areas such as STEM, ICT, Financial services, manufacturing and leisure industries as identified in the Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025[1].

Secondly the report raises questions about why the structure of funding available for students with disabilities is biased towards full time courses. Only 1.3% of students on part time courses have registered as having a disability meaning the rate of participation of students with disabilities is nearly five times lower on part time courses than on full time ones. These students are not looking for any special advantages but are simply seeking equality and the chance to study on the same terms as full time students with disabilities. Thirdly, we need to query why the data suggests that the progression rate of students with disabilities to post graduate courses is so low.

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[1] Dept. of Education & Skills, 2016
[2] Higher Education Authority, "HEA Annual Statistics 2014/2015", 2015, <www.hea.ie/en/statistics> [accessed

Diversity brings with it greater complexity and places greater demands on faculty and administration staff to work differently, to change procedures and processes, to work across functions and to be more flexible and innovative in their teaching and assessment practice.

The challenge for higher education is to respond to diversity with a whole college approach, designed so that all functions and faculties are inclusive of all students. Universal Design for Learning is a new approach to learning that looks systematically at the whole college experience and creates a culture of teaching and learning which is engaging, flexible and offers many routes to achieving learning outcomes.

Contents

Introduction

AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access and Disability) is the National Centre for Inclusive Education. An independent non-profit organisation AHEAD's mission is '*To empower more students to succeed in education and graduate employment*'.

One of the key activities undertaken by AHEAD in pursuance of its mission is the research into the number of students with disabilities studying in higher education in Ireland. To achieve this AHEAD surveys, on an annual basis, all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that are funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) plus other additional higher education institutions that are an important part of the higher education system. The objective of the participation rates survey is to provide an accurate national measure of the numbers of students with disabilities in higher education; to identify where and in what academic field they are studying, and, to give an insight of their progress from one academic year to another.

To this extent survey findings offer a comprehensive snapshot of the numbers of students with disabilities entering and progressing through the higher education system at a given time along with identifying emerging trends and areas of improvement. It is intended that survey results will assist and inform strategic planning in the education sector with the aim of improving access routes to higher education for students with disabilities. This report details the results of AHEAD's survey on the participation rates of students with disabilities in higher education in Ireland covering the academic year 2014/15.

Going forward a key driver to the implementation of the core activities of AHEAD is a focus on building an inclusive learning environment in higher education that embeds flexibility and equality into learning and assessment practices across all higher education courses.

AHEAD seeks to achieve its mission by pursuing four core strategic themes:

To influence national policy to impact positively on the inclusion of students with disabilities in education and employment

To develop AHEAD's existing emerging partnerships and build on its successes

To build relationships within the higher education sector to promote the integration of the principles of Universal Design for Learning in education and employment

To sustain and grow the organisation of AHEAD through engagement with key strategic partners

Survey Method

This survey was carried out by AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, in collaboration with Disability/Access Officers of various institutions throughout the country. A survey questionnaire was sent to the Disability/Access Officer in each of the targeted institutions. Targeted institutions were selected on the basis that they are funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and therefore included in the HEA annual statistics on the total student population. This allows a comparison between AHEAD survey results and HEA data for the same academic year 2014/15[2]. Despite the National College of Ireland being funded by the Dept. of Education, it was included in this year's survey due to the nature of its size. 28 institutions were approached and 27 of those responded to the survey, all of which are listed below. Some institutions were unable to complete every section of the survey, and this is explained in footnotes throughout the report.

Universities (later referred to as)

-University College Dublin (UCD)

-University College Cork (UCC)

-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)

-Mater Dei Institute of Education (MDIE)

-National College of Art and Design (NCAD)

-Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)

-St. Angela's College (St. Ang)

-St. Patricks College Drumcondra (SPD)

Institutes of Technology and Other Institutions (later referred to as)

-Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT)

-Cork Institute of Technology (CIT)

-Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)

-Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology (DLIADT)

-Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)

-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)

In this report you will find comparisons between the findings of this survey and the findings of eight similar surveys of participation rates of students with disabilities for the academic years

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[2] Higher Education Authority, "HEA Annual Statistics 2014/2015", 2015, <www.hea.ie/en/statistics> [accessed Nov 9th 2015]

2013/14, 2012/13, 2011/12, 2010/11, 2009/10, 2008/09, 2005/2006 and 1998/1999, all of which were undertaken by AHEAD. There are some differences in the approach to the nine surveys, most notably, that the 98/99 survey was much larger in scale. It is important to point out these differences if one is to make an informed comparison of the educational landscapes of the relevant years. In the 98/99 survey, 42 institutions returned information regarding the participation of students with disabilities, in comparison with 22 in 05/06, 21 in 08/09, 26 in 09/10, 23 in 10/11, 25 in 11/12, 26 in 12/13, 27 in 13/14 and 27 in the current survey, although most of the major institutions are represented in all of them. There are also some comparisons made where possible, with a survey carried out by AHEAD on the same topic for the academic year 1993/1994 and it should be noted that this survey included Northern Ireland's higher education institutions, which were not included in subsequent surveys.

It should also be noted that when the term "students with disabilities" (shortened to SWDs in parts) is used in this report, it refers only to students with a disability or specific learning difficulty who have registered with the disability/access services of participating institutions. This requires a student to declare a disability verified by medical documentation. In other words, students with a disability who have not registered with the services of one of the participating institutions are not included in the findings.

Throughout this report the phrase 'participation rate' is referenced. When used in this report, this phrase refers to the number of students with disabilities in higher education as a percentage of the total student population.

Findings

Participation Rates of Students with Disabilities

The 27 responding institutions in Ireland identified a total of 10733 students with disabilities, representing 5.1% of the total student population, of which 9777 are studying undergraduate courses and 996 are studying postgraduate courses. This represents an 11% rise in the total number of students with disabilities from 13/14, when the figure was 9694. This means that students with disabilities now make up 5.1% of the total student population in the responding institutions, up significantly from last year's figure of 4.7%.

Key Point: The participation rate of students with disabilities in higher education has broken the 5% mark for the first time since records began. In real terms, this means that in an average university lecture hall with 20 rows seating 400, there will be on average one student with a disability sitting in every row and 20 students with disabilities in a full lecture.

Figure 1 shows the increasing numbers of students with disabilities from AHEAD's first survey of the subject in 1993/94 right through to 2014/15

Number of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education (and the % of the Total Student Population they represent)
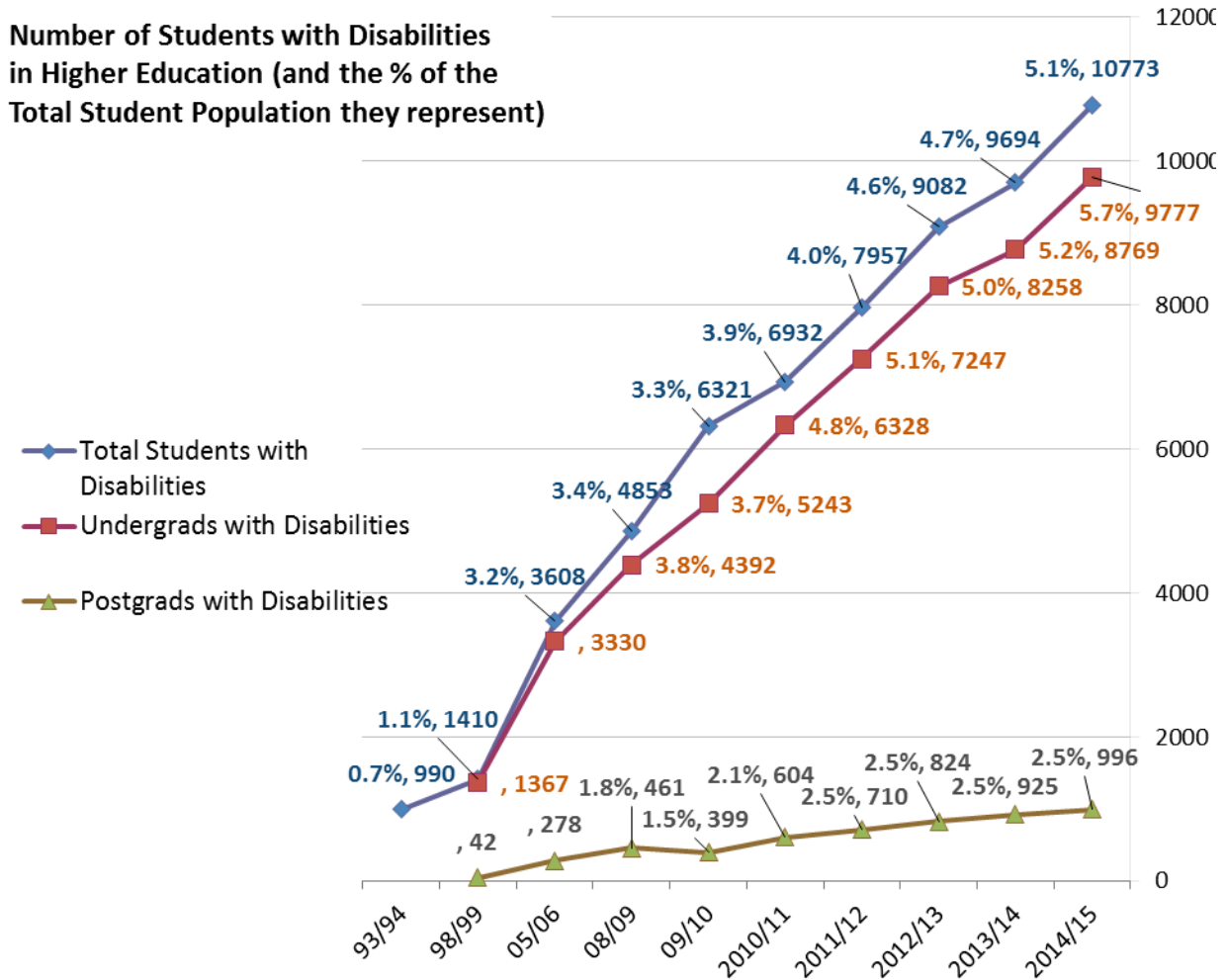
The average participation rate in Institutes of Technology/Other sector was 5.4% (up from 5.1% last year) in comparison to 4.9 % (up from 4.4% last year) in the University sector. This is further evidence of a trend that the participation rate in the University sector is growing at a slightly faster rate than that in the IoT/Other sector which has historically had a higher rate. The participation rate varied significantly across different institutions with rates as low as 0.9% in some institutions and as high as over 10% in others. Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology had the highest rate of participation at 10.2%, followed by Institute of Technology Tralee at 9.3%. National College of Art & Design had the highest participation rate in the University Sector with 8.6% of their total student population being made up of SWDs. See Table 13 in the Appendix for further information on the numbers of students with disabilities registered in each of the responding institutions.

