Participation of and services for students with disabilities in Institutes of Technology 2004-2005
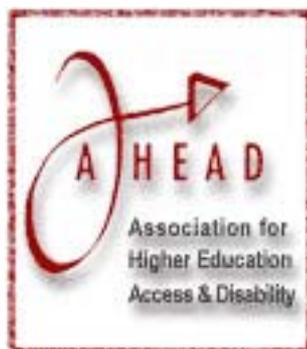
Research
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Background

The achievement of equity of access to education is a priority for the Irish education system, for Irish society and for economic development (HEA, 2005). Adequate resources and financial support for students, educational institutions, and communities are central to achieving this goal. In recognition of this the HEA established an Action Group on access to third level in 2001. This group made recommendations to the Minister for Education and Science regarding the arrangements to put in place to ensure the most effective provision of services for students with disabilities. While many of their recommendations have been implemented, the Action Group's endorsement of the vital role of Disability Officers in co-ordinating services within institutions and in implementing policy and practice in the area of disability has not been acted on. Their recommendation, no. 42, *"The Action Group recommends that each University and Institute of Technology have a minimum of one full time permanent post of Disability Officer"* has not been implemented throughout the Institutes of Technology.

The recently established National Access Office are currently reviewing the funding model underlying the allocation of funding to higher education institutions in Ireland, and is working on the implementation of its action Plan to achieve equity of access to higher education. It is intended to submit this research for their consideration as part of this review.

Irish law, including the Equal Status Act 2000 and The Employment Equality Act 1998, takes cognisance of the fact that disability is socially constructed, and places an onus on education establishments to provide accommodations for students with disabilities and not to discriminate against them. The Equal Status Act prohibits all educational establishments from discriminating on the basis of any of the discriminatory grounds in the legislation, including disability. Educational establishments are prohibited from directly or indirectly discriminating in relation to: admission, the terms or conditions of admission, access to any course, access to any facility or benefit provided, or any term or condition of participation in the establishment, expulsion of a student or any other sanction against a student (AHEAD, 2000). The legislation states that an educational establishment will discriminate against a student with disability if they do not do all that is reasonable to accommodate that student. Such accommodation can be by means of providing special treatment or facilities if, without such facilities it would be impossible or unduly difficult for the person to avail of the service provided by the educational institution (AHEAD, 2000).

To date institutes of technology have been disadvantaged relative to the university sector in respect of access funding. Whereas on average universities have between ¤500,000 and €1m of ring fenced funding available for access initiatives, institutes of technology have an average of approximately €50, 000 available (HEA, 2005). Universities have been able to develop a significant infrastructure and access/disability services to widen access whereas institutes of technology have only been able to afford the employment costs of one access officer. Typically disability services in Universities include a Disability Officer, a Learning Support Officer, an Assistive Technologist, a Psychologist, an Administrator and an Assistive Technology room. This relative disadvantage, at least in part, accounts for the greater success of universities in attracting students from under-represented groups. The proportionate numbers of students with a disability attending institutes of technology are far lower than the universities (HEA, 2005).

The Fund for Students with a Disability, a component of the European Social Fund (ESF), is the main source of special funding for students with a disability and has made the critical difference to many students in progressing through their third level course. This fund has been criticised on several grounds, including the following: it operates on the (erroneous) assumption that staff are

in place in all educational institutions with the expertise to conduct an assessment of need for students with disabilities, it is unduly bureaucratic and demanding on all engaged in its administration, it is also inflexible as the application-decision process must be repeated if the needs of individual students change (HEA, 2005). However the main problem is that the fund was never designed to be the sole means of providing services for students with disabilities, it was intended to complement core services by providing individual supports to students with greater support needs. There is a cost involved in supporting student with disabilities and it is unrealistic to expect colleges to build services for disabled students without additional funding.

Currently there is no adequate system in place for carrying out diagnostic assessments for students with specific learning difficulties, nor a system for carrying out an assessment of the support needs of students with disabilities throughout Ireland. Attention has been drawn to good practice in the United Kingdom where 30 regionally based 'access centres' provide assessment and support for disabled people in further and higher education, and employment. It has been proposed that five similar centres could be established in Ireland and that they could be part of a statutory entitlement-based scheme. Such schemes are already available in the UK, Canada and other countries (HEA, 2005).

Several actions are recommended in the Action Plan 2005-2007 (HEA, 2004). These include evaluating access programmes for under-represented groups. This study of access systems for students with disabilities is part of this evaluation process.

Study method

This report is based on the findings of a questionnaire survey and a focus group discussion. In April 2005 questionnaires were sent to the officers responsible for students with disabilities in 15 institutes of technology and replies were received from 14. The focus group discussion took place in the offices of AHEAD on 3rd May; 4 access officers and 2 disability officers were present. The questionnaire had sections covering such issues as participation rates, policy and staffing issues, student services and priorities for improving services and increasing participation rates.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows: section two, participation of students with disabilities in institutes of technology; section three: policies on students with disabilities; section four, services for students with disabilities; section five, priorities for service improvement and for increasing the participation of students with disabilities in institutes; and finally, section six, conclusions and recommendations.

In 2004-05 there were 1,366 undergraduates with disabilities attending the 14 institutes listed in table 1. These students accounted for 2.76% of all full-time undergraduates. The proportions of students with disabilities attending the institutes ranged from 0.52% (Cork) to 5.5% (Tralee); more than 2.76% (the average) of students in six institutes had disabilities. Only one institute, DIT, had more than 300 students with disabilities in attendance, four institutes had in excess of 100 while five had less than 40.

The numbers, in Table 1, refer to those full-time students only who are registered as having a disability. The correct number could be considerably greater as anecdotally as many as 40% of

Table 1 Number of full time undergraduates with disabilities in institutes 2004/05			
Institutes[1]	Number of full-time undergraduates with a disability	Number of full-time undergraduates	% of full-time undergraduates with a disability
Blanchardstown	37	1,200	3.08
Carlow	35	2,700	1.30
Cork	32	6,200	0.52
Dublin	301	9,000	3.34
Dundalk	45	3,190	1.41
Dun Laoghaire	65	1,450	4.48
Galway-Mayo	126	4,600	2.74
Letterkenny	99	2,013	4.92
Limerick	193	3,627	5.32
Sligo	87	3,500	2.49
Tallaght	30	2,550	1.18
Tipperary	24	403	5.96
Tralee	144	2,616	5.50
Waterford	148	6,500	2.28
Total	1,366	49,549	2.76

students with disabilities in Ireland and the UK do not disclose their disability at the start of the academic year, but come forward throughout the year.

The nature of disability

Most students with disabilities (68.8%) have specific learning disabilities; 8.2% have a mental health disability, 8% have a physical or mobility disability, 4.9% have a hearing impairment or

[1] All of the above Institutes, with the exceptions of Dun Laoghaire and Tipperary, are Institutes of Technology. Dun Laoghaire is an Institute of Art, Design and Technology. They will all be referred to as "institutes" in this document.

deafness, 2.3% have vision impairment and 7.8% have some other disability. The proportion with specific learning difficulties ranges from 44.4% (Tralee) to 92.3% (Dun Laoghaire); however, it is in excess of 68.8% (the average) in 8 of the 14 institutes. The proportion with physical or mobility disability ranges from 2.2% (Dundalk) to 16.7% (Tipperary); it is in excess of 8% in 6 of the institutes. The proportion with mental health problems ranges from 0 in 3 institutes (Blanchardstown, Dundalk and Tallaght) to 31.6% in Limerick; it is in excess of 8.2% in only two institutes – the average being skewed by the high proportion in Limerick. The proportion with hearing impairment or deafness ranges from 1.5% (Dun Laoghaire) to 8.8% (Waterford); it is in excess of 4.9% in 7 of the institutes. The proportion with vision impairment ranges from 0 (Dun Laoghaire) to 6.7% (Dundalk); it is in excess of 2.2% in 8 of the institutes (see Table 2).

