UNILINK SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT
2009/2010

University of Dublin
Trinity College

This report was compiled by:
Clodagh Nolan M.Sc., M.A., Dip. C.O.T. Director of Unilink Service
Sarah Quinn M.Phil., B.Sc. (Curr. Occ), Kieran Lewis B.Sc. (Curr. Occ), Claire Gleeson B.Sc. (Curr. Occ)
Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 4

What is Unilink? ..................................................................................................... 4
Mission Statement of the Unilink Service .......................................................... 4
Aim of Unilink Service ............................................................................................ 4

Executive Summary ................................................................................................. 6

Section 1: Review of the Activities in the Unilink Service 2009 – 2010 .... 8

1. Number of Students using the Unilink Service ........................................ 8
2. Standing per year and faculty of students accessing the Unilink Service .......................................................... 9
3. Diagnosis of students using the Unilink Service .................................. 11
4. Student Contact Time ............................................................................... 14
5. Staff Time Use within the Unilink Service over the year of 2009-10 .......................................................... 17
6. Focus of the Sessions within the Unilink Service 2009-2010 .... 19

Section 2: Review of Service Objectives 2009 -2010 .............................. 21

Objective 1: Staffing ............................................................................................ 21
Objective 2: Statistics .......................................................................................... 21
Objective 3: Service Development ................................................................. 22
Objective 4: Communication ............................................................................ 23
Objective 5: Administration .............................................................................. 24
Objective 6: Training/Supervision ................................................................. 25
Objective 7: Funding .......................................................................................... 25
Objective 8: Research ........................................................................................ 26
Section 3: Service Objectives 2010 - 2011

Objective 1: Service Development ........................................... 27
Objective 2: Outreach Service ............................................. 27
Objective 3: Staffing ......................................................... 27
Objective 4: Communication ............................................. 28
Objective 5: Promotion ...................................................... 28
Objective 6: Administration ............................................. 28
Objective 7: Continuous Professional Development .............. 28
Objective 8: Research ....................................................... 29
Objective 9: Funding ....................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.
Introduction

What is Unilink?

Unilink is a practical occupational therapy support service for students who may be experiencing mental health issues such as Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Schizophrenia and Asperger’s Syndrome. It offers a safe environment where students can explore their mental health difficulties and begin to understand how mental health impacts upon their student lives and the activities that they engage in.

Mission Statement of the Unilink Service

To support students with mental health difficulties to complete their studies and provide them with the best opportunity to reach their full potential and become productive members of society.

Aim of Unilink Service

The aim of the service is to enable students to develop practical self-management strategies that assist them in the completion of their college tasks and their integration into college life.

The Unilink Service offers practical support on a one to one basis, by using a collaborative individual student centred approach which addresses the individual’s difficulties and is personalised to their needs.

This reflects the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) directive on enhancing participation and quality of life for those with enduring mental health issues (WHO, 2001).
Occupational therapy has its roots in assisting people overcome practical issues by developing strategies and maximising the use of available environmental supports. Occupational therapy puts the person, in this case the student, at the centre of its planning and intervention and includes ‘doing tasks’ with the individual until confidence and skills have adequately grown. Enhancing occupational performance requires assisting the students in a holistic way to facilitate their performance of skills. This generally relates to their college work, leisure and social life, and their satisfaction with everyday living.

The Unilink Service continues to grow and develop and is now supporting over 150 students within Trinity College.

**Unilink** is the only service of its kind in Ireland.
Executive Summary

This annual report is divided into four sections and will describe the activities of the Unilink Service across the last academic year; 2009-10. Additionally, it will detail the performance objectives for the Service, including its research objectives, and the attainment of same. It will further outline the performance objectives for the Unilink Service in the coming academic year of 2010-11.

SECTION 1: A Review of Activities in the Unilink Service 2009/10
SECTION 2: A Review of Service Objectives 2009/10
SECTION 3: Research Objectives 2009/10
SECTION 4: Service Objectives for 2010/11

The number of students attending the Unilink Service has increased dramatically since it was established in 2004, with 21 students attending in 2004-2005 increasing to 146 students attending in 2009-2010. However, as numbers increase, service funding will continue to decrease; due to the new per-capita allocation model proposed for the ESF Student with Disability Fund, 2010-11. The funding available for Unilink will decrease by approximately 40%. This will result in a redefined and potentially reduced service for students.