In the academic year 2014/15, SWDs made up 5.7% (9777) of the total undergraduate population but just 2.5% (996) of the total postgraduate population in the 27 responding institutions. From the data collected for this report, it is not possible to discern why the participation rate at undergraduate level is more than double that at postgraduate level. It is likely that there is a myriad of complex reasons for this and anecdotal evidence suggests they could include:

o   The nature of postgraduate study (usually relying on a large amount of reading and written work putting those with print disabilities at a natural disadvantage).

o   The fact that postgraduate study is more likely to occur in the university sector and this sector has already a lower participation rate than the IoT/Other sector.

o   The likelihood that some students, having required support to get through their undergraduate studies, may now be more equipped to study without the assistance of disability support services and as such, may decide against registering i.e. they will not be identified and counted in this report.

o   The reality that many students may opt out of further study and instead begin looking for work.

o   The cost of postgraduate study.

Full Time/Part Time Divide

AHEAD collected data on the breakdown of SWDs by the full time/part time status of their courses. The 27 responding institutions provided the full time/part time breakdown of all SWDs registered with the disability support services. The responding institutions identified 10333 SWDs undertaking full time courses representing 5.9% (up from 5.4% last year) of the total full time student population while just 440 SWDs undertaking part time courses were reported, representing only 1.3% of the total part time student population (up from 1%).

This significant gap between the participation of SWDs on part time courses compared with full time courses is consistently high and highlights the considerable barriers faced by these students. Given the impact of certain disabilities along with the consideration that part time study is a more sustainable choice for many students with disabilities, one might reasonably expect that the part time participation rate would be higher than the full time rate but the data does not reflect this, suggesting that there are systemic barriers present. While we have no robust evidence of the nature of these barriers, anecdotal sources such as calls made to the AHEAD information service indicates that the lack of available funding for additional supports through the Fund for Students with Disabilities in the part time sector is a real difficulty, in particular where the supports are costly as is the case with, for example, sign language interpretation or personal assistance.

Figure 2 shows the full time and part time breakdown of students with disabilities registered with the disability service of the responding institutions

Students w/disabilities PT/FT Breakdown as % of Total Student Population 2014/15
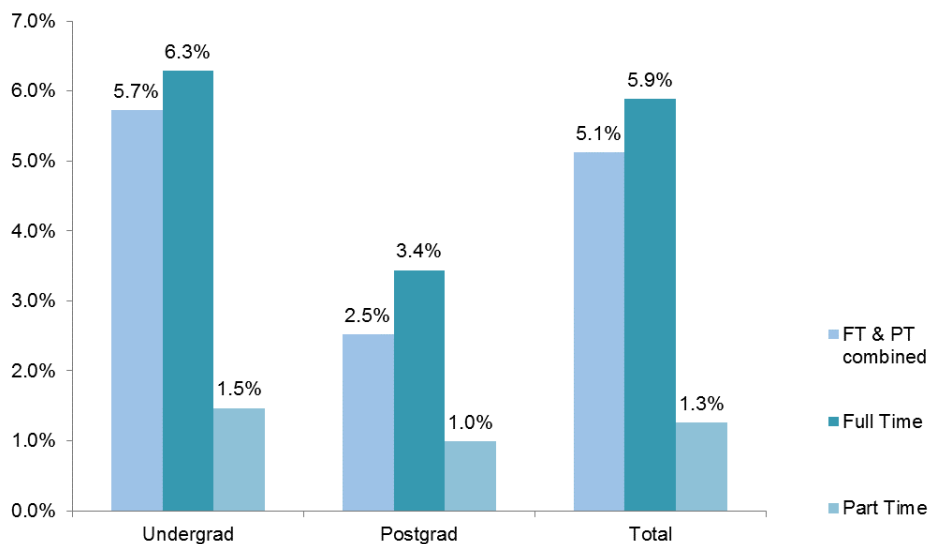
Key Point: The participation rate of Students with Disabilities in full time courses is almost 5 times the participation rate in part time courses. There are likely many complex reasons for this, but anecdotal evidence suggests that in many cases it may be due to the lack of funding for supports in the part time sector.

New Entrant and Final Year Undergraduates with Disabilities

The institutions surveyed were asked to supply numbers of new entrant undergraduates registered with the disability services in 2014/15, "new entrant" meaning students in their first year of study. A total of 3016 new entrants were registered with the services of the 27 responding institutions (up from 2576 in 13/14) representing 31% of the total disabled undergraduate population, up from 29% in 13/14.

The Institutions surveyed also returned the numbers of final year undergraduates registered with the disability services in 2014/15. A total of 2157 final year undergraduates were registered with the services of the 26 institutions who responded to this question[3], representing 23% of the total disabled undergraduate population, down from 25% in 13/14.

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[3] NUI Galway could not provide this data

Mature Students with Disabilities

The institutions surveyed were asked to supply numbers of mature students registered with the disability service in 2014/15. A total of 1443 (down from 1746 in 13/14) mature students were registered with the services of the 27 responding institutions, representing 17.5% of the total population of students with disabilities in those institutions.

New Registrations

Institutions were asked to provide information on the number of all students who newly registered with the disability services in 2014/15, including those that were not new entrants to the institutions. This question was asked in an attempt to capture the approximate number of students who were going through first year (or more) without support and then subsequently realised they required support and registered in 2014/15. We calculated this number by taking the number of new registrations and subtracting the number of new entrants. The 27 responding institutions identified 652 students newly registered with disability services who were not new entrants to the institutions, representing 6.7% of total SWDs in these institutions (down from 7.4% the previous year) and 18% of total new registrations.

Key Point: Of significance is the high number of students who register for support in years subsequent to their first. It is important to understand the difference that support makes to the retention of students with disabilities and the all-round benefits to be gained by promoting registration with the disability services at the earliest possible juncture.