Five per cent of the population have a specific learning disability according to the Singleton Report in the UK (1999). This implies that as the understanding of and supports for students with specific learning difficulties improves in primary and secondary education, the rate of participation of those students will increase significantly over the next five years.

The participation of students with sensory disabilities remains very low. Targeted initiatives are required to improve the transition of these students from second level.

Table 2 Distribution of full-time undergraduates with disabilities across disabilities[2]							
Institutes	Total number of full-time under-graduates with a disability	% with specific learning disability	% with physical or mobility disability	% with hearing impairment or deafness	% with vision impairment	% with mental health disability	% with other disability
Blanchardstown	37	67.6	16.2	8.1	2.7	0	5.4
Carlow	35	71.4	5.7	8.6	2.9	11.4	0
Cork	32	78.1	9.4	6.2	3.1	3.1	0
Dublin	301	79.1	7.3	4.3	1.7	4.3	3.3
Dundalk	45	82.2	2.2	4.4	6.7	0	4.4
Dun Laoghaire	65	92.3	4.6	1.5	0	1.5	0
Galway-Mayo	126	80.2	4.0	4.0	1.6	2.4	7.9
Letterkenny	99	80.8	6.1	5.0	1.0	3.0	4.0
Limerick	193	56.5	8.8	1.6	1.6	31.6[3]	0
Sligo	87	63.2	10.3	3.4	5.7	6.9	10.3
Tallaght	30	73.3	13.3	3.3	3.3	0	6.7
Tipperary	24	50.0	16.7	8.3	4.2	4.2	16.7
Tralee	144	44.4	6.9	7.6	3.5	6.2	31.3
Waterford	148	58.8	11.5	8.8	2.0	6.8	12.2
Total	**1,366**	**68.8**	**8.0**	**4.9**	**2.3**	**8.2**	**7.8**

[2] The numbers on which the percentages included in Table 2 are based are included in appendix Table 2.

[3] Typically students with mental health issues disclose their condition to the college counsellor, the high percentage in Limerick results from the inclusion of those students registered with the counsellor as having a mental health issue.

Table 3
The participation rates of undergraduates with disabilities in institutes of technology for the academic years 1993/94, 1998/99, 2003/04, 2004/05.

Institute	1993/94		1998/99		2003/04		2004/05	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Athlone	14	0.59	24	0.90	63	1.82	n/a	n/a
Blanchardstown	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	30	2.96	37	3.08
Carlow	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	0.65	35	1.30
Cork	2	0.05	13	0.30	39	0.65	32	0.52
Dublin	27	n/a	66	0.70	246	2.51	301	3.34
Dundalk	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	46	1.49	45	1.41
Dun Laoghaire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	48	3.58	65	4.48
Galway-Mayo	10	0.30	21	0.50	97	1.96	126	2.74
Letterkenny	5	0.32	54	3.20	92	4.54	99	4.92
Limerick	5	0.21	283	9.80	70	1.94	193	5.32
Sligo	2	0.10	10	0.40	79	2.39	87	2.49
Tallaght	13	1.09	n/a	n/a	31	1.26	30	1.18
Tipperary	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	29	7.51	24	5.96
Tralee	6	0.32	54	3.20	87	3.60	144	5.50
Waterford	34	0.93	19	0.40	115	1.95	148	2.28
Total*	**118**	**0.53**	**544**	**1.59**	**1,088**	**2.08**	**1,366**	**2.76**

*Please note: to ensure that the percentages for the totals are correct records without a value for both the total number of undergraduates and the number of undergraduates with a disability are not included in the total.

Changes in the participation rates of students with disabilities

The participation rate of students with disabilities in the institutes increased from 0.53% to 2.76% in the period 1993/94 to 2004/05,[4] a factor of 5.2. The rate of increase in the participation rate has however been uneven over the period. In the period 1993/94 to 1998/99 the participation rate trebled, from 0.53% to 1.59%, an average annual increase of 24.6%. In the period 1998/99 to 2003/04 the participation rate increased by 30.82%, from 1.59% to 2.08%, an average annual increase of only 5.5%. However, over the year 2003/04 to 2004/05 the rate increased from 2.08% to 2.76%, an annual increase of 32.7% (see Table 3).

The participation rates have increased significantly over the years and have exceeded the MacNamara target of 1.8%; however, they are still under-representative by international standards. Institutes of Higher education in the UK have participation rates of 4-7%, Canada has a participation rate of 9% while Holland has a rate of 12%. This upward trend in participation in the institutes will continue as the NAO programme for broadening access is implemented.

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[4] These rates are not strictly comparable as the institutes contributing to the totals are not the same for each period.

In 2003/04 there were 1,617 full-time undergraduates with disabilities registered in the universities; this represented a participation rate of 2.76%, the same as the institutes' rate in 2004/05. The participation rates of the universities were considerably higher than those of the institutes in 2003/4, 2.76% compared with 2.08%. However, in 1998/99 the universities' participation rates were lower than the institutes, 0.88% compared with 1.59%. In 1993/94 the rates of both groups were very similar, 0.53% for the institutes compared with 0.55% for the universities[5] (AHEAD, 2004).

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[5] Again these rates, for either the universities or the institutes, are not strictly comparable as the colleges contributing to them are not identical for each period.

Definition of disability and equal opportunities policies

Ten of the 14 institutes have an agreed definition of disability. Five of these refer to the Equal Status Act, 2 refer to AHEAD/HEA Guidelines, and three (Dublin, Letterkenny and Waterford) refer to some other definition or source. Two have no definition of a disability and two did not state their definition (see Table 4).

Ten institutes have an equal opportunities policy; 4 have not, but 1 of the latter, Tallaght, has a policy on students with disabilities. Four of the equal opportunities policies specifically refer to students with disabilities (Cork, Dundalk, Tralee (draft) and Waterford). The other six do not, but one of these, DIT, has a student's charter that specifically refers to students with disabilities.

Table 4 Definitions of disability used by institutes	
Institutes	**Definition of disability**
Blanchardstown	No definition adopted.
Carlow	Not stated
Cork	Not stated
Dublin	" 'Disability includes students who are blind or have a visual disability, those who are deaf or hard of hearing, those with communications difficulties, with a physical disability, mental health difficulties, and hidden disabilities, including dyslexia, epilepsy, ME, etc."
Dundalk	Equal Status Act
Dun Laoghaire	AHEAD/HEA Guidelines
Galway-Mayo	No set definition
Letterkenny	"Any learner who has an impairment or is impaired by our learning environment from achieving to their full potential."
Limerick	AHEAD/HEA Guidelines (1993)
Sligo	Equal Status Act
Tallaght	Equal Status Act
Tipperary	Equal Status Act
Tralee	Equal Status Act
Waterford	Defined in policy handbook. Source: Code of practice for the employment of people with disabilities in the Civil Service.