Students experiencing depression are the largest group within the students attending Unilink, accounting for 43% of the overall number. Notable increases have been seen in the numbers attending Unilink with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Asperger’s Syndrome and Eating Disorders. Also of note is that the number of Senior Sophister and Post-Graduate students attending Unilink has doubled from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010.
As of September 1st 2010, a second full time staff grade Occupational Therapist has been recruited to work within the Unilink Service. In addition to this, three part-time Senior Occupational Therapists are employed in the Unilink Service in a supervisory and research capacity. Space has been set aside in the new Student Centre (Luce Hall) for Unilink. This will become available from 2012 onwards but suitable short term accommodation needs to be identified for the second Occupational Therapist as soon as is possible.

Future development and expansion of the Unilink model externally is being explored. Dublin City University (DCU) is presently developing a Unilink Service and this will be formalised over the next year. The objective is that DCU will pay for a therapist one day a week to provide the service on their campus in Glasnevin.

**Highlights of the year included:**

- The launch of the Five Year Report on the Unilink Service in October 2009 by the Minister for Equality, Disability and Mental Health, Mr. John Moloney and the Provost, Dr. John Hegarty.
- Presentation at the 7th International Conference on Higher Education and Disability at Innsbruck in July 2010.
- Poster Presentation at the World Federation of Occupational Therapists Conference in Chile, April, 2010.
- Presentation of Papers on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Asperger’s Syndrome at the Disability Service 10th Anniversary Symposium.
**Section 1: Review of the Activities in the Unilink Service 2009 – 2010**

1. Number of Students using the Unilink Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2009-2010</strong></td>
<td>79 (54.1%)</td>
<td>67 (45.9%)</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2008-09</strong></td>
<td>56 (55%)</td>
<td>46 (45%)</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2007-08</strong></td>
<td>27 (54%)</td>
<td>23 (46%)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2006-07</strong></td>
<td>21 (54%)</td>
<td>19 (46%)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2005-06</strong></td>
<td>25 (52%)</td>
<td>23 (48%)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2004-05</strong></td>
<td>14 (66%)</td>
<td>7 (34%)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1**: Number of students using the Unilink Service per year for the period 2004-2010.

As can be seen from **Table 1**, the pattern of increased number of students using the Unilink Service has continued this year with the numbers increasing by 43% from the figures in 2008-09.
2. Standing per year and faculty of students accessing the Unilink Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standing year of student</th>
<th>JF</th>
<th>SF</th>
<th>JS</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Yr 5</th>
<th>PG</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Standing of Students per Year Accessing the Unilink Service

The number of first, second and third year students using the Unilink Service in 2009-10 has increased from the figures in 2008-09. Most of these referrals are either from the Trinity College Disability Service or the Psychiatrist within the College Health Service. There is now a policy within the Disability Service of referring all students who disclose a mental health difficulty on their entry to college to the Unilink Service, which accounts for the high number of first year students using the service. Also of particular interest is that the number of and senior sophister and post-graduate students attending Unilink has doubled since 2008-09.
Figure 2. Number of students in each Faculty that accessed the Unilink Service in 2009/10

When broken down by Faculty the above diagram indicates the numbers of students accessing the Service from the different Faculties in Trinity. Students from the Arts Faculty still make up the largest proportion of students using the Unilink Service. However, there has been an increase from 11 to 20 students in Health Sciences and from 25 to 40 in Engineering, Maths and Science.
3. Diagnosis of students using the Unilink Service

**Figure 3.** Breakdown of student diagnosis using the Unilink Service.

**Figure 4.** Diagnosis of Students attending Unilink across time; 2006 – 2010.
There has been a notable increase in the number of students with Depression using the Unilink Service; with 38% of students attending Unilink having depression in 2008-09 rising to 43% of students in 2009-10. The number of students using the service with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Asperger’s Syndrome and Eating Disorders has also increased from last year and the needs of these students are being further investigated. (Fig 4.)

**Figure 5.** Breakdown of total time by diagnosis.
Figure 6. Breakdown of the number of appointments for each diagnosis category.