Nature of Disability

Figure 3 shows the disability profile of total disabled student population 2014/15

Breakdown of Students by Category of Disability 2014/15

- Aspergers/Autism
- ADD/ADHD
- Blind/Visually Impaired
- Deaf/Hearing Impaired
- DCD - Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia
- Mental Health Condition
- Neurological/Speech and Language
- Significant Ongoing Illness
- Physical Disability
- Specific Learning Difficulty
- Other

3.0% 4.3% 3.8% 2.1% 2.7% 4.9% 12.5% 3.3% 10.2% 6.2% 46.9%
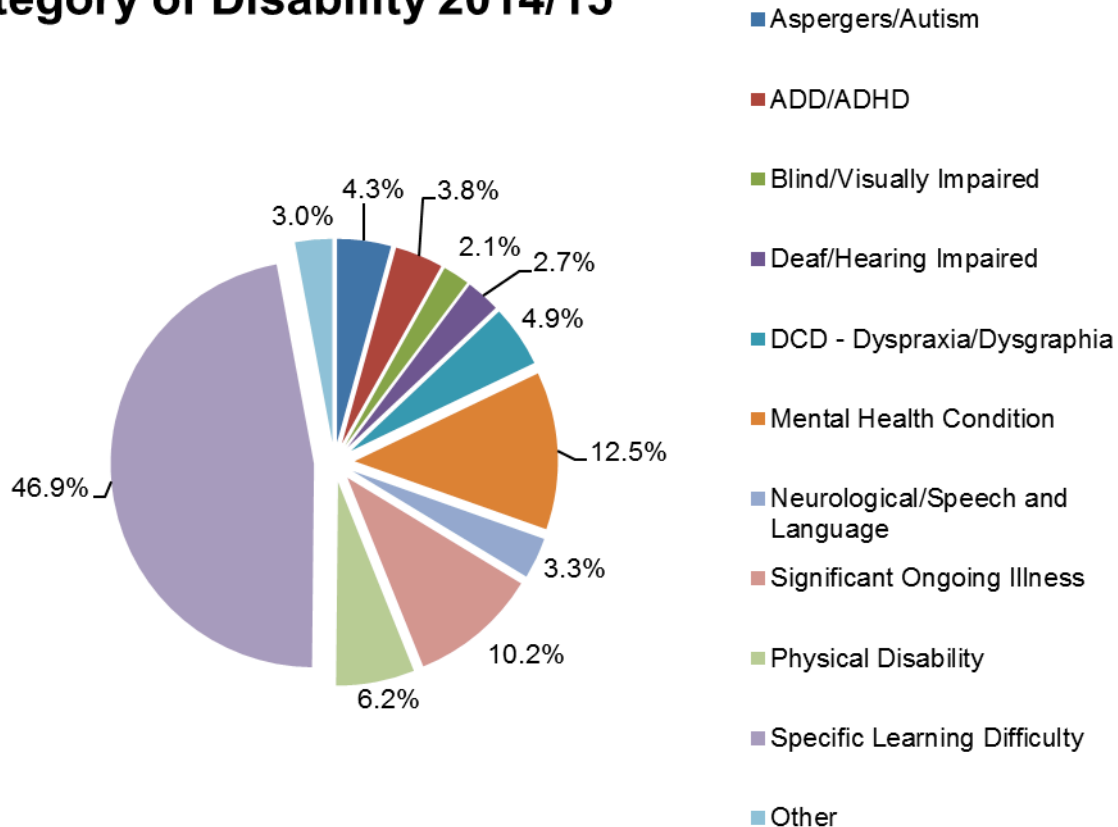
The categories of disability in the breakdown match those outlined in the guidelines provided by the Higher Education Authority to institutions applying to the Fund for Students with Disabilities albeit with an 'Other' category added for students registered with the services who do not fall into one of these categories.

The responding institutions provided the primary disability profile of 9777 undergraduates with disabilities and 996 postgraduates with disabilities. Of the 10773 students represented in the disability profile, 462 (4.3%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 413 (3.8%) have ADD/ADHD, 228 (2.1%) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 295 (2.7%) are in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing category, 529 (4.9%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 1351 (12.5%) have a Mental Health Condition, 352 (3.3%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition,

1101 (10.2%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 672 (6.2%) have a Physical Disability, 5202 (46.9%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 318 (3%) are listed under Other category.

The most significant changes in the year-on-year percentage breakdown are in the categories Specific Learning Difficulty down 4.1 percentage points and the Mental Health Condition category up 1.6 percentage points. Other changes show Asperger/Autism up 0.6 percentage points, Blind/Visually Impaired down 0.3 percentage points, Deaf/Hearing Impaired down 0.1 percentage points, DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia up 0.8 percentage points, Neurological/Speech and Language Condition up 0.6 percentage points, Significant Ongoing Illness down 0.5 percentage points, and Physical Disability down 0.3 percentage points.

Key Point: As a percentage of total students with disabilities, the Specific Learning Difficulty category has fallen a total of 13.6 percentage points in the last four years from 60.5% in 10/11, to 46.9% currently – a drop of 3.4 percentage points per year on average.

Despite the issue of underrepresentation of students with sensory impairments in Higher Education being flagged in several previous AHEAD reports, and an increase in their participation recognised as a strategic objective in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019, the only category that has seen a drop in actual numbers of students is the Blind/Visually Impaired category. While the total numbers of students with disabilities has risen 11% year on year, the number of students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category actually fell by 2% in the academic year 14/15.

Key Point: While the total numbers of students with disabilities has risen 11% year on year, the number of students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category actually fell by 2%

Numbers with 2 or More Disabilities

We asked responding institutions to provide data on the number of students with disabilities who had disclosed 2 or more disabilities. The 24 institutions that responded to this question[4] reported 847 SWDs who had disclosed 2 or more disabilities, representing 8.9% of SWDs in these institutions (up from 8% last year). Further examination of the breakdown revealed that 9.1% (789) of undergraduates with disabilities disclosed 2 or more disabilities in comparison to just 7.3% (58) of postgraduates with disabilities.

10% of students with disabilities in the IoT/Other sector registered 2 or more disabilities in comparison to 6% of those in the University sector.

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[4] UCC, MIC and NCAD could not provide this data

New Entrant Disability Breakdown

Of the 3016 new entrant undergraduate students with disabilities identified by the responding institutions, 165 (5.5%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 119 (3.9%) have ADD/ADHD, 54 (1.8%) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 79 (2.6%) are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, 229 (7.6%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 338 (11.2%) have a Mental Health Condition, 107 (3.5%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition, 323 (10.7%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 135 (4.5%) have a Physical Disability, 1371 (45.5%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 96 (3.2%) were placed in the Other category.

Final Year Disability Breakdown

Of the 2157 final year undergraduate students with disabilities identified by the 26 responding institutions that provided data for this question[5], 71 (3.3%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 89 (4.1%) have ADD/ADHD, 44 (2 %) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 40 (1.9%) are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, 78 (3.6%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 297 (13.8%) have a Mental Health Condition, 65 (3%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition, 231 (10.7%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 166 (7.7%) have a Physical Disability, 1037 (48.1%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 39 (1.8%) were placed in the Other category.

Undergraduate Disability Breakdown

Of the 9777 undergraduate students with disabilities identified by the responding institutions, 426 (4.4%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 384 (3.9%) have ADD/ADHD, 184 (1.9%) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 256 (2.6%) are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, 510 (5.2%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 1192 (12.2%) have a Mental Health Condition, 306 (3.1%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition, 1004 (10.3%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 548 (5.6%) have a Physical Disability, 4658 (47.6%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 309 (3.2%) were placed in the Other category.

Postgraduate Disability Breakdown

Of the 996 postgraduate students with disabilities identified by the responding institutions, 36 (3.6%) are in the Aspergers/Autism category, 29 (2.9%) have ADD/ADHD, 44 (4.4%) are Blind/Visually Impaired, 39 (3.9%) are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, 19 (1.9%) have DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia, 159 (16%) have a Mental Health Condition, 46 (4.6%) have a Neurological/Speech and Language Condition, 97 (9.7%) have a Significant Ongoing Illness, 124 (12.4%) have a Physical Disability, 394 (39.6%) have a Specific Learning Difficulty, and 9 (0.9%) were placed in the Other category.
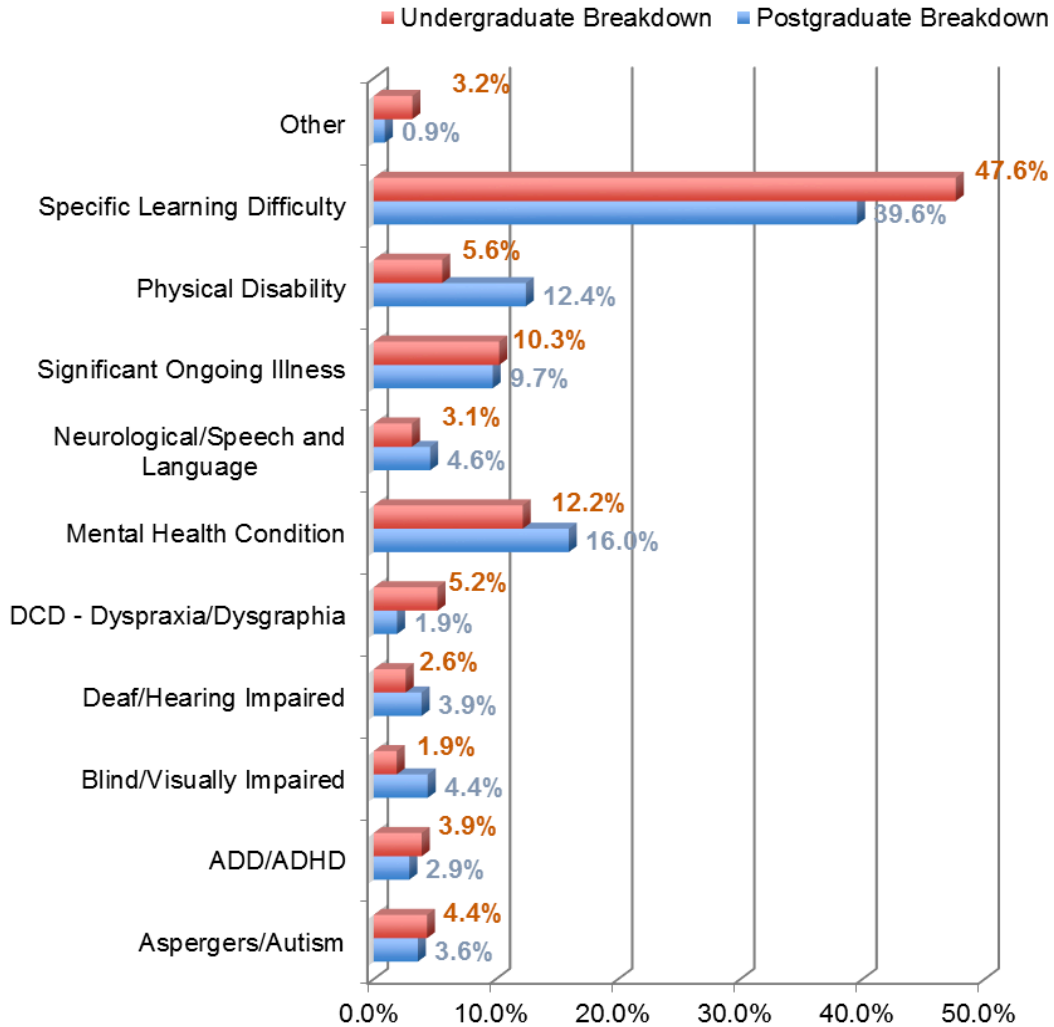
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[5] NUI Galway could not provide data for this question