The Equal Status Act uses the following definition, found to be an effective mechanism for validating a person's application for accommodations and supports:

"disability means"

a. the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body,

b. the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,

c. the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body,

d. condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or

e. a condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour."

Planning for students with disability and their accommodation by academic staff

Only 4 respondents indicated that full consideration is given to students with disability in the future planning of their institutes; 3 estimated that the degree to which they were considered was 75%. One indicated that the level of such consideration was 50% but 6 estimated that it was 25% only (see Table 5).

Table 5 Degree to which students with disability are considered in the future planning for the institute				
Fully 100%	75%	50%	25%	Not at all 0%
4	3	1	6	

Five respondents indicated that academic staff fully accepted responsibility for accommodating the learning needs of students with disabilities. One estimated that the degree to which academic staff did this was 75%. Four estimated that the degree to which responsibility was accepted was 50% and 2 estimated it was 25% only. Two respondents indicated that acceptance of such responsibility varied (see Table 6).

Table 6 Extent to which academic staff accept responsibility for accommodating students with disabilities					
Fully 100%	75%	50%	25%	Not at all 0%	Varies
5	1	4	2		2

Responsibilities of Access/Disability Officers

Respondents are responsible for students with disabilities; 11 of them are Access Officers.[6] The other 3 are Student Services Officer (Cork), Disability Liaison Officer (Dublin) and Disability Officer/Co-ordinator (Waterford). All Access Officers, in addition to their responsibilities for students with disabilities, are responsible for mature students and students from broader economic backgrounds. In addition, 5 of them are responsible for other student services and 6 of them have other responsibilities. In contrast, the Disability Liaison Officer (DIT) and the Disability Officer/Co-ordinator (WIT) focus only on students with disabilities (see Table 7).

Table 7 Primary functions of respondents and their other responsibilities						
Institutes	Primary function[7]	Students with disabilities	Mature students	Students from broader economic backgrounds	Other student services	Other
Blanchardstown	AO and SSO					
Carlow	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Cork	SSO	Yes			Yes (with AO)	
Dublin	DLO	Yes				
Dundalk	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dun Laoghaire	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Galway-Mayo	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Letterkenny	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Limerick	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Sligo	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Tallaght	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tipperary	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tralee	AO	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Waterford	DO/C	Yes	No	No	No	No

Reflecting their wide range of responsibilities only 3 respondents indicated that 80% or more of their working time is given to supporting students with disabilities. Three others give 50%, while the majority (8) give 40% or less or their time to students with disabilities. Two of the latter give 20% or less of their time (see Table 8). Several respondents noted there was considerable seasonal variation in the time allocated.

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[6] In the institute of Technology, Blanchardstown, the Access Officer is responsible for potential students and Schools Programmes. The Student Support officer administers all services for registered students.

[7] AO = Access Officer; SSO = Student Services Officer; DLO = Disability Liaison Officer; DO/C = Disability Officer/Co-ordinator.

Table 8 Proportion of time at work given to supporting students with disabilities						
20% or less	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80% or more
2[8]	2	4	2		1	3

Disability support personnel

Only 3 institutes employ a disability officer, one of which is employed on a part time basis. Six institutes employ at least one full-time learning support tutor; DIT employs 4. In addition 4 institutes employ a part-time learning support tutor. Only 2 institutes employ at least 1 full-time assistive technology officer, DIT employ 2; 3 institutes employ a part-time assistive technology officer (see Table 9).

Table 9 Whether Institute employs (full time or part time) a disability officer, learning support tutor, or assistive technology tutor			
Institutes	Disability officer	Learning support tutor	Assistive technology officer
Blanchardstown	No	Yes (By BUA centre)	Yes (by AT centre in library)
Carlow	No	No	No
Cork	No	Yes (part-time)	n/a
Dublin	Yes	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Dundalk	No	No	No
Dun Laoghaire	No	Yes (part-time)	Yes (part-time)
Galway-Mayo	Yes (part-time)	Yes	No
Letterkenny	No	Yes	No
Limerick	No	Yes (part-time)	Yes (part-time)
Sligo	No	Yes	No
Tallaght	No	No	No
Tipperary	No	Yes (part-time)	No
Tralee	No	No	No
Waterford	Yes	Yes (ESF)	Yes (part-time, ESF)
Total (of institutes)	2 Yes 1 Yes (part-time) 11 No	6 Yes 4 Yes (part-time) 4 No	2 Yes 3 Yes (part-time) 8 No 1 No answer

[8] The Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology respondent noted it was impossible to give more time. One respondent in this category is the Student Services Officer (Cork Institute of Technology).

Disability awareness training

Eleven institutes provide disability awareness training for their staff[9]; 2 do not, and in 1 case the question was not answered. Ten of the 11 providing the training make it available to all staff; 1 gave no answer. Eight of the 11 offer the training to new teaching staff; 2 do not and 1 gave no answer. The training is voluntary in 10 of the 11 institutes providing it; 1 gave no answer. In 6 institutes internal staff and / or external agencies provide the training; in 4 it is provided by external agencies only and in 1 it is provided by internal staff only.

Retention Rates

Thirteen institutes record the number of full-time undergraduates who leave before the end of their course; in 1 case no answer was given. Eight record the number of students with disabilities who leave before the end of their course; 6 do not. In one reply it was indicated that annually 1 or 2 such students either take some time out or move to a college nearer home. This is usually due to an exacerbation of their disability.

9 One who responded positively to this question pointed out that training was last provided in the year 2000.

Assessment of learning support needs

Four institutes have allocated additional funding for learning needs assessments of students with disabilities; 10 have not (see Table 10).

Ten institutes carry out learning needs assessments for students with disabilities; 4 do not (see Table 10). Four of these use internal personnel only, 5 use internal and/or external personnel, and 1 uses external personnel only.

Of the ten institutes that carry out assessments, 5 estimated that, on average, assessments required more than 90 minutes; 3 indicated they required from 61 to 90 minutes while 2 indicated that 31 to 60 minutes were required.

Nine institutes screen students who are identified as possibly having specific learning disabilities, 4 do not and 1 provided no answer (see Table 10).

Eight institutes provide students with access to educational psychologists for assessment; 6 do not (see Table 10).

Ten institutes provide a written individual support plan for all students with disabilities; 4 do not (see Table 10).

Table 10 Assessment of learning support needs					
Institutes	Allocated additional funding	Carries out learning needs assessments	Screens students identified with possible learning difficulties	Provides access to educational psychologist	Produces written individual support plan
Blanchardstown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Carlow	No	No	No	No	Yes
Cork	No	No	Yes[10]	Yes	No
Dublin	No[11]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Dundalk	No	No	No	No[12]	Yes
Dun Laoghaire	Yes	Yes[13]	Yes[14]	Yes[15]	Yes
Galway-Mayo	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes
Letterkenny	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Limerick	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Sligo	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Tallaght	No	No	No	No	Yes
Tipperary	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tralee	No	Yes	Yes	No[16]	Yes
Waterford	No	Yes	No	Yes[17]	Yes
Total	Yes 4 No 10	Yes 10 No 4	Yes 9 No 4 No answer 1	Yes 8 No 6	Yes 10 No 4

[10] The Careers Service Officer meets the students and if they consider it necessary an assessment will be arranged.

[11] Assessment of needs is carried out by Learning Support Officers, funded by ESF funding, and by Assistive Technology Officers, funded by core institutional funding.