The above pie-charts (Figures 5 & 6) represent the total number of hours and number of appointments for each diagnosis. It can be seen that the highest number of contact time is spent with those students with a diagnosis of depression; this is evident given that there are 63 students with Depression using the Unilink Service, representing the highest proportion of students in Unilink. It can also be seen that students with Asperger’s Syndrome also account for a high proportion of time. An occupational therapist has been employed part time to cater for the complex needs of this student group.
4. Student Contact Time

Each student on referral is offered an appointment with one of the therapists within the Unilink Service within a week of receiving the referral. Students are contacted via mobile phone, text messaging or email from the outset. Following on from the first meeting students then arrange further appointments to suit their schedules.

The Unilink Service has found that those with enduring mental illness value the continuity of care it provides as well as the ongoing contact between therapist and students. Students can keep in contact with therapist through email or through the use of text messaging and phone calls. In a thematic analysis of the text messaging engaged in by the service five over-arching themes found that students used text messaging for – managing the practicalities around appointments, managing their condition/illness, relating their academic and personal progress, engaging in non-therapeutic interaction which often drew on humour and where students’ could show their appreciation of therapists’ support and in the last theme the students thanked the therapist but felt they were doing ok and not in need of the service at that point in time. (Nolan & Quinn, 2009)

In 2008-09, we had 1,148 scheduled appointments with 107 students availing of the service. In 2009-10, we had approximately the same number of scheduled appointments (n=1193) but this was with 146 students. To cope with this increase in student numbers the average number of appointments per student for 2009/10 was down two from 10 to 8, however this varied from student to student depending on their individual needs, where some only availed of 2 to 3 appointments while others availed of approximately 30 appointments.
Table 3 indicates the number of appointments and the reasons for non attendance. It should be noted that in the majority of these incidents of non-attendance (n=190), another appointment was made for the following days or the following week.

**Table 3: Number of Unilink Appointments and Re-scheduled Appointments / Cancellations 2009/10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Appointments</th>
<th>Number of Rescheduled Appointments / Cancellations</th>
<th>Reasons for Rescheduling / Cancellations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,193 (August 2009 – Start of May 2010)</td>
<td>190 (16%)</td>
<td>1. Students became unwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Timing of appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Student’s availability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 7.** The number of appointments and face-to-face contact (in hours) with Students in 2009-2010.
Figure 8. Breakdown of time spent on student cases.

The above chart shows that the majority of time is spent on face-to-face contact with the student with 55% of the total student time being designated to one-to-one sessions. 24% of student time is spent on case management, advocating on behalf of the student and session preparation. While 14% of the student time is spent on texting, emailing and phone contact; this allows for ongoing support in achieving goals and implementing strategies worked on in the sessions.
5. Staff Time Use within the Unilink Service over the year of 2009-10

![Time Use of staff in hours](image)

**Figure 9.** Time Use (in hours) within the Unilink Service 2009-10

The majority of time as evidenced by the figure 9 above is spent on student cases. The second largest amount is over 600 hours and was spent on projects for the Unilink/Disability Service such as promotion and representation at a national and international level. Over the course of the year 707 extra hours were completed, at an average of 9-10 hours per week per therapist over and above the average working week.

The following are the projects engaged in by Unilink staff 2009/10

Projects which fall within the agreed objectives:

- Launch of the Five Year Report on the Unilink Service. (Objective 4)
- Development of the Unilink website. (Objective 4)
Presentations at to ASPIRE, DAWN, Trinity Student Counselling Service and Dublin City University disability staff. (Objective 4)

Research and writing of Papers and presentations for DS symposium. (Objective 3 & 8)

Updating of phone system (Objective 5)

Organising ASIST Suicide Prevention Training for DS Staff (Objective 6)

Continuous Professional Development (Objective 3)
- Unlink staff have attended the following courses / talks over the course of the year;
  - Training Day organised by Association of Occupational Therapy of Ireland, Mental Health Advisory Group.
  - Level 1 Sensory Integration Course.
  - ASIST Suicide Prevention Course.
  - HCR – 20 Risk Assessment Training.
  - DAWN CPD Day.
  - DCD and ADHD Training day with Prof. Amanda Kirby.
  - A biweekly journal club to research and discuss articles relevant to practice; has also been started by Unilink staff.

Other projects which evolved over the year:

- Development of a Self Management handbook.
- Preparing and providing placement to a final year Occupational Therapy student.
- Lectures to HDip Students in Education
- Evaluation of the AS strand of the Unilink service
- DARE expert group in DCD.
Writing of Unilink information for Disability Booklets and college leaflets
- Better Options and College Open days
- Presentation at the 7th International Conference on Higher Education and Disability Innsbruck July 2010.