Figure 4 shows the disability profile of postgraduate and undergraduate students with disabilities

Disability Profile of Undergrad/Postgrad Students with Disabilities 2014/15

■ Undergraduate Breakdown ■ Postgraduate Breakdown

Category	Undergraduate Breakdown	Postgraduate Breakdown
Other	3.2%	0.9%
Specific Learning Difficulty	47.6%	39.6%
Physical Disability	5.6%	12.4%
Significant Ongoing Illness	10.3%	9.7%
Neurological/Speech and Language	3.1%	4.6%
Mental Health Condition	12.2%	16.0%
DCD - Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia	5.2%	1.9%
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	2.6%	3.9%
Blind/Visually Impaired	1.9%	4.4%
ADD/ADHD	3.9%	2.9%
Aspergers/Autism	4.4%	3.6%

There is a significant difference in the disability profile breakdown of postgraduate students to undergraduate students. Students with Specific Learning Difficulties make up 39.6% of the postgraduate breakdown compared to 47.6% of the undergraduate breakdown. Students with physical disabilities make up 12.4% of the postgraduate breakdown in comparison to 5.6% of the undergraduate breakdown. Students in the Blind/Visually impaired category make up 4.4% of the postgraduate breakdown in comparison to 1.9% of the undergraduate breakdown. Students in the categories of Mental Health Condition (16%) and Deaf/Hearing Impaired categories (3.9%) categories also represent a significantly larger percentage of the postgraduate population than the undergraduate population of students with disabilities. The reasons behind these significant differences merit some further exploration.

Fields of Study of Students with Disabilities

The 26 institutions that responded to this section[6] of the survey reported on the number of students with disabilities in each field of study in 2014/15. Each institution was given the subject breakdown as used by the HEA in their statistics but modified slightly[7], each subject coming under one of 13 fields and were asked to report the number of students with disabilities studying in each field. The data shown in Figure 5 represents the fields of study of 10098 students with disabilities across 26 institutions.

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[6] NUI Galway were unable to provide fields of study data
[7] HEA statistics collate subjects under 10 fields. In this survey AHEAD provided 13 fields putting Law, Computing & Nursing in fields of their own where in the HEA statistics they were included under more diverse fields.

Figure 5 shows the fields of study of students with disabilities and compares them to the figures for the total student population[8]

Fields of Study Breakdown - Total Student Population Vs. Disabled Student Population 2014/15

■ Total Student Population   ■ Students with Disabilities

Field	Total Student Population	Students with Disabilities
Combined	0.2%	119, 1.2%
Services	5.1%	523, 5.2%
Nursing	4.4%	406, 4.0%
Health and Welfare	12.8%	810, 8.0%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1.8%	275, 2.7%
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	11.2%	1046, 10.4%
Computing	7.0%	733, 7.3%
Science & Mathematics	10.3%	1032, 10.2%
Law	2.6%	229, 2.3%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	2176, 21.5%
Humanities and Arts	15.8%	2384, 23.6%
Education	5.7%	298, 3.0%
General Programmes	0.3%	67, 0.7%

'Humanities & Arts' was again the most common field of study for students with disabilities in the responding institutions with 23.6% of the makeup, followed by 'Social Science & Business' with 21.5% and 'Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction' with 10.4%. The least common fields of study for students with disabilities were 'General Programmes' with 0.7%, 'Combined Studies' with 1% and law with 2.3%.

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[8] Higher Education Authority, "2013/14 Statistics", 2014, <www.hea.ie/en/statistics> [accessed Dec 4th 2014]

The most notable differences between the percentage breakdown for fields of study of students with disabilities and the breakdown for the total student population arise in the fields of 'Humanities and Arts' and 'Health & Welfare'. 23.6% of students with disabilities study in the field of 'Humanities and Arts' in comparison to 15.8% of the total student population and 8% of all students with disabilities study in the area of 'Health & Welfare' in comparison to 12.8% of the total student population.

Fields of Study Breakdown by Disability

We asked the responding institutions to provide the fields of study breakdown of students with disabilities by category of disability. The 25 institutions that responded to this section[9] of the survey provided the fields of study of 9830 students with disabilities and the fields of study breakdown for each primary disability. The following series of Tables represent the fields of study of each disability category, each one containing a table and one or two salient points about the findings. Note that when discussing the preferred subjects of each disability category, we have omitted reference to the 'General Programmes' field and the 'Combined' field as they are, by far, the least popular fields selected by the total student population and given their broad nature, neither reveal a great deal about the students with disabilities studying them. Note the application of the terms 'underrepresented' and 'overrepresented' in this section are applied to highlight the fields of study that have a concentration or not of students with a particular disability in comparison to the average number of students/students with disabilities. There is no intention that the use of the terms impart any positive or negative inferences.

The results provide insights that may have implications for the design and implementation for teaching and learning within higher education as a whole and in particular on specific fields of study.

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[9] NUI Galway & IT Sligo could not provide this information

Aspergers/Autism – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 1 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the Aspergers/Autism Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

Aspergers/Autism Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category

4.3% of all SWDs are in Aspergers/Autism Category"	% of Total Students Studying Field	% of Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers in Aspergers/Autism Category Studying Field	% of Students in Aspergers/Autism Category Studying Field	% of SWDs Studying Field in Aspergers/Autism Category
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	6	1.4%	9.0%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	3	0.7%	1.0%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	126	29.7%	5.4%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	50	11.8%	2.4%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	7	1.7%	3.1%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	66	15.6%	6.8%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	80	18.9%	11.4%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	44	10.4%	4.4%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	6	1.4%	2.2%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	19	4.5%	2.3%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	3	0.7%	0.7%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	10	2.4%	1.9%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	4	0.9%	3.4%
Total			424	100.0%	

Key Points:

o In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Aspergers/Autism category are most underrepresented in the field of Education Science.

o In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Aspergers/Autism category are most overrepresented in the fields of Computing & Science.

o The institutions who responded to this question reported just 3 students with Aspergers/Autism in the fields of both Education Science and Nursing.

o Students in the Aspergers/Autism category are more than 2 and a half times as likely to study in the Computing field as the average student or the average student with a disability.

o Students in the Aspergers/Autism category are one quarter as likely to study in the field of Education Science as the average student with a disability.

ADD/ADHD – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 2 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the ADD/ADHD Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

ADD/ADHD Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category

3.8% of all SWDs are in ADD/ADHD Category	% of Total Students Studying Field	% of Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers in ADD/ADHD Category Studying Field	% of Students in ADD/ADHD Category Studying Field	% of SWDs Studying Field in ADD/ADHD Category
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	6	1.6%	9.0%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	4	1.0%	1.3%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	94	24.4%	4.0%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	84	21.8%	4.0%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	8	2.1%	3.5%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	29	7.5%	3.0%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	28	7.3%	4.0%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	55	14.2%	5.5%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	16	4.1%	5.8%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	25	6.5%	3.1%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	13	3.4%	3.2%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	15	3.9%	2.9%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	9	2.3%	7.6%
Total			386	100.0%	

Key Points:

o   In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the ADD/ADHD category are most underrepresented in the fields of Education Science.

o   In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the ADD/ADHD category are most overrepresented in the fields of Agriculture and Vetinary and Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction.

o   The institutions who responded to this question reported just 4 students with ADD/ADHD in the field of Education Science.

o   Students in the ADD/ADHD category are more than twice as likely to study in the field of Agriculture & Vetinary as the average student.