[12] Institute provides contact names and addresses.

[13] Use LADS.

[14] Use LADS.

[15] Institute covered costs of nine educational psychologists' reports in 04/05 for disadvantaged students to help them to apply for Fund for Students with Disabilities.

[16] In exceptional circumstances the institute will provide educational assessments, limited by lack of resources.

[17] Institute refers student to an external psychologist who has agreed to undertake assessments for an agreed fee and within a reasonable time.

Contact with secondary school students and addressing needs of students in open days and orientation days

Six institutes have systems in place for developing contact with students with disabilities in secondary schools (see Table 11).

Three institutes have specific 'open days' for students with disabilities. Ten respondents indicate that the needs of students with disabilities are addressed in 'open days'. Ten respondents also indicated that the needs of these students are addressed in orientation days (see Table 11).

Institutes	System for contact with students with disabilities in secondary schools	Specific 'open days' for students with disabilities 'open days'	Needs of students with disabilities are addressed in orientation days	Needs of students with disabilities are addressed in
		Table 11 **Contact with secondary school students and addressing needs of students in open days and orientation days**		
Blanchardstown	Y	Y	Y	Y
Carlow	N	N	Y	Y
Cork	N	N	Y	Y
Dublin	N	N	Y	Y
Dundalk	Y	N	Y	Y
Dun Laoghaire	Y	N	Y	N/A
Galway-Mayo	N	N	N	Y
Letterkenny	Y	N	Y	N
Limerick	N	N	Y	Y
Sligo	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tallaght	N	N	N	N
Tipperary	N	N	N	N
Tralee	Y	Y	Y	Y
Waterford	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y
Total	6 Y(es) 7 N(o) 1 N(o) A(nswer)	3 Y(es) 10 N(o) 1 N(o) A(nswer)	10 Y(es) 3 N(o) 1 N(o) A(nswer)	10 Y(es) 3 N(o) 1 N(o) A(nswer)

Course information formats, content of prospectus and application process

Six respondents indicated that course information was available in alternative formats. Virtually all respondents (13) indicated that their institute's prospectus referred directly to support services. Twelve indicated that their application process asks whether applicants have a disability. The same number indicated that the application process inquires about the applicants' previous support needs (see Table 12).

Table 12 Course information formats, content of prospectus and application process				
Institutes	Course information is provided in alternative formats	Institute's prospectus directly refers to support services	Application process asks if students have a disability	Application asks about student's previous support needs
Blanchardstown	Y	Y	Y	Y
Carlow	N	Y	Y	Y
Cork	N	Y	Y	Y
Dublin	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dundalk	Y (if requested)	Y	Y	Y
Dun Laoghaire	N	Y	Y	Y
Galway-Mayo	N	N	Y	Y
Letterkenny	N	Y	Y	Y
Limerick	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sligo	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tallaght	N	Y	CAO	CAO
Tipperary	N	Y	N	N
Tralee	Y	Y	Y	Y
Waterford	N/A	Y	N/A	Y
Total	6 Y(es) 7N(o) 1 N(o) A(ns)	13 Y(es) 1 N(o)	12 Y(es) 1 N(o) 1 N(o) A(ns)	12 Y(es) 1 N(o) 1 N(o) A(ns)

Training in study skills and assistive technology, and the availability of additional learning support and personal assistance

Virtually all respondents indicated that training in study skills and assistive technology is available together with additional learning support and personal assistance when required. Twelve indicated that training in study skills is available; 13, in each case, indicated that training in assistive technology and additional learning support is available, and 12 indicated that a personal assistant service is available (see Table 13).

Table 13 Training in study skills and assistive technology, and the availability of additional learning support and personal assistance				
Institutes ice	Training in study skills (when required)	Training in assistive technology (when required)	Additional learning support/tuition (when required)	Personal assistant serv- (when required)
Blanchardstown	Y	Y	Y	Y
Carlow	N	Y	Y	N
Cork	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dublin	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dundalk	Y	Y	N	Y
Dun Laoghaire	Y	Y	Y	N/A
Galway-Mayo	Y	Y	Y	Y
Letterkenny	Y	Y	Y	Y
Limerick	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sligo	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tallaght	N	N	Y	Y
Tipperary	Y	Y	Y	N
Tralee	Y	Y	Y	Y
Waterford	Y	Y	Y	Y
Total	12 Y(es) 2 N(o)	13 Y(es) 1 N(o)	13 Y(es) 1 N(o)	11 Y(es) 2 N(o) 1 N(o) A(ns)

Addressing students' needs in the lecture/class context

Most respondents indicated that tape recorders, interpreters, note takers and speed text were available to students in the context of lectures/classes when required. The numbers confirming their availability were 12, 10, 12 and 9 respectively (see Table 14).

Institutes	Tape recorder during lectures/classes (when required)	Interpreter during lectures/classes (when required)	Note taker during lectures/classes (when required)	Speed text during lectures/classes (when required)
Blanchardstown[18]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carlow	Y	N	N	N
Cork	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dublin	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dundalk	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dun Laoghaire	Y	Y	Y	Y
Galway-Mayo	Y	Y	Y	N
Letterkenny	Y	Y	Y	Y
Limerick	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sligo	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tallaght	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tipperary	Y	N	Y	N
Tralee	Y	Y	Y	Y
Waterford	N	N/A	Y	Y
Total	12 Y(es) 1 N(o) 1 N(o) A(ns)	10 Y(es) 2 N(o) 2 N(o) A(ns)	12 Y(es) 1 N(o) 1 N(o) A(ns)	10 Y(es) 3 N(o) 1 N(o) A(ns)

Table 14 — heading: **Table 14 / Addressing students' needs in the lecture/class context**

Examination Arrangements

All 14 institutes provide alternative examination facilities across all faculties, additional time and alternative venues for students with disabilities. Eleven provide alternative methods of assessment; 3 do not.

Transport

Two institutes provide taxis and / or private bus for students with disabilities. While 6 provide taxis only, the remaining 6 provide no transport service. One respondent noted that the disability officer buys in the taxi service and the ESF pays for it.

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[18] The respondent noted that the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown, had never been requested to provide the services referred to in the above table.

Accessibility

Six institutes have conducted an access audit. One of the 8 who have not is about to undertake one. All faculty buildings in 5 of the institutes are accessible to students with disabilities. They are not in the other nine (see Table 15).

Institutes	Accessibility
Table 15 **Accessibility**	
Blanchardstown	Fully accessible
Carlow	No lift in two buildings, one of which is temporary.
Cork	Second floors in prefabricated buildings are inaccessible.
Dublin	The respondent pointed out that DIT has 40 different sites and that all of them have not been audited. Although some buildings are wholly, or partly, inaccessible, learners have not had difficulty accessing a course because of this. Solutions were found by providing such measures as temporary ramps or moving the course to another location.
Dundalk	Parts of buildings inaccessible (Whittaker building)
Dun Laoghaire	Sections of quadrangle building are inaccessible. All recent buildings are accessible.
Galway-Mayo	Access office is inaccessible. Prefab classrooms inaccessible.
Letterkenny	Fully accessible.
Limerick	Art college and Fashion College are inaccessible.
Sligo	Fully accessible.
Tallaght	Numerous buildings, especially portacabins, are inaccessible
Tipperary	One modular building is not accessible for wheelchair users – no lift to first floor.
Tralee	Fully accessible
Waterford	Fully accessible

Accommodation

Twelve institutes have no on site accommodation designed for students with disabilities; two have.

