Disability Services

Academic Support Services

Annual Report 2010 - 2011

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1 Overview

Disability Service (DS) facilitates potential success for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties in the College setting by providing advice, support, and academic accommodations in partnership with students and academic departments. This annual report covers the academic year 2010-2011.

1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Academic Support Service

The aims and objectives of the Disability Service are

- To embed disability issues into the culture of the University, thereby influencing the development of policies and practices.

- To address the delivery of specific supports to students with disabilities.
To further this second aim Disability Service has an Academic Support service which provides support in the areas of note-taking skills, essay-writing support and examination preparation for students registered with DS. The Academic Support Service within Disability Service was set up to meet the needs of students with specific learning difficulties. The scope of the service has since been broadened to include students with other learning needs. Academic Support aims to assist students in improving their learning skills particularly with using the library, reading effectively, note-taking, essay writing, referencing, editing and proofreading, learning, and taking exams.

In the academic year 2010-11, one Academic Support Tutor (AST) was employed to maintain 14 hours of service per week. The service is provided by a tutor from the School of English on Mondays and Thursdays. From August to February AST took place in Room 2032A of the Arts Building and then the service was moved to the ATIC area of the Library to provide easier access for students who use this area for study. Additional hours are also provided by a Disability Officer in room 3029 of the Arts Building by appointment. Students may also request a screening and assessment for specific learning difficulty. Screenings take place each Monday at 10am and 2pm. This service is provided by a Disability Officer assisted by a postgraduate student from the School of Psychology.

1.2 Executive Summary

In Academic Year (AY) 2010 - 2011 115 students availed of Academic Support. 81 students (out of a total SLD population of 618) were seen by the end of April and a further 23 seen were registered with physical, medical, sensory, mental health disabilities or serious ongoing illness. 11 students with a mental health disability availed of Academic Support. The students took up 68% of available hours on average in AY 2010-11 with a cancellation/no-show rate of 12% compared to 15% for AY 2009-10. During September 2010 - April 2011 1 AST logged 266 hours of tutoring with 14 hours per week of support provision. This is compared to August 2009 - April 2010 when 260 hours of tutoring were provided. More detailed statistics, including the numbers of different students, their patterns of usage of services, and their division by class or university standard are available in this report, accompanied by graphs of the data.
2 Statistical Analysis of the Service

2.1 Statistics: Uptake of AST

- Student uptake of available hours during the academic year averages 68% (Sept-Apr); last year student uptake of available hours was 56% (Aug-Apr).

- There was a notable fluctuation in number of appointments over the course of the academic year. (Weather in December and annual leave in January accounts for the disparity in uptake in these months). Percentage uptake per month is as follows:
• Last year’s statistics are included on the following page with this year's for comparison.

• Cancellations and no-shows were kept rigorously. The cancellation in AY 09-10 was at 15% which dropped in AY 10-11 to 12% of total hours across the year.

2.2 Statistics: Who uses Academic Support?

The following statistics are the results from Academic Support AY 2010-11. The
statistical analysis below includes measures of:

- Patterns of use (number of hours which students need);

- Distribution by disability;

- Distribution by class standing;

- Distribution by faculty.

In all graphical analysis, a distinction is made between the number of students seen and the hours for which students were seen, for purpose of comparing the parity of these numbers.

Patterns of use

Distribution of booked hours 2010-11
There is a reasonable parity between last year’s distribution of hours and this year’s with a slight proportional increase in the time spent with students.

The statistics which follow refer to September 2010 to the end of the second week of April 2011. Statistics are adjusted to reflect the number of hours taken up relative to the hours provided.

- 114 students were seen by one AST from September 2010 – April 2011. 2 of these students used more than 10 hours of support taking up 8% of available hours. This is the same percentage as last year for this group.

- 8 students used more than one hour in the year but fewer than five hours; this group occupied 14% of available hours in AY 2010-11. This is a similar percentage of uptake compared to the previous academic year, when this group used 12% of available time.

- The highest level of uptake was the group that used 1-5 hours of academic support during the year. 45 students were in this category taking up 32% of available hours. Last year this group took up 22% of available hours.

- 56 students who met with one AST once only during the year which took up 14% of time compared to 12% in the previous academic year. A number of these students were first years who declined to avail of the service as they entered on merit and/or felt that they did not need to avail of the service.
- Meetings, training, project work, administrative tasks and student contact time in total occupied 32% of booked time which is a significant decrease from the previous year, when this accounted for 44% of AST time.