6. Focus of the Sessions within the Unilink Service 2009-2010

The Unilink Service follows an Occupational Therapy process of intervention based upon the Person-Environment-Occupation Model (Christiansen & Baum, 2005).

Assessments completed in Unilink

Assessments were used on a needs basis in order to highlight occupational concerns that the student was experiencing. Below are some examples of the assessments used in the Unilink Service.

An initial interview is carried out in the first meeting with the student in order to gather background information on their role and habits as a student and to establish goals for intervention. This initial interview also allows the therapist and the student to begin to develop the key therapeutic relationship that is vital for the Unilink process of engagement.

The Trinity Student Profile (TSP) is also used with students. This measure gleans information on the student’s university course demands and on the personal, environmental and occupational issues that are of most concern to the student, and on the practical issues they are experiencing most difficulty. This measure asks
students to prioritise these difficulties and to then set realistic goals in relation to dealing with them.

The **Adult Sensory Profile** is used primarily with students with ADHD and Asperger’s Syndrome. It is a self evaluation questionnaire to identify behavioural responses to everyday sensory experiences. It provides a standard method for occupational therapists to measure and profile the effect of sensory processing on everyday functional performance and tasks. The assessment was developed by Winnie Dunn (Dunn, 1999).

The **Time Wheel** explores the student’s use of their time over a day period, and enables the therapist and student to understand how the student is managing their time.

Other assessments are also used on a needs basis.

**Areas of Focus within Unilink Sessions included;**

- Assessment
- Executive Functioning
- Performance components of the student role
- Occupational engagement of the student role
- Social Modelling/Environmental Cuing
- Holding/Grounding/Guidance/Reality Check
- Activity Analysis
- Time Tabling
- Environmental Management
- Sensory Integration Approaches
- Anxiety Management
- Self-Management
- Goal Setting
Section 2: Review of Service Objectives 2009 - 2010

These objectives below were set in May 2009 following a review of the academic year of 2008-2009.

Objective 1: Staffing

- To advertise and appoint a basic grade Occupational Therapist by July 2009 so that this person will be ready for the new term in September 2009.

Outcome:
One full time staff grade and one half-time staff grade position were created in July 2009. A second full time position will be created at the beginning of September 2010 incorporating a Unilink outreach program for one day per week in Dublin City University.

Objective 2: Statistics

- To record the Unilink Service statistics from the period 2003 to 2008.

Outcome:
Statistics from 2003-2008 have been recorded and are available from the disability service.
Objective 3: Service Development

- To monitor the increase in student numbers, as well as identifying their occupational needs.

- It has been observed that those students with ADHD and Asperger’s Syndrome have required more input from the Unilink staff and in response to this need, the staff have developed new approaches to working with them such as:
  - Increasing the contact in order to enable these students to regulate their sensory environmental inputs and thus manage their behavioural response.
  - A group structure is being developed to cater for the social needs of those with AS and it is hoped to commence offering this service September 2010.

Outcome:

Student numbers have risen from 107 in 2008-09 to 146 in 2009-10. The areas of diagnosis were consistent with the previous year as outlined above. On-going evaluation of student perspectives and their needs are continuously evaluated and analysed by the therapists in the Service in order to meet the occupational needs of the students.

Papers were researched and presented at the DS symposium in the areas of ADHD and AS, identifying current and suggested future approaches for supporting these students, within the DS in Trinity. Individual and group approaches in management of academic workload, self management, environmental adaptations, leisure enhancement, and orientation to college services and environments have been identified as particular strategies in working with students with ADHD and AS.
Objective 4: Communication

- To continue to establish links with other services within the University
- In an effort to increase the visibility of the service to students:
  - To place information about Unilink in the students diary
  - To develop posters about the Unilink service for placement around the campus.
- To update the website information
- To update the Unilink Service booklet
- To disseminate the Five Year Unilink Service report
- To make links with other universities in order to establish the Unilink Service in other third level institutes.

Outcome:
- The Five Year Report on the Unilink Service was launched in October 2009 and attended and launched by the Minister for Equality, Disability and Mental Health; Mr John Moloney and Provost; Mr. John Hegarty.
- Copies of the report have been disseminated in hardcopy and online format to relevant organisations.
- Links have been maintained with the College Health and Student Counselling Services within college and links have also been established with the Sports Centre.
- The Unilink website was redesigned in August 2009 but will need to be updated on an ongoing basis.
- It was decided upon following discussion that the development of posters to highlight the Unilink Service would not be an effective approach to promote the service within the college.
Objective 5: Administration

- Up-date the mobile phones for all staff
- Activate the panic button in 2032 A
- Purchase a second printer for the service.