Blind/Visually Impaired – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 3 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the Blind/Visually Impaired Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

Blind/Visually Impaired Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category					
2.1% of all SWDs are in Blind/Visually Impaired Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Blind/Visually Impaired Studying Field**	**% of Students in Blind/Visually Impaired Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Blind/Visually Impaired Category**
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	4	1.9%	6.0%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	6	2.8%	2.0%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	65	30.2%	2.8%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	56	26.0%	2.7%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	7	3.3%	3.1%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	14	6.5%	1.5%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	26	12.1%	3.7%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	9	4.2%	0.9%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	1	0.5%	0.4%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	18	8.4%	2.2%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	1	0.5%	0.2%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	5	2.3%	1.0%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	3	1.4%	2.5%
Total			215	100.0%	

Key Points:

○ In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are most underrepresented in the fields of Nursing, Agriculture & Veterinary, and Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction.

○ In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are most overrepresented in the fields of Computing and Law.

○ The institutions who responded to this question reported just 1 student in the Blind/Visually Impaired category in the fields of both Nursing and Agriculture & Veterinary.

- o Students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are one and three quarters as likely to study in the Computing field as the average student.

- o Students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are almost twice as likely to study in the Humanities & Arts field as the average student.

- o Students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category are one eighth as likely to study in the fields of Nursing as the average student or student with a disability.

Deaf/ Hearing Impaired – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 4 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

Deaf/Hearing Impaired Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category

2.7% of all SWDs are in Deaf/Hearing Impaired Category	% of Total Students Studying Field	% of Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers in Deaf/Hearing Impaired Category Studying Field	% of Students in Deaf/Hearing Impaired Category Studying Field	% of SWDs Studying Field in Deaf/Hearing Impaired Category
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	2	0.7%	3.0%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	12	4.3%	4.0%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	53	19.1%	2.3%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	77	27.8%	3.7%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	8	2.9%	3.5%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	31	11.2%	3.2%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	19	6.9%	2.7%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	26	9.4%	2.6%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	5	1.8%	1.8%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	29	10.5%	3.6%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	9	3.2%	2.2%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	4	1.4%	0.8%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	2	0.7%	1.7%
Total			277	100.0%	

Key Points:

o   In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired category are most underrepresented in the field of Services.

o   In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired category are most overrepresented in the field of Education Science.

o   Students in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired category are one and a half times as likely to study in the Education Science field as the average student with a disability.

DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 5 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the DCD – Dyspraxia/ Dysgraphia Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

DCD - Dyspraxia Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category

4.9% of all SWDs are in DCD - Dyspraxia Category	% of Total Students Studying Field	% of Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers in DCD - Dyspraxia Studying Field	% of Students in DCD - Dyspraxia Category Studying Field	% of SWDs Studying Field in DCD - Dyspraxia Category
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	2	0.4%	3.0%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	5	1.0%	1.7%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	137	26.8%	5.9%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	117	22.9%	5.6%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	12	2.3%	5.2%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	55	10.8%	5.7%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	45	8.8%	6.4%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	42	8.2%	4.2%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	7	1.4%	2.5%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	23	4.5%	2.8%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	17	3.3%	4.2%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	38	7.4%	7.3%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	11	2.2%	9.2%
Total			511	100.0%	

Key Points:

o   In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia category are most underrepresented in the fields of Education Science and Health & Welfare.

o   In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia category are most overrepresented in the fields of Services and Computing.

o   Students in the DCD – Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia category are almost one and a half times as likely as the average student or student with a disability to study in the field of Services.

Mental Health Condition – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 6 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the Mental Health Condition Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

Mental Health Condition Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category

12.5% of all SWDs are in Mental Health Condition Category	% of Total Students Studying Field	% of Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers in Mental Health Condition Category Studying Field	% of Students in Mental Health Condition Category Studying Field	% of SWDs Studying Field in Mental Health Condition Category
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	8	0.6%	11.9%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	27	2.1%	9.1%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	435	34.5%	18.6%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	267	21.2%	12.8%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	35	2.8%	15.3%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	132	10.5%	13.7%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	87	6.9%	12.4%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	47	3.7%	4.7%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	19	1.5%	6.9%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	105	8.3%	13.0%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	53	4.2%	13.1%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	20	1.6%	3.8%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	26	2.1%	21.8%
Total			1261	100.0%	

Key Points:

o In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Mental Health Condition category are most underrepresented in the fields of Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction and Services.

o In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Mental Health Condition category are most overrepresented in the fields of Humanities & Arts and Law.

o Students in the Mental Health Condition category are more than twice as likely to study in the Humanities & Arts field as the average student.

o Students in the Mental Health Condition category are one third as likely as the average student or student with a disability to study in the fields of Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction and Services.

Neurological/Speech and Language – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 7 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the Neurological/Speech and Language Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

Neurological/Speech and Language Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category					
3.3% of all SWDs are in Neurological/ Speech and Language Category	**% of Total Students Studying Field**	**% of Total SWD Studying Field**	**Numbers in Neurological/ Speech and Language Studying Field**	**% of Students in Neurological/ Speech and Language Category Studying Field**	**% of SWDs Studying Field in Neurological/ Speech and Language Category**
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	3	0.9%	4.5%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	10	3.1%	3.4%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	70	21.4%	3.0%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	69	21.1%	3.3%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	6	1.8%	2.6%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	40	12.2%	4.1%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	18	5.5%	2.6%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	28	8.6%	2.8%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	10	3.1%	3.6%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	29	8.9%	3.6%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	19	5.8%	4.7%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	20	6.1%	3.8%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	5	1.5%	4.2%
Total			327	100.0%	

Key Points:

o In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Neurological/Speech and Language category are most underrepresented in the fields of Computing and Law.

o In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Neurological/Speech and Language category are most overrepresented in the field of Nursing, Science and Services.

o The institutions who responded to this question reported just 2 students in the Neurological/ Speech and Language category in the fields of Agriculture & Veterinary and Law.

o Students in the Neurological/Speech and Language category are almost one and a half times as likely to study in the field of Nursing as the average student with a disability.

Significant Ongoing Illness – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 8 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the Significant Ongoing Illness Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

Significant Ongoing Illness Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category

10.2% of all SWDs are in Significant Ongoing Illness Category	% of Total Students Studying Field	% of Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers in Significant Ongoing Illness Category Studying Field	% of Students in Significant Ongoing Illness Category Studying Field	% of SWDs Studying Field in Significant Ongoing Illness Category
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	58	5.8%	19.5%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	241	24.0%	10.3%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	203	20.2%	9.7%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	42	4.2%	18.3%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	133	13.2%	13.8%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	40	4.0%	5.7%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	66	6.6%	6.6%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	20	2.0%	7.3%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	113	11.2%	14.0%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	48	4.8%	11.8%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	25	2.5%	4.8%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	17	1.7%	14.3%
Total			1006	100.0%	

Key Points:

o   In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Significant Ongoing Illness category are most underrepresented in the field of Service and Computing.

o   In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Significant Ongoing Illness category are most overrepresented in the fields of Education Science and Law.

o   Students in the Significant Ongoing Illness category are almost twice as likely to study in the fields of Education Science and Law as the average student with a disability.

Physical Disability – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 9 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the Physical Disability Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

Physical Disability Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category

6.2% of all SWDs are in Physical Disability Category	% of Total Students Studying Field	% of Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers in Physical Disability Studying Field	% of Students in Physical Disability Category Studying Field	% of SWDs Studying Field in Physical Disability Category
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	6	1.0%	9.0%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	29	4.7%	9.7%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	174	27.9%	7.4%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	154	24.7%	7.4%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	18	2.9%	7.9%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	55	8.8%	5.7%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	35	5.6%	5.0%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	38	6.1%	3.8%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	13	2.1%	4.7%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	54	8.7%	6.7%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	23	3.7%	5.7%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	16	2.6%	3.1%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	8	1.3%	6.7%
Total			623	100.0%	

Key Points:

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Physical Disability category are most underrepresented in the fields of Services and Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction.

- In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Physical Disability category are most overrepresented in the fields of Education Science and Social Science & Business.

- Students in the Physical Disability category are more than one and a half times as likely to study in the Education Science field as the average student with a disability.

- Students in the Physical Disability category are more than one and three quarter times as likely to study in the field of Humanities & Arts as the average student.

- Students in the Physical Disability category are about half as likely to study in the fields of Services & Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction as the average student or student with a disability.