- Cancellations were at 9% as a percentage of overall time available but were not recorded here as they were recorded by the time spent during these hours on tasks undertaken and recorded this year under the admin/project/training category.

This is very similar to last year’s chart for Distribution of Disabilities:

There has been a drop in numbers with dyslexia using the service as we continue to streamline the provision of service and resources for this group. Needs assessment is now only for students who enter via the supplementary route. There are now increased resources and emphasis on online resources for students with dyslexia. There has been an increase in numbers of students with mental health difficulties in College and this is reflected
in the numbers availing of academic support. A similar number of students with DCD used the service compared with last year. Four students with a significant ongoing illness used the service this year, which is a new group. The numbers of students with physical/sensory difficulties is similar to previous years. These trends are also reflected in the percentage of time spent with students:

- The vast majority of students seen in Academic Support have specific learning difficulties (eg. Dyslexia) as their primary disability. 105 students (85% of all students seen) accounted for 80% of the hours spent with AST in 2009-10. This is a very similar breakdown to the previous year when 105 students (87.5% of all students seen) accounted for 84% of the hours spent between in AY 2008-09.

- 1% of time was spent with students with physical/medical disabilities compared to 10% in AY 2008-09
• 4% of time was spent with students with a significant ongoing illness, a new category.

• 10% of AST time was spent with students registered with a mental health disability compared to 5% in AY 2008-09.

• 10% of AST time was spent with students with a sensory disability compared to 5% last year.

Figure 1
Student uptake by College standing
(inside=no of students, outside=hours spent)
Two measures are provided in Figure 1. The inside ring represents the percentage of students who used Academic Support between in AY 2010-11 without taking into account the hours they were seen. The outer ring provides a “real” reading of these numbers by the hours spent in Academic Support. The results this year show more matched correspondence of hours spent per year group. As formerly, the primary groups using the service are first years, fourth years and postgraduate students.

Students in first year were the largest group seen, representing 44% of total students and taking up 33% of time. This is a significant shift from last year’s statistics when first years accounted for 67% of total students, taking up 51% of hours.

The percentage of second years’ appointments has increased slightly from 11% to 13% and the percentage of time spent with second years has increased from 9% to 17%.

The percentage of third years’ appointments has increased significantly from 8% to 14%. The percentage of time spent with them decreased slightly from 9% to 16%.

The percentage of fourth years’ appointments has increased from 11% to 18% and the time spent has increased from 16% to 24%.

The percentage of postgraduate students has increased from 7% to 11% and time spent with this group is 10% compared to 11% last year.
Two measures are provided in Figure 2. The inside ring represents the percentage breakdown by academic school of students who used Academic Support during AY 2010-11 without taking into account the hours they were seen. The outer ring provides a “real” reading of these numbers by the hours spent in Academic Support.

54% of students seen in Academic Support are from the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences faculty and they account for 63% of time. This reflects the nature of support the service is currently offering, which is focussed predominantly on essay support and study skills for lexical tasks. This is very similar to last year when the combined percentages of Arts, BESS and Social Sciences totalled 58%. This year the AHSS group took up 63% of AST time, which is identical to last year.
• Students studying Health Sciences make up 26% of students taking up AST support and account for 21% of time, which is an increase on last year for this group and reflects an ongoing trend of increase for this group.

• Uptake of students in the category of Maths and Engineering dropped considerably this year with 8% of students taking up 8% of AST time compared to 16% of students who took up 12% of time in AY 2009-10, although higher than the previous year (6% of taking up 4% of time).

3. Evaluation of Service

In AY 2009-10 a survey of students using the AST service was conducted. 56% of those surveyed had never used the service. Of these 21% felt that they did not have a need to use AST, principally because they felt they were managing their studies adequately, or were registered on courses where essay writing was not an important requirement (maths and science). However 11% of students reported no uptake as they were unaware that the service existed. The most popular reason for accessing AST was help with essay writing skills (31%), followed by proofreading (19%) and study skills (16%). With respect to future provision, 55% of students expressed an interest in online web tutorials, 26% in group sessions for academic skills, and 25% in formation of study buddy groups. These results informed service provision for AY 2010-11.

• Two online learning forums were evaluated: wiziq.com and weebly.com. As wiziq has greater scope for interactive teaching allowing for use a webcam and microphone. Academic Support offered a number of classes and training for scribes during this academic year but there were technical problems that have to be resolved before using this more extensively for group sessions in the next academic year.