Seven institutes arrange local accommodation for students, 7 indicated the institute did not do so but that assistance could be provided informally.

Minister's ESF Fund

In 2004-05 738 applications for funding were made on behalf of 1,366 full-time undergraduate students with disabilities. This corresponds to an application rate of 0.54. Most of these applications (417) were made on behalf of continuing students, the remainder, 321, were made on behalf of new students. Of the latter 244 (76%) were successful. The application rate ranges from the lowest of 0.13 (Dundalk) to the highest of 0.96 (Letterkenny)[19]. The application rates for 9 of the institutes were in excess of the average rate of 0.54. The application rates for 4 institutes (Carlow, Dublin, Letterkenny and Tipperary) were in excess of 0.65. The application rates of 3 institutes (Dundalk, Limerick, and Sligo) were less than 0.35 (see Table 16).

Table 16 Number of full-time undergraduates with a disability and applications to the Minister's ESF Fund 2004-2005					
Institutes	Undergraduates with a disability	Applications on behalf of new students	Successful applications on behalf of new students	Applications on behalf of continuing students	All applications as a proportion of number of undergrad's with a disability
Blanchardstown	37	6	2	17	0.62
Carlow	35	15	13	12	0.77
Cork	32	15	6	3	0.56
Dublin	301	90	85	115	0.68
Dundalk	45	3	3	3	0.13
Dun Laoghaire	65	11[20]	11	22	0.51
Galway-Mayo	126	21	21	24	0.36
Letterkenny	99	44	4[21]	51	0.96
Limerick	193	35	23[22]	25	0.31
Sligo	87	11	10	14	0.29
Tallaght	30	7	7	12	0.63
Tipperary	24	5	4	15	0.83
Tralee	144	25	25	43	0.47
Waterford	148	33	30	61	0.64
Total	1,366	321	244	417	0.54

[19] Applications are not made in some instances because the resources applied for are not available even if the funding is forthcoming.

[20] Four additional applications were made late.

[21] Whereas in previous years Study Scan was accepted as a diagnostic tool, an educational psychologists' report was required to support applications in 2004-05. This accounts for the low rate of success of first-time applications in 2004-05. Currently there is a considerable waiting period for assessments by health board services.

[22] Responses to 11 applications were pending when the survey was undertaken.

The average amount of time required for making applications to the fund on behalf of new students is considerable. Twelve applications indicated that on average more than one hour was required and 2 estimated that between 30 and 60 minutes were needed.

Initiatives taken by institutes to improve services for students with disabilities

Respondents identified 30 initiatives undertaken by their institutes for improving the services for students with disabilities. These initiatives are categorised in Table 17; the details for each institute are presented in Table 18.

Table 17 Initiatives taken for improving services for students with disabilities	
Priority Category	Number
Programme or system development	9
Recruitment of learning support staff	6
Specific learning support initiative	5
Provision of assistive technology - training centre / room	3
Policy development	3
Other support	4
Total	30

Initiatives referred to in the programme or system development category include the introduction of a supplementary entry system and a learning agreement system, the representation of students with disabilities, the communication of ISL messages on information screens and making examination requirements available to all staff members through the Banner system, screening for SPLD, the delegation of responsibility for students with disabilities to the Access Officer from the counsellor, and individualised campus orientation for students with disabilities during the summer months.

The recruitment of learning support staff was identified as an initiative in six institutes; in one a team of two had been appointed.

Five institutes referred to specific learning support initiatives. These included the provision of individual learning documents, the formulation of pre-entry support plans, designing a foundation course for students with epilepsy (in conjunction with Brainwave), the provision of a writing and research skills service and a supported note-taking system.

Three institutes had developed assistive technology centres.

Policy development initiatives included an admissions policy for students with disabilities, an equal access and participation policy, and a policy for students with disabilities.

Other policy initiatives included engagement in a special project on brain injuries (in conjunction with the North Western Health Board), the provision of exam allowances, making an educational psychologist available for assessments and making applications to the NAO on behalf of students.

Table 18 Initiatives taken for improving services for students with disabilities by institute			
Institutes	First	Second	Third
Blanchardstown	Screening for SPLD (and supports)	Assistive Technology Centre	Admission policy for students with disabilities
Carlow	na	na	na
Cork	na	na	na
Dublin	Supplementary entry system	Learning support team (4 full time) working with students on an individual basis.	Dedicated assistive technology team (2 full time) & training room.
Dundalk	Equal Access and Participation Policy	Learning Agreement System	Individualized orientation re campus over summer months
Dun Laoghaire	Writing & Research Skills Service established (1999)	Employed Support Tutor/Dyslexic Tutor and AT tutor	Established assistive technology room
Galway-Mayo	Policy drafted	Delegating responsibilities for students with disabilities to the Access Officer (previously the counsellor was responsible)	Full-time learning support workers for students with dyslexia
Letterkenny	Employed Learning Support Tutor	Special project on brain injuries (NWHB)	Provision of exam allowances
Limerick	Exam requirements available to all staff through Banner	Applications on behalf of students made to NAO	E. P. available for assessments
Sligo	Pre-entry information/ support sessions: including pre-entry support plan	Foundation course for students with epilepsy (run in conjunction with brainwave)	na
Tallaght	na	na	na
Tipperary	Screening of all 1st year students	Appointment of part-time learning support officer	na
Tralee	Individual learning documents	Disability student reps. introduced 2004-05	ISL messages on information screens on campus
Waterford	Group supported re note taking.		

Priorities for service improvement and for increasing the participation of students with disabilities in institutes

Priorities for service improvement

Respondents identified 34 priorities for improving services for students with disabilities in their institutes. (One respondent identified five of these.) These priorities are categorised in Table 19 below; the details for each institute are presented in Table 20.

Table 19 Priorities for service improvement for students with disabilities	
Priority Category	Number
Identification of specific staff requirement	15
Building/space requirement or accessibility issues	5
Funding or resource issues	5
Awareness training/development	4
Developing programmes or systems	3
Policy/other	2
Total	34

The appointment of specific staff was identified as a priority for service improvement in 15 cases. In 11 cases it was specified that a disability officer was required (in two cases on a part-time basis; in one case the issue concerned the nature of contract – the appointment of the disability officer to a permanent post rather than on a contract basis). Two institutes identified the appointment of an assistive technology officer as a priority, and 1 in each case referred to the need for more disability support staff and administrative support for the disability officer.

Three institutes identified the provision of a suitable place for assistive technology, training or resources as a priority; the other 2 referred to accessibility.

Funding or resource issues were identified 5 times as priorities; in 2 cases a very general reference was made to the need for more funding. The other 3 references included the need for funding for educational psychologists, learning support, and resourcing examination accommodation requirements.

Disability awareness training / development was cited as a priority for service improvement by 4 institutes. Three of these indicated the necessity of increasing the awareness of staff and students; 1 referred to the need for more staff participation in awareness training.

One institute made three references to priorities for programmes or systems improvement. These included embedding learning support officers within each of the Institute's faculties, networking assistive technology software across all faculties and sites, and auditing / benchmarking services against best international practice.

Two institutes cited service improvement in the policy area; these included increasing participation rates and the development of the perception that disability issues are an institute-wide responsibility.