Specific Learning Difficulty – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 10 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the Specific Learning Difficulty Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

Specific Learning Difficulty Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category

46.9% of all SWDs are in Specific Learning Difficulty Category	% of Total Students Studying Field	% of Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers in Specific Learning Difficulty Category Studying Field	% of Students in Specific Learning Difficulty Category Studying Field	% of SWDs Studying Field in Specific Learning Difficulty Category
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	17	0.4%	25.4%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	144	3.1%	48.3%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	931	20.0%	39.8%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	967	20.7%	46.2%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	85	1.8%	37.1%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	407	8.7%	42.2%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	312	6.7%	44.4%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	641	13.7%	63.8%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	170	3.6%	61.8%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	381	8.2%	47.0%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	218	4.7%	53.7%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	357	7.7%	68.3%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	34	0.7%	28.6%
Total			4664	100.0%	

Key Points:

o In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Specific Learning Difficulty category are most underrepresented in the field of Law.

o In comparison to other students with disabilities, those in the Specific Learning Difficulty category are most overrepresented in the fields of Services, Agriculture & Vetinary and Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction.

o Students in the Specific Learning Difficulty Category are one and a half times as likely to study in the Services category as the average student with a disability.

Other – Fields of Study Breakdown

Table 11 shows the fields of study breakdown for students in the Other Category and compares with the breakdown of total students with disabilities and total student fields of study breakdown

Other Field of Study Breakdown - Highlighted Green/Red are Highest/Lowest % in each category

3% of all SWDs are in Other Category	% of Total Students Studying Field	% of Total SWD Studying Field	Numbers in Other Studying Field	% of Students in Other Category Studying Field	% of SWDs Studying Field in Other Category
Broad Programmes	0.3%	0.7%	13	9.6%	19.4%
Education Science	5.7%	3.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Humanities & Arts	15.8%	23.6%	14	10.3%	0.6%
Social Science & Business	22.6%	21.5%	48	35.3%	2.3%
Law	2.6%	2.3%	1	0.7%	0.4%
Science	10.3%	10.2%	3	2.2%	0.3%
Computing	7.0%	7.3%	12	8.8%	1.7%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	11.2%	10.4%	8	5.9%	0.8%
Agriculture and Vetinary	1.8%	2.7%	8	5.9%	2.9%
Health & Welfare	12.8%	8.0%	14	10.3%	1.7%
Nursing	4.4%	4.0%	2	1.5%	0.5%
Services	5.1%	5.2%	13	9.6%	2.5%
Combined	0.2%	1.2%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Total			136	100.0%	

There is no further breakdown due to the varied nature of the 'Other' category.
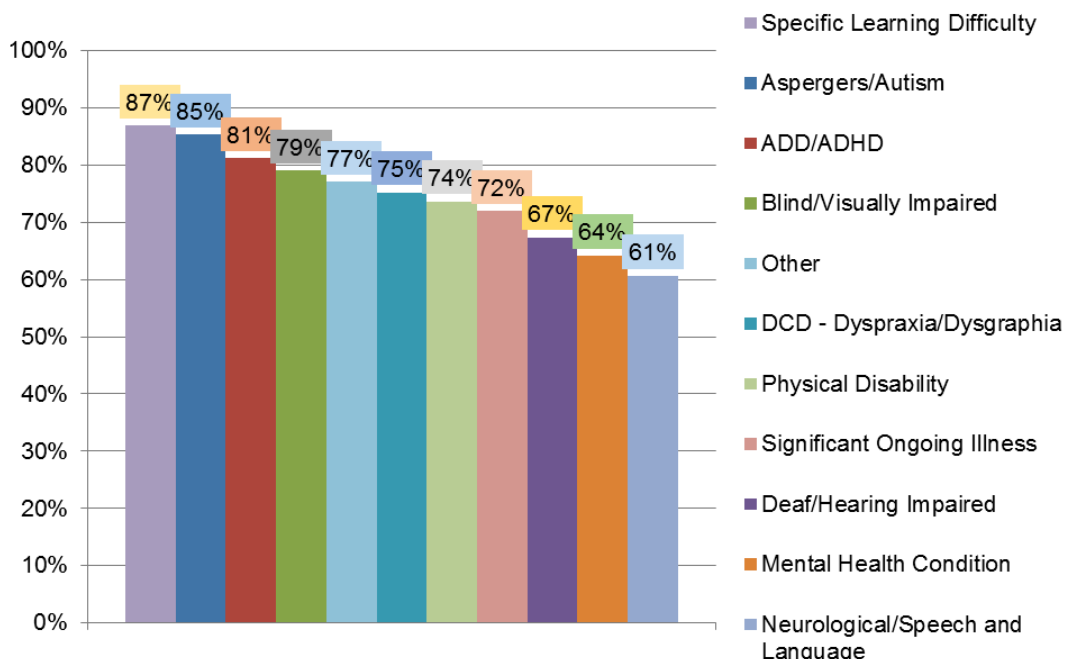
Examination Accommodations

Responding institutions were asked to supply the number of students with disabilities receiving one or more exam accommodations and the type of accommodations provided. 7989 students with disabilities receiving one or more exam accommodations in the academic year 2014/15 were identified in the 26 institutions who responded to this question[10], representing 79% of the disabled student population in these institutions, up from 78% in 2013/14.

Exam Accommodations – Disability Profile

Pro rata, the group most likely to receive an exam accommodation were students with Specific Learning Difficulty, of whom 87% received one or more exam accommodations in the academic year 2014/15. They were followed closely by the Aspergers/Autism group (85%) and the ADD/ADHD group (81%). The groups least likely to be receiving an accommodation were the Neurological/Speech and Language group (61%), those with a Mental Health Condition (64%) and those in the Deaf/Hearing Impaired group (67%).

Figure 6 shows the percentage of students in different disability categories receiving one or more exam accommodations

Exam Accomodations - % of Disability Category that received Accomodations

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[10] NUI Galway could not provide data for any questions relating to exam accommodations.

Exam Accommodation Types

Responding institutions were asked to provide data on the types of exam accommodations received by students with disabilities. The responses identified three major categories of exam accommodations – the provision of extra time, alternative venues provided to undertake exams and other accommodations such as the use of a computer.

Figure 7 shows the numbers of students with disabilities receiving exam accommodations in 2014/15 and the percentage they represent of total students with disabilities
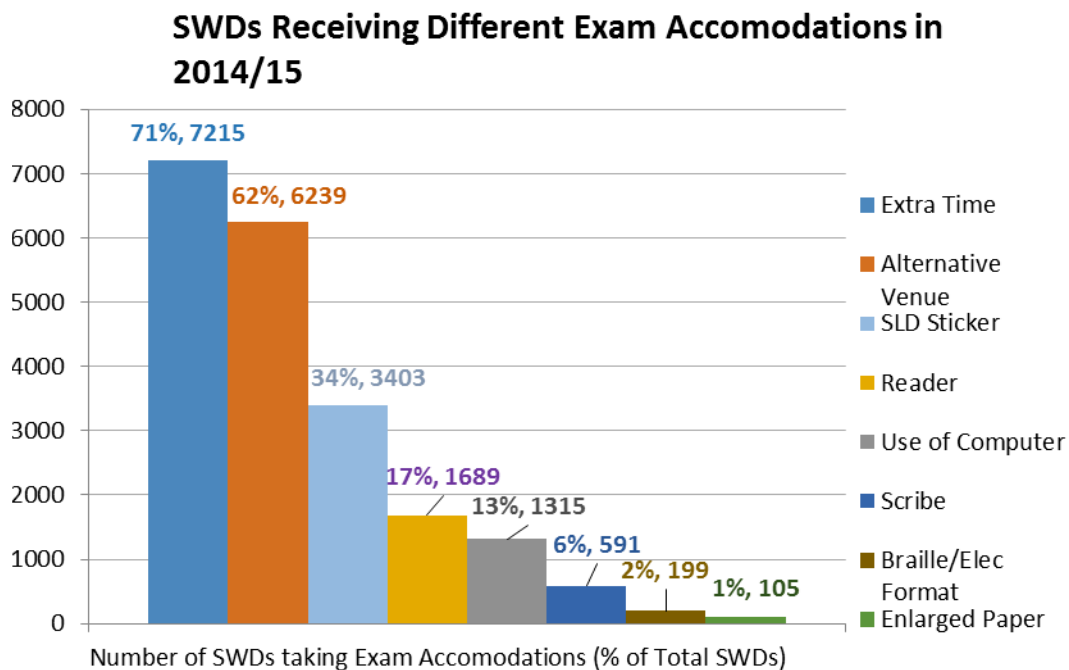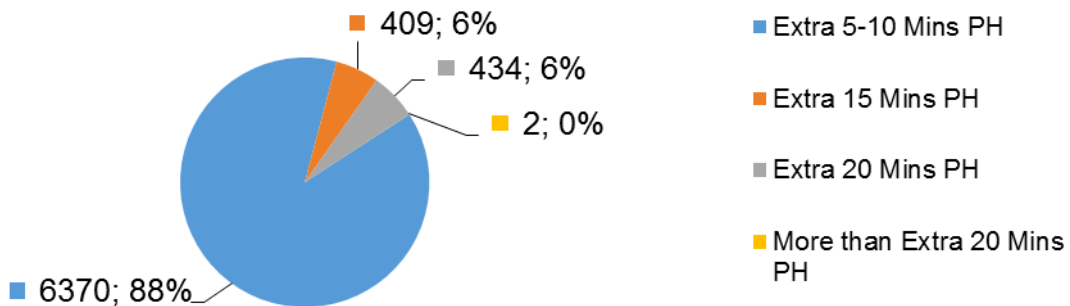

Extra time given to complete an examination proved to be the most popular exam accommodation with 71% (7215) (down from 72%% in 13/14) of all students with disabilities in the responding institutions receiving extra time in examinations in 2014/15, representing 90% of all SWDs that received one or more exam accommodations. 62% (6239) of students with disabilities took their examinations in an alternative venue (up from 60% in 13/14); 34% (3403) had a sticker placed on their exam paper to notify their marker that they had a specific learning difficulty (up from 32% in 13/14); 17% (1689) had a reader to read exam papers aloud to them (down from 20% in 13/14); 13% (1315) had the use of a computer to aid them in writing their answers (down from 17% in 13/14); 6% (591) had a scribe present to aid them in writing their answers (down from 8% in 13/14); 2% (199) had their examination provided in Braille or an electronic format (up from 0.4% in 13/14) and 1% (105) had their paper in an enlarged format (also 1% in 13/14).

