“Addressing access challenges for Students with Visual Impairments Transition to Further and Higher Education” a TCD/AHEAD seminar is a follow on initiative from a collaborative workshop between NCBI Centre for Inclusive Technology and TCD’s School of Education in January 2013. This first workshop provided a forum for student driven discussion on research and development partnerships to ensure people with a visual impairment can access and participate in an inclusive learning environment in higher education. Digital inclusion was the core theme of this workshop.

The context for this seminar is to address the continued concern about the low numbers of students with visual impairment making transition to further and higher education (DSS UCC, 2012).\(^1\)

While digital inclusion was the first workshop’s central theme, on the day several other critical access barriers were identified including; “students’ sense of “having to fight for everything”, “lack of expectations, down-grading maths options-managing expectations” and the “need for information on college very early on even at primary school”.\(^2\)

Following on from the workshop, a pilot study was designed to profile the VI student transition experiences from senior cycle to FE and HE in Ireland. This seminar is being run in conjunction with the study, which commenced in April 2014 and is funded by the HEA. It involves in depth qualitative interviews with a number of young people at various education stages (all post Junior Certificate) and their ‘support circles’ and key stakeholders to document their access.

The aim of running this seminar is to continue raising awareness of this under-researched area with the goal of bringing together all key stakeholders and on this occasion hearing directly from young senior cycle students and Féach, the national support group for parents of blind and visually impaired children. In addition, we would like to widen the debate to hear from our UK colleagues at the University of Birmingham’s School of Education VICTAR center, who are currently running a large longitudinal Transitions Project study supported by the RNIB.

So the key question is how can we move from the recognition of these digital and other critical access barriers to devising strategies to overcome them? By bringing all stakeholders together for this seminar, the big goal of the day is that we can share learning and devise an action plan for implementing access enablers.

The seminar will be held on Thursday 25\(^{th}\) September in Trinity College Dublin’s School of Education. For information on booking a place, please contact Dr. Esther Murphy: esther.murphy@ncbi.ie.

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\(^2\) All of the access barriers and enablers identified by participants were collated for our workshop report, please contact esther.murphy@ncbi.ie for a copy.