Table 20 Priorities for service improvement for students with disabilities by institute			
Institutes	First	Second	Third
Blanchardstown	Disability officer (employment of)	Staff and student awareness	n/a
Carlow	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cork	Disability officer	Additional funds for supports for students with disability	Designated person for assistive technology
Dublin	Embed learning support officers within each faculty[23]	Increase access to assistive technology, planned opening of second assistive technology room & campus-wide networking.	Quality audit and benchmark services against best international practice.
Dundalk	Disability officer	Make buildings fully accessible	View disability issues as an institute–wide responsibility
Dun Laoghaire	Sanction by Dept. for part-time disability officer	n/a	n/a
Galway-Mayo	Full-time disability officer.	Adequate funding	Improved accessibility
Letterkenny	Disability officer	Funding for E. P. assessments	Funding for learning support
Limerick	Disability officer	Increase participation rates	Disability training for staff and students
Sligo	Disability officer	Assistive technology officer	Raising staff awareness of services of Access Office
Tallaght	Disability officer		
Tipperary	Part-time disability officer	Training room/ Assistive technology	n/a
Tralee	Set up disability resource room	Increase staff participation in disability awareness training	Review resources for meeting Exam Accommodations requirements
Waterford	Disability officer on a permanent/pensionable basis instead of a contract basis.	Recruitment of more disability support staff	Administrative support for Disability Officer

[23] Becoming a key resource for learners with disabilities and faculty staff, and moving from being driven by the individual's disability to focusing on the individual's teaching, learning and assessment needs.

Priorities for increasing participation rates of students with disabilities

Respondents identified 29 priorities for increasing the participation of students with disabilities in their institutes. These priorities are categorised in Table 21 below and presented by institute in Table 22.

Table 21 Priorities for increasing the participation of students with disabilities	
Priority Category	**Number**
Identification of specific staff requirement	8
Building/space requirement or accessibility issue	5
Funding or resource issues	4
Training and or awareness development	4
Developing programmes or systems	4
Developing links with or targeting specific groups	4
Total	29

Table 22 Priorities for increasing the participation of students with disabilities by institute			
Institutes	First	Second	Third
Blanchardstown	Closer links with schools & other organisations	Specific disability officer to develop and implement a disability policy	n/a
Carlow	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cork	Disability officer	Funding for supports	n/a
Dublin	Target student groups under represented in HE (deaf or blind) within supplementary entry system	Market DIT as THE place to study for learners with disabiities	Build support systems to support the wider range of students with disabilities, especially in part-time and masters programmes.
Dundalk	Disability officer	Make buildings fully accessible	Work more with local agencies & schools at pre-entry stage.
Dun Laoghaire	na	na	na
Galway-Mayo	Full-time disability officer	Expansion of special case admissions procedures	Staff training
Letterkenny	Disability officer	Increased funding	Retention of students because of greater level of support
Limerick	Step up mentoring programme	Improve support for students with dyslexia	Improve physical accessibility
Sligo	Increasing awareness of supports for pre-entry students	Encourage students to register with the access office by raising awareness of students & staff.	na
Tallaght	na		
Tipperary	Disability officer	AT Training Room	
Tralee	Set up disability resource room	Increase staff participation in disability awareness training	Review resources for meeting Exam Accommodations requirements
Waterford	Physical space to expand disability service	A staff member for assistive technology	Admin. officer for Disability support Service.

These conclusions and recommendations are based on the findings of the survey of 14 institutes and of a focus group meeting of access officers and disability officers in the offices of AHEAD on the 3rd May 2005.

Participation of students with disabilities

In 2004-05 there were 1,366 undergraduates with disabilities attending the 14 institutes responding to the survey; they accounted for 2.76% of all full-time undergraduates. However there is considerable variation in the proportions of students with disabilities attending the institutes; they range from 0.52% to 5.5%. The number of students with disabilities attending any institute is low; only one has more than 300 in attendance while 5 have less than 40.

Most of these students (68.8%) have specific learning disabilities; 8.2% have a mental health disability, 8% have a physical or mobility disability, 4.9% have a hearing impairment or deafness, 2.3% have vision impairment and 7.8% have some other disability. However the proportions of these categories of students vary significantly between the different institutes. For example, the proportion with specific learning difficulties ranges from 44.4% to 92.3%, although it is in excess of 68.8% (the average) in 8 of the 14 institutes. The proportion with physical or mobility disability ranges from 2.2% to 16.7%, and the proportion with mental health problems ranges from 0 (in 3 institutes) to 31.6% in one.

The participation rate of students with disabilities in the institutes has increased substantially over the period 1993/94 to 2004/05, from 0.53% to 2.76%, a factor of 5.2. The rate of increase in the participation rate was uneven over that time. In the period 1998/99 to 2003/04 the participation rate increased annually by 5.5%, less than the average annual increase of 24.6% over the period 1993/94 to 1998/99. However, over the year 2003/04 to 2004/05 the rate increased from 2.08% to 2.76%, an annual increase of 32.7%.

The rate of participation has increased significantly but students with disabilities are still under-represented in higher education, in particular those students with sensory disabilities.

Policies on Students with disability

Most institutes (10 of 14) have an agreed definition of disability. Five of these refer to the Equal Status Act, 2 refer to AHEAD/HEA Guidelines, and 3 refer to some other definition or source. Most of them (10) also have an equal opportunities policy; and another has a policy on students with disabilities. Four of the equal opportunities policies specifically refer to students with disabilities; in addition one institute has a student's charter that specifically refers to students with disabilities.

An affirmative culture for students with disabilities is not yet established in all institutes. Only a minority of respondents (4) indicated that full consideration is given to students with disability in the future planning of their institutes; 6 rated their institutes as 25% only in this respect. Again only a minority of respondents (5) indicated that academic staff fully accepted responsibility for accommodating the learning needs of students with disabilities; 2 rated their institutes as low as 25%. Most institutes provide disability awareness training for all their staff; however participation in it is voluntary and very low. Some focus group participants raised questions about the levels of participation in such training, and how seriously it was taken. They highlighted the effectiveness of disability equality training in challenging the assumptions, myths and fears surrounding disability and in informing academic staff about the practical strategies they can use to include students

with disabilities in their courses.

The absence of a personnel framework for dealing with students with disabilities is a reflection of the lack of an affirmative culture and is part of the explanation for this lack. Most of the officers responsible for providing services to students with disabilities are access officers (11 of 14); there are full-time disability officers in 2 institutes only. All access officers, in addition to their responsibilities for students with disabilities, are responsible for mature students and students from broader economic backgrounds. In addition, some of them are responsible for other student services and other matters. Reflecting their wide range of responsibilities, the majority of access officers give 40% or less or their time to students with disabilities. The availability of other essential support staff is also unsatisfactory. Only 6 institutes employ at least one full-time learning support tutor; in addition 4 institutes employ one on a part-time basis. Only 2 institutes employ at least one full-time assistive technology officer, another 3 employ 1 part-time. Respondents were very aware of the need for more staff; 16 of 35 priorities identified for improving services for students with disabilities referred to staff. All respondents in institutes without disability officers referred to the need for one, whether full-time or part-time. Eight of 29 priorities for increasing the participation of students with disabilities also referred to the need for appropriate staff.

The role of disability officer is to market courses to potential students with a disability, to implement policy and practice, to negotiate alternative examination arrangements and to inform college staff across faculties of the support needs of students with disabilities. They have a key role to play in auditing and identifying cultural changes required for the inclusion students with disabilities, and in challenging discredited and obsolete perspectives, for example the view that students with disabilities do not belong in education.