Outcome:
2032a in the Arts Block has been renovated and the panic buttons in both this office and the Westland Row office have been activated. 2032a was used by one Unilink staff member for the academic year 2009-2010. This therapist is now located in room 2032, with 2032a being used by other staff members in the Disability Service. The second full-time occupational therapist is currently located in a room in the Centre for Women’s Studies in the Hamilton Building but this room is not suitable for the therapeutic process and in the interests of safety for the occupational therapists and the students who attend the service. Alternative locations are currently being investigated in the Arts Building and LUCE Hall but are as yet to be confirmed.

New mobile phones have been purchased for all staff members and webtext is being used in order to reduce the cost of communication for both the service.

A second printer was purchased in July 2009.
Objective 6: Training/Supervision

- Provide Suicide Risk Assessment/Training for all Unilink staff.
- Supervision to be provided by Discipline of Occupational Therapy

Outcome:
Unilink staff members have attended the ASIST suicide training courses and have organised for other members of the DS staff to also attend. Unilink staff ran a review of the course as part of in service training. Supervision once a week for approximately one to two hours is provided for therapists within the Unilink Service by the Discipline of Occupational Therapy.

Objective 7: Funding

- To continue with application to the European Social Fund.
- To investigate alternative sources of funding.
- To monitor the number of students availing of the service and the timing of the referral process in relation to funding, i.e. Students need to be referred earlier in order to apply for funding under the European Social Fund.

Outcome:
The economic downturn has affected the ongoing funding of this service. Unilink in response to this situation has begun to explore disseminating and expanding the Unilink Service to other universities, namely DCU. The objective is that DCU will pay for a therapist one day a week to provide the service on their campus in Glasnevin.
Objective 8: Research

- Complete evaluation of the Unilink Service
- Present at the World Federation of Occupational Therapists Conference April 2010
- Commence research into both the ADHD and AS Projects.

Outcome:
Third year occupational therapy students will be completing a service review beginning September 2010.
Unilink Service Director, Clodagh Nolan completed a poster presentation at the WFOT conference in April 2010.
As outlined above, papers and presentations on AS and ADHD were prepared for the DS 10 year symposium, the suggestions from which are to be incorporated into the service development objectives for ‘10-‘11.
Section 3: Service Objectives 2010 - 2011

Objective 1: Service Development

- Continue to provide Unilink Occupational Therapy support to students registered with the Disability Service.
- Commence group structure for students with AS
- Implement approaches for students with ADHD identified in paper presented at the Disability Service Symposium, June 2010.
- Complete evaluation of AS Strand of Unilink and Service as a whole (3rd year OT students project)
- Research and develop approaches to better support students with anxiety and eating disorders.
- To complete an audit of college environments from a sensory processing perspective.

Objective 2: Outreach Service

- Development of the Unilink model within Dublin City University
- Develop links within this setting with academic and non-academic staff.
- Develop Links to other third level institutions both nationally and internationally.

Objective 3: Staffing and Funding

- A second full time staff grade position is to start in September 2010.
- The contract of the first staff grade position to be reviewed and changed to a contract of ‘indefinite duration’.

27
To identify and actively campaign for alternate sources of funding for the Unilink Service.

**Objective 4: Communication**
- Continue to liaise with internal and external student support services, e.g. Health Centre, Counselling, Sports etc.

**Objective 5: Promotion**
- Update the Unilink Website including podcast on Self Management Handbook.
- Place Unilink Information in the Student Diary and other pertinent college publications.
- Launch the Self Management Tool.
- Take part in Mental Health Week within the College.

**Objective 6: Administration**
- Update and sort files.
- Keep clinical notes as per best practice guidelines.
- Keep up to date statistics on student contact.

**Objective 7: Continuous Professional Development**
- Attend Conferences, courses etc.
- Engage in biweekly journal club meetings
- Attend Practice Educators Course in September run by the Discipline of Occupational Therapy
- Continue with weekly supervision provided by the Discipline of Occupational Therapy

**Objective 8: Research**
- Review paper on supporting college students with anxiety.
- Publications of papers relevant to work of the Unilink service.