Extra Time Breakdown

Of the 7215 students with disabilities who received extra time to complete their examinations, 6370 (88% of those who received extra time) received an extra five to ten minutes per hour; 409 (6% of those who received extra time) received an extra 15 minutes per hour; 434 (6% of those who received extra time) received an extra 20 minutes per hour; and 2 (0% of those who received extra time) received more than an extra 20 minutes per hour.

Figure 8 shows the number of students with disabilities receiving varying amounts of extra time per hour in examinations in 2014/15

Breakdown of SWDs Receiving Extra Time - % as total of those receiving extra time - 2014/15

- 409; 6%
- 434; 6%
- 2; 0%
- 6370; 88%

- ■ Extra 5-10 Mins PH
- ■ Extra 15 Mins PH
- ■ Extra 20 Mins PH
- ■ More than Extra 20 Mins PH

Alternative Venue Breakdown

Of the 6239 students with disabilities who took their examinations in an alternative venue; 3042 (49%) sat their exams in a Large or Low Distraction Venue; 1314 (21%) sat their exam in an individual centre and 1883 (30%) sat their exam in another type of alternative venue.

Figure 9 shows the number of students with disabilities taking their examinations in different types of alternative venue in 2014/15

Breakdown of SWDs taking Exams in Alternative Venues - 2014/15

- 1883, 30%
- 1314, 21%
- 3042, 49%

- ■ Individual Centre
- ■ Large/Low Distraction
- ■ Other

Inside the Service

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. 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.

The responding institutions reported an average of 169 students per disability support staff member with responsibility for students with disabilities (up from 140 in 13/14) and 379 students per learning support staff member (up from 321 in 13/14). If we combine these figures, we get an average of 117 students per staff member (up from 97 in 13/14). In the combined figure, the University sector report an average of 131 students per staff member and the IT sector report an average of 102 students per staff member.

> **Key Point: The number of students with a disability per staff member (disability and learning support staff) has risen 21% year on year. The impact of the continuing increase in the number of students with disabilities (19% increase in the last two years) on related staff must be realised and resourced with a similar increase in staffing levels.**

Dyslexia Screenings

AHEAD also tried to gauge the number of students referred for specific learning difficulty screenings by the responding institutions and the diagnosis rate resulting from these screenings. The responding institutions reported that 492 students were referred for dyslexia screening in 2014/15 (up from 458 in 13/14), of which 253 received a positive diagnosis, representing an overall 51% positive diagnosis rate.

On the Ground

The questionnaire sent to institutions also contained a question designed to gauge the opinion of Disability/Access Staff in the responding institutions on how well their institutions were implementing the best practice principles of Universal Design for Learning with regard to choice of assessment. Each respondent was asked to rate their institutions from 1 (Not well at all) to 5 (Very well) and then given the opportunity to elaborate. The question is transcribed below, along with details of the responses and a representative selection of the comments provided.

Figure 10 shows the percentage breakdown of the answers received
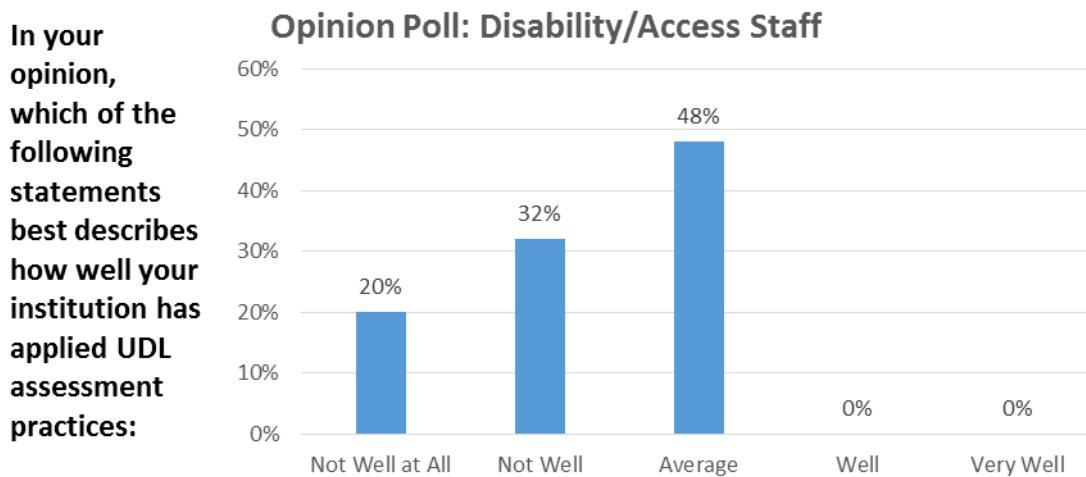
Question: The principles of Universal Design of Assessment suggest that best practice is to offer students a choice of assessment types (e.g. exam vs essay vs presentation) assessing the same outcomes to give different styles of learners equal chance to perform to the best of their ability. In your opinion, which of the following statements best describes how well your institution has applied these practices:

1 - Not well at all: no assessment type options on any courses

2 - Not well: small number of courses offer some assessment options

3 - Average: some courses offer choice of assessment, others don't

4 - Well: most courses allow students to choose an assessment type

5 - Very Well: all courses offer some choice of assessment type

Responses:

20% - Not well at all: no assessment type options on any courses

32% - Not well: small number of courses offer some assessment options

48% - Average: some courses offer choice of assessment, others don't

0% - Well: most courses allow students to choose an assessment type

0% - Very Well: all courses offer some choice of assessment type

Key Point: With regard to choice of assessment, no respondents thought their colleges were implementing the Universal Design for Learning principles 'well' or 'very well' and 20% thought they were implementing them 'not well at all' and were offering 'no assessment options on any courses'.

On the Ground - Respondents Comments:

The following is a sample of representative comments which accompanied answers:

"No alternate options for end of term and end of year exams. More flexibility given for in-class tests/exams."

"There would be a mixture of assessment types on many programmes. For example students may be required to write an essay and the topic of the essay may be assigned or may be chosen by the student. For projects students often choose their topics but the format of the project is set by the discipline. For other disciplines, students have the choice. Across a programme students will have a wide variety of assessment types but may not have a choice of assessment."

"Some courses routinely offer a choice in assessment type, but to my knowledge this is only available to those students who are registered with the Disability Service."

"Usually the choice of assessment type is based on individual cases."

Summary of Key Findings

In order to ascertain the number of students with disabilities in the Irish higher education system for the academic year 2014/15 AHEAD surveyed all HEA funded Higher Education Institutions plus one non HEA funded institution (with a large volume of students and thereby considered too significant to omit). A structured questionnaire was sent out and responses were received from 27 institutions. Following data collation and analysis, the following represent the most salient findings emerging from the research process concerning students with disabilities in higher education for the academic year 2014/2015:

o 27 HEI's in Ireland identified a total of **10,773** students with disabilities representing **5.1%** of the total student population. This represents an **11% rise** in the numbers year on year and for the first time since records began, students with disabilities have broken the 5% barrier as a proportion of the total student population.

o **3,016** of these were new entrants, representing 31% of the disabled undergraduate student population. **2,157** of these were final year undergraduates, representing 23% of the disabled student population.

o The number of students with a disability per staff member (disability and learning support staff) has risen **21%** year on year to an average of 117 students per staff member. The data suggests that the continuing rise in the numbers of students with disabilities in higher education (**19%** increase in the last two years) is not being met with a similar increase in staffing levels across the sector.

o When compared with the general student population, a significantly lower proportion of students with disabilities study in the fields of 'Health & Welfare' and 'Education Science'. Interestingly a significantly higher percentage of students with disabilities are studying in the fields of 'Humanities & Arts' in comparison to their non-disabled peers.

o The participation rate of Students with Disabilities in full time courses (**5.9%)** is almost 5 times the participation rate in part time courses (**1.3%**).