Virtually all institutes (13) record the number of full-time undergraduates who leave before the end of their course; however only 8 record the number of students with disabilities who do so. The absence of such essential monitoring again indicates the lack of an affirmative culture for students with disabilities.

Services

Essential services for students with disabilities, such as learning needs assessments, screening for specific learning disabilities, access to educational psychologists and written individual support plans are not available in all institutes. Learning needs assessments are available in 10 institutes; four of these use internal personnel only, 5 use internal and / or external personnel, and 1 uses external personnel only. Nine institutes screen students suspected of having SLD, 8 provide some kind of access to educational psychologists and 10 provide written support plans.

Only a minority (6) of institutes have systems in place for developing contact with students with disabilities in secondary schools. All institutes are not taking basic steps to encourage the entrance of students with disabilities; for example only 3 have specific 'open days' for them. However, 10 address the needs of these students in 'open days' and 10 also address their needs in orientation days.

Course information in alternative formats is available in 6 institutes only. Virtually all respondents (13) indicated that their institute's prospectus referred directly to support services. Twelve indicated that their application process asks whether applicants have a disability; 12 also indicated that the application process inquires about applicants' previous support needs.

Training in study skills and assistive technology is available together with additional learning support and personal assistance, when required, in virtually all institutes. Twelve indicated that

training in study skills is available; 13, in each case, indicated that training in assistive technology and additional learning support is available, and 12 indicated that a personal assistant service is available.

Most institutes make tape recorders, interpreters, note takers and speed text available to students in the context of lectures/classes when required.

All institutes provide alternative examination facilities across all faculties, additional time and alternative venues for students with disabilities. Most provide alternative methods of assessment.

Most institutes provide transport for students with disabilities; 2 provide taxis and/or private bus while 6 provide taxis only, 6 provide no service.

While only 6 institutes have conducted an access audit, access is known to be an issue.

All faculty buildings in five of the institutes are accessible to students with disabilities; they are not in the other 9.

Twelve institutes have no on site accommodation designed for students with disabilities; two have. However, 7 institutes arrange local accommodation for students; the other 7 indicated that such assistance could be provided informally.

Despite funding and staff limitations respondents identified 30 initiatives for improving the services for students with disabilities undertaken by their institutes. The development of programmes or systems and the recruitment of learning support staff were foremost among these initiatives. Other initiatives included specific learning supports, assistive technology provision and policy development.

Respondents identified 34 priorities for improving services for students with disabilities in their institutes. The appointment of specific staff was identified as a priority for service improvement in 15 cases. In 11 cases it was specified that a disability officer was required (in two cases on a part-time basis). Two institutes identified the appointment of an assistive technology officer as a priority, and one in each case referred to the need for more disability support staff and administrative support for the disability officer.

Funding

In 2004-05 738 applications for funding were made on behalf of 1,366 full-time undergraduate students with disabilities, an application rate of 0.54. Most of these applications (417) were made on behalf of continuing students, the remainder, 321, were made on behalf of new students; of the latter, 244 (76%) were successful. The application rate varies considerably, ranging from 0.13 to 0.96. The application rates for 9 institutes were in excess of the average rate of 0.54. The rates for 4 institutes were in excess of 0.65. The application rates of 3 institutes were less than 0.35. The randomness in educational outcomes for students with disabilities, as predicated by the variation in their participation rates, is emphasised by this very substantial variation in application rates.

The time required for making applications to the fund on behalf of new students is considerable and there is no acknowledgement of the heavy administration requirements of accessing this fund. Twelve respondents indicated that on average more than one hour was required, 2 estimated that between 30 and 60 minutes were needed.

Recommendations

To ensure equality of access for students with disabilities, and increase their participation, there is much to be done.

The issue of access for students with disabilities should be reviewed in regard to targets and procedures. Recommendations arising from the review should be costed, tested realistically against expected funding availability and speedily implemented. Any staffing requirements identified should, in common with other recommendations, be carefully costed.

The functions of the various officers involved with students with disabilities should be clarified. The functions of access officers have been defined very broadly; and they have developed pragmatically in response to local circumstances. In examining the functions of access officers, account should be taken of the likely increasing demands for them to intensify their development role in schools and elsewhere as competition for funds is encouraged in the educational sector.

Learning needs assessment needs to be professionalised. Currently there are not enough trained personnel available to undertake such assessments. Many socially disadvantaged students with disabilities cannot afford the assessments they require to support their funding applications and institutes have no funds to pay for them. This is contrary to the most basic standards of social justice and human rights. Consideration should be given to the regionalisation of the assessment together with the recruitment of sufficient skilled staff to provide the professional assessment service required.

A comprehensive and standardised guidance and audit tool needs to be developed to support institutes in creating an inclusive, teaching, learning and assessment environment for students with disabilities. This tool should deal with such issues as admissions; course development; printing, display and electronic dissemination; lectures, seminars and tutorials; fieldwork; laboratories, workshops and other practice-based environments; placement learning; assessment; professional bodies, legislation and grant application procedures.

An early development of a suitable funding mechanism is essential. The ESF model is unsuitable as it was not designed to be the sole source of funding; funding must be provided through the core budget to build capacity and infrastructure in every college. A funding mechanism must be in place in time for the funding review in 2006.

Any review of students with disabilities should take account of other categories of non-standard students, including mature students and second chance students. Many students in these latter categories are presenting with some of the difficulties traditionally associated with students with disabilities; currently there is no provision for them. In institutes apprentices and post-graduate students are also excluded from any services available to undergraduate students with disabilities.

Fragmentation can easily arise in pursing different paths of educational access. In large institutions similar support systems can be developed for and offered to different groups independently. Mature students, international students, early leavers, students with learning disabilities can have quite separate, though essentially similar, programmes in study skills and learning support. Such fragmentation should be avoided.

Problems and their solutions, often uniquely associated with learning difficulties, can have much wider application. Many solutions, developed for students with learning difficulties in such areas as study skills, numeracy, literacy, etc. could if more widely implemented have beneficial outcomes for many students. Currently these developments are not having any impact on course design; there are no procedures or systems for the necessary assimilation because the personnel

concerned are excluded from the relevant academic councils and committees. Conversely, the facilitation of learning by students with disabilities should be enhanced through the systematic proofing of courses for unnecessary barriers and ensuring that assessment processes include well-informed considerations of the needs of students with disabilities.

Consideration should be given to making it mandatory for staff to attend meetings and training sessions re disability.

Commitment to disability must come from the top in each institute. All strategic plans must refer to the issue of access and disability. Likewise in any wide-ranging initiatives, for example the introduction of semesterisation, account must be taken of students with disability.

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Table A1
Distribution of full time undergraduates with disabilities across disabilities – numbers

Institutes	Total number of full time undergraduates with a disability	Number with a specific learning disability	Number with a physical or mobility disability	Number with a hearing impairment or deafness	Number with a vision impairment	Number with a mental health disability	Number with some other disability
Blanchardstown	37	25	6	3	1	0	2
Carlow	35	25	2	3	1	4	0
Cork	32	25	3	2	1	1	0
Dublin	301	238	22	13	5	13	10
Dundalk	45	37	1	2	3	0	2
Dun Laoghaire	65	60	3	1	0	1	0
Galway-Mayo	126	101	5	5	2	3	10
Letterkenny	99	80	6	5	1	3	4
Limerick	193	109	17	3	3	61	0
Sligo	87	55	9	3	5	6	9
Tallaght	30	22	4	1	1	0	2
Tipperary	24	12	4	2	1	1	4
Tralee	144	64	10	11	5	9	45
Waterford	148	87	17	13	3	10	18
Total	**1,366**	**940**	**109**	**67**	**32**	**112**	**106**

AHEAD SURVEY OF THE PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY

ACADEMIC YEAR 2004 – 2005

Your Institute is _____

Participation of full time undergraduate students with disabilities

Q.1 Do you record the number of full time undergraduates with disabilities attending courses in the institute?   Yes ☐   No ☐

If Yes to Q.1 please enter the number of students with the difficulties/disabilities listed below*	
	Number
1.1 Specific learning difficulty	
1.2 Physical and mobility disability	
1.3 Hearing impairment or deafness	
1.4 Vision impairment	
1.5 Mental health disability	
1.6 Other disability	
1.7 All full time undergraduates with disabilities (Total of above)	
*If a student has more than one of the above disabilities include him/her in the category deemed most significant.	

Q. 2 What is the number of full time undergraduates in the institute? _____

Policies
Q. 3 How does the institute define disability?

_____

_____

_____

Q. 4.1   Does the institute have an Equal Opportunities policy?   Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes to Q. 4.1

Q. 4.2

Does it specifically refer to students with disabilities? Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes please enclose a copy of the policy document with your reply.

Planning

Q. 5   To what extent is the inclusion of students with disability considered in the future planning for the institute?

Fully 100%	75%	50%	25%	Not at all 0%

Q.6   To what extent is responsibility for accommodating students with disabilities taken by academic staff?

Fully 100%	75%	50%	25%	Not at all 0%

Assessment of Support Needs

Q. 7 Has the institute allocated additional funding for learning needs assessments of students with disabilities?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Q. 8.1   Does the institute carry out learning needs assessments for students with disabilities? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes to Q.8.1

Q.8.2 For these learning needs assessments does the institute use:

External and / or internal personnel   ☐

External personnel only   ☐

Internal personnel only   ☐

If yes to Q.8.1

Q. 8.3 What is the average amount of time spent with each student assessing his/her learning needs?

30 minutes or less	31 – 60 minutes	61 – 90 minutes	More than 90 minutes

Q. 8.4   Does the institute screen students who are identified with possible specific learning difficulties?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Q. 8.5   Does the institute provide students with access to educational psychologists for assessment?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Q. 8.6   Does the institute produce a written individual support plan for all students with disabilities?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Provision of services for students with disabilities

Q. 9 Does the institute provide the following services for students with disabilities?

	Service	Yes	No
9.1	Institute has system in place for contact with prospective students with disabilities in secondary school		
9.2	Specific 'open days' for students with disabilities		
9.3	Needs of students with disabilities are addressed in 'open days'		
9.4	Needs of students with disabilities are addressed in orientation days		
9.5	Course information is provided in alternative formats		
9.6	Institute's prospectus directly refers to support services for students with disabilities		
9.7	Application process asks if students have a disability		
9.8	Application process asks about student's previous support needs		
9.9	Training in study skills (when required)		
9.10	Training in assistive technology (when required)		
9.11	Additional learning support/tuition (when required)		
9.12	A personal assistant service? (when required)		
9.13	Tape recorder during lectures/classes (when required)		
9.14	Interpreter during lectures/classes (when required)		
9.15	Note taker during lectures/classes (when required)		
9.16	Speedtext during lectures/classes (when required)		

Disability Support Services

Q.10 Does the institute employ those listed below?

	Yes full time	Yes part time	No
10.1 Disability officer			
10.2 Learning support tutor			
10.3 Assistive technology tutor			

Q. 10.4 Does the institute operate an alternative admissions policy/process?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes to Q. 10.4 please enclose a copy of the admissions policy document with your reply

Minister's ESF Fund

Q. 11.1 How many applications for new students did the institute make to the ESF in 2004/05?

_____

Q. 11.2 How many of these applications for new students were successful? _____

Q. 11.3 What is the average amount of time spent making applications for new students to the fund?

Less than 30 minutes	☐
From 30 to 60 minutes (inc.)	☐
More than 60 minutes	☐

Q. 11.4 How many applications for continuing students did the institute make in 2004/05?

_____

Examination arrangements

Q. 12   Does the institute provide alternative examination arrangements across all faculties?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes to Q. 12 do the arrangements include?		
	Yes	No
12.1 Additional time		
12.2 Alternative venues		
12.3 Alternative methods of assessment (such as oral examinations instead of written examinations)		

Transport

Q. 13   Does the institute provide transport for students with disabilities?

Yes – Taxis and / or private bus	☐
Yes –Taxis only	☐
Yes - Private bus only	☐
No such transport provided by the institute	☐

Accessibility

Q. 14 Has the institute conducted an access audit?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Q.15.1 Are all faculty buildings accessible to students with disabilities?   Yes ☐ No ☐

If No to Q. 15.1– Q.15.2 Please list faculties that are not accessible

Retention rates

Q16.1   Does the institute record the number of full time undergraduate students who leave before the end of their course?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Q16.2   Does the institute record the number of full time undergraduate students with disability who leave before the end of their course?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Accommodation

Q. 17.1 Has the institute on site accessible accommodation designed for students with disabilities?
                                                                                                Yes ☐ No ☐

Q. 17.2 Does the institute arrange local accommodation for students with disabilities? Yes ☐ No ☐

Responsibilities of access officer

Q. 18 Are you the institute's Access Officer?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Q. 19 Are you responsible for any of the groups/services listed in the box below?

Groups/services	Yes	No
19.1 Students with disabilities		
19.2 Mature students		
19.3 Students from broader economic backgrounds		
19.4 Other Student services		
19.5 Other (please describe)		

Q. 20 How much of your time at work is given to supporting students with disabilities?

20% or less	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80% or more

Disability awareness trainining

Q. 21 Does the institute provide Disability Awareness Training for staff?   Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes to Q. 21		
	Yes	No
21.1 Are all staff offered this training		
21.2 Are new teaching staff offered this training		
	Voluntary	Mandatory
21.3 Is disability awareness training voluntary or mandatory		

If Yes to Q.21

Q21 .4 Who provides disability awareness training?

Institute staff   ☐

External agency (ies)   ☐

Institute staff and/or external agency (ies)   ☐

Institute's initiatives and priorities

Q.22   What initiatives (if any) has the institute implemented for students with disabilities? *Please list/summarise the three most important initiatives in the box below, in order of importance, and enclose a written description of them with your reply. If there were no initiatives, please write none in the box.*

1(first most significant initiative)
2 (second most significant initiative)
3 (third most significant initiative)

Q. 23 What in your opinion are the institute's top three priorities for service improvement* for students with disabilities? (Please list them, in order of importance, in the box below)

1 (first priority)
2 (second priority)
3 (third priority)

Q. 24 What in your opinion are the institute's top three priorities for increasing participation rates* of students with disabilities in the institute? (Please list them, in order of importance, in the box below).

*It is appreciated there may be some overlap in the responses to questions 23 & 24. Even if they happen to be the same please list them.

1 (first priority)
2 (second priority)
3 (third priority)

Q. 25 Please enter the information required in the box below.

Your signature
Your function
Institute
Date

AHEAD appreciates the contribution you have made to this important study