o In terms of disability profile, the vast majority of students with disabilities have a specific learning difficulty (**46.9%**). However, this cohort has reduced as a percentage of total students with disabilities for the 4th year in a row, falling on average 3.4 percentage points every year for the last four academic years, since it peaked at 60.5% in 2010/11.

o While the total numbers of students with disabilities has risen **11%** year on year, the number of students in the Blind/Visually Impaired category actually fell by **2%** to **228**. They now make up just **2.1%** of students with disabilities (down from **2.4%** last year). Last year's Participation Rates Survey reported an increase of new entrants in this category generating positive signs of a change to an upward swing in participation rates for Blind/Visually impaired students. However, given that this survey latest findings show a drop in **16%** in blind/visually impaired new entrants to just **54** students, it undermines any previous indicators of a steady upward trend.

o Responding institutions reported a **20%** increase in the number of Deaf/Hearing Impaired new entrants in 2014/15 as compared to the previous academic year. Last year's Participation Rates Report identified a decrease in the number of new entrants in this category. Given that this survey latest findings show an increase in new entrants, it is taken as a positive indicator to an upward swing in participation for Deaf/Hearing Impaired. Whether this constitutes an indicator of a steady upward trend is uncertain at this stage.

o **79%** of the disabled student population received an examination accommodation in the academic year 2014/15. Extra time was by far the most common support provided with 71% of students with disabilities receiving extra time in their examinations in 2014/15.

o With regard to choice of assessment, no respondents thought their colleges were implementing the Universal Design for Learning principles 'well' or 'very well' and **20%** thought they were implementing them 'not well at all' and were offering 'no assessment options on any courses'.

o **847** students with disabilities registered with 2 or more disabilities, representing **8.9%** of students with disabilities in institutions which provided data on this matter (up from 8% last year). **10%** of students with disabilities in the IoT/Other sector have 2 or more disabilities in comparison to **6%** of those in the University sector.

o Almost **7%** of students with disabilities registered with disability support services after their first year of study in the responding institutions.

Recommendations

1. Given the continuing upward trend in the number of students with disabilities in higher education year on year, it is no longer sustainable to expect disability support services to cater for the growing diversity in the student population given their limited resources. What is now needed is a commitment to a cross campus, whole system approach to managing expectations and educational outcomes if we are to ensure that students with disabilities can participate in all aspects of college life. If graduates with disabilities are to make the most of their educational opportunities and make the transition to higher studies and into the competitive world of work, they require full access to careers advice, co-operative teaching, study abroad opportunities, work placements and internships.

2. A focus on 'inclusion in' education of students/graduates with disabilities requires the building of a learning environment that embeds flexibility and equality into learning and assessment practices in higher education. AHEAD believes that the model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) will help pave the way in including all students while supporting the agencies, staff and service providers working at the coalface.   AHEAD promotes the adoption of the model of UDL and is committed to the establishing of a resource for UDL through the development of and engagement with national and international partnerships to share knowledge and mutual learning in higher education.

3. Due to the nature of impact of disability many students with disabilities can only engage with higher education on a part time basis. However, accessing this route is problematic because part time studies are ineligible for additional funding for educational supports, thus creating barriers for this cohort of students. The report recommends that the Higher Education Authority extends access to funding for educational supports for students with disabilities studying part time courses.

4. Since AHEAD commenced researching the participation rates of students with disabilities in higher education, annual findings are showing a reoccurring pattern of students with disabilities being concentrated in particular fields of studies. While we recognize that the decision making process in selecting a 'field of study' is most likely influenced by a number of factors, we need to ensure that students are informed about upcoming employment growth areas as highlighted by the Solas publication Occupational Employment Projections 2020. AHEAD recommends that dedicated supports be provided for career guidance counsellors at second level to equip them with the knowledge and resources to advise students with disabilities when planning their further education and career paths.

5. The data suggests that the progression rate of students with disabilities to post graduate studies continues to be low in comparison to their non-disabled peers. While non registration with disability support services at this level may partly explain this outcome it is recommended that the Higher Education Authority consider focusing on this issue to determine why this is so and what can be done to encourage and improve access to post graduate studies for students/graduates with disabilities.

6. This report highlights a reliance on the provision of additional time and alternative locations for students with disabilities in examinations as a means to combat the impact of a student's disability on their performance. Higher education institutions should consider embracing a broader suite of valid assessment instruments and incorporate assessment as an indicator within the periodic review of programmes.

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Appendix

Table 12 shows which subjects are contained within each Field of Study. This breakdown is taken from the student statistics found on the Higher Education Authority website and modified to allow a greater insight into the numbers studying in key areas such as Law and Nursing - www.hea.ie.

Field of Study
General Programmes
(010) Basic / broad general programmes
(080) Literacy and numeracy
(090) Personal skills
Education
(140) Teacher training and education science (Broad programmes)
(142) Education science
(143) Training for pre-school teachers
(144) Training for teachers at basic levels
(145) Training for teachers with subject specialisation
(146) Training for teachers of vocational subjects
Humanities and Arts
(200) Combined Arts & Humanities
(210) Combined Arts
(211) Fine arts
(212) Music and performing arts
(213) Audio0visual techniques and media production
(214) Design
(215) Craft skills
(220) Combined Humanities
(221) Religion
(222) Foreign languages
(223) Mother tongue
(225) History and archaeology
(226) Philosophy and ethics
Social Science, Business and Law
(300) Combined Social Science, Business and Law
(310) Combined Social and behavioural science
(311) Psychology
(312) Sociology and cultural studies
(313) Political Science and civics
(314) Economics
(320) Combined Journalism and Information
(321) Journalism and reporting

(322)Library, information, archive
(340) Combined Business and Administration
(341) Wholesale and retail sales
(342) Marketing and advertising
(343) Finance, banking, insurance
(344) Accounting and taxation
(345) Management and administration
(346) Secretarial and office work
(347) Working life
Law
Science
(400) Combined Science, Mathematics and Computing
(420) Combined Life Science
(421) Biology and biochemistry
(422) Environmental Science
(440) Combined Physical Science
(441) Physics
(442) Chemistry
(443) Earth Science
(460) Combined Maths and Statistics
(461) Mathematics
(462) Statistics
Computing
(481) Computer Science
(482) Computer Use
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction
(500) Combined Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction
(520) Combined Engineering & Engineering Trades
(521) Mechanics and metal work
(522) Electricity and energy
(523) Electronics and automation
(524) Chemical and process
(525) Motor vehicles, ships and aircraft
(540) Combined Manufacturing and Processing
(541) Food processing
(542) Textiles, clothes, footwear, leather
(543) Materials (wood, paper, plastic, glass)
(544) Mining and extraction
(580) Combined Architecture and building
(581) Architecture and town planning
(582) Building and civil engineering
Agriculture and Veterinary
(600) Combined Agriculture & Veterinary

(620) Combined Agriculture, forestry and fishery
(621) Crop and livestock production
(622) Horticulture
(623) Forestry
(624) Fisheries
(641) Veterinary
Health and Welfare
(700) Combined Health and Welfare
(720) Combined Health
(721) Medicine
(724) Dental Studies
(725) Medical diagnostic and treatment technology
(726) Therapy and Rehabilitation
(727) Pharmacy
(760) Combined Social Services
(761) Child Care and youth services
(762) Social work and counselling
Nursing
Services
(800) Combined Services
(810) Combined Personal Services
(811) Hotel, restaurant and catering
(812) Travel, tourism and leisure
(813) Sports
(814) Domestic services
(815) Hair and beauty services
(840) Transport services
(850) Combined Environmental Protection
(851) Environmental protection technology
(852) Natural environments and wildlife
(853) Community sanitation services
(860) Combined Security Services
(861) Protection of persons and property
(862) Occupational health and safety
(863) Military and defence
Combined
(900) Balanced Combination across difference Fields of Education
(910) Balanced Combination of 'Humanities/Arts' and 'Social Sciences Business/Law'

Table 13 shows the numbers of students with disabilities registered with the disability/access service in each responding institutions

Institution	Total Students with Disabilities	SWDs as % of Total Student Population
UCD	1048	3.92%
UCC	1104	6.1%
NUIG	675	4.3%
TCD	1313	7.7%
MU	539	5.1%
DCU	560	4.9%
SPD	30	1.1%
UL	607	5.0%
MIC	74	2.3%
MDIE	25	4.4%
NCAD	101	8.6%
RCSI	33	0.9%
St Angela's	39	2.7%
AIT	289	5.4%
CIT	625	6.8%
DIT	966	5.4%
DLIADT	228	10.2%
DKIT	212	4.3%
ITB	234	6.5%
ITC	264	4.1%
ITS	268	4.7%
ITT	150	2.7%
ITTRA	285	9.3%
LYIT	195	5.4%
LIT	412	7.8%
NCI	169	4.1%
WIT	328	4.0%
University Total	**6148**	4.9%
Other Total	**4625**	5.4%
Overall total	**10773**	**5.1%**

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