• Skills4studycampus, an online resources provided by Palgrave Macmillan will be trialled in AY 2010-11 with the purchase of a license for 1000 students. This will be piloted with a limited number of schools and student groups: Nursing, Social Studies and Drama, TAP, Mature, DS. Skills4studycampus is a fully interactive e-learning resource, comprising generic study skills modules.
3.1 Recent Developments

Needs assessment process

This year only students who entered via the DARE supplementary route were given a needs assessment appointment for AST. This session included completion of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and a short Library and ATIC visit. Academic Support has since relocated to the ATIC space. Prior to the needs assessment meeting, students were contacted via email and asked to view relevant podcasts on Needs Assessment, the LENS and Exam Accommodations, prior to attending their appointment.

Monitoring of web resources

Google analytics, which provided statistics on use of AST web pages recorded 240 users in one month since Google analytics was installed. The uptake of individual podcasts created by Academic Support was also monitored. There are currently 12 podcasts available via YouTube with viewing statistics as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maths and language waiver explained</td>
<td>156 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing</td>
<td>434 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Databases</td>
<td>103 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Library</td>
<td>395 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam accommodations explained</td>
<td>148 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell Note taking method</td>
<td>374 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive Technology</td>
<td>295 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam Tips</td>
<td>224 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to use Texthelp</td>
<td>194 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining the LENS</td>
<td>139 views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need assessment</td>
<td>89 views</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The month-to-month increase for the most frequently accessed podcasts since December 2010 is represented below:

![Podcast Access Increase Graph]

**DCD**

The number of students with ADHD and DCD who are attending Trinity College is increasing year on year, and it is anticipated that numbers for this group will continue to do so. In the main this is due to initiatives such as the Disability Access Route to Education, and to improvements in access to formal diagnosis. Both DCD and ADHD lie within the spectrum of Specific Learning Difficulties and are frequently co-occurring disorders, together with dyslexia. The complexity of DCD and high level of co-morbidity with SpLD and ADHD means that such students require significant supports within College in order to achieve their true potential. It is therefore vital that academic staff and service providers are aware of the nature of such difficulties, and how they might manifest themselves within an academic environment. It is also vital to have an in-depth understanding of best practice in providing reasonable accommodations and intervention programmes.

In the academic year 2009-10 a symposium was organised in Trinity College with four academic papers addressing current issues in higher education and disability. Academic Support and Unilink collaborated to examine and evaluate the supports available to students
with DCD at third level. In AY 2010-11 this project was extended to create a research study using Nominal Group Theory. A focus group has been set up to examine the needs of this emerging population with 38 students registered with DCD invited to participate.

3.2 Screening and assessment of students for specific learning difficulties

DS provides a screening service for specific learning difficulties, for all undergraduate and postgraduate students. Applicants must download a screening questionnaire from the website and submit this to DS, prior to booking an appointment. The Disability Officer responsible for screenings reviews the questionnaire and summarizes noted difficulties, before contacting the student with an appointment time. Screenings are conducted by a postgraduate student from the Masters in Applied Psychology. This degree incorporates qualification for the Certificate of Competence in Occupational Testing (BPS Level A). This student was also provided with training in test procedure, observation and reporting.

Screenings take place each Monday at 10am and 12pm in a room provided by the School of Psychology, and takes between 1.5 and 2 hours. The DO reviews the draft screening report and results before writing an interpretation and recommendations. The student is then invited to attend a feedback session where decisions are made with regard to next steps. Students are advised that on the basis of screening results they may register with DS for examination accommodations only. Funded support (AST and AT) can only be provided on submission of a full psycho-educational assessment to the National Access Office.

A review of the screening service is on-going, details of this research project can be found at the following link: http://www.tcd.ie/disability/projects/Screening.php DS has developed a valid and robust screening battery which reflects a full psycho-educational assessment, but does not include measurement of intelligence. It is hoped that findings from the research project will confirm that the DS screening report is an acceptable alternative to a full psycho-educational assessment for the purposes of funding. This year a trainee educational psychologist completed a placement with the Student Counselling Service, and provided two full psycho-educational assessments for two positive screenings. Both assessments confirmed findings from the new assessment battery. This is particularly important as whilst 148 students were formally screened between 2007 and 2011, only 19 of those students actively sought a formal assessment. Effectively this means that DS are currently providing
unfunded support for 129 students.

Screening statistics are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Screenings</th>
<th>07/8</th>
<th>08/9</th>
<th>09/10</th>
<th>10/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Dyslexia Screenings/positives diagnosis</td>
<td>26/13</td>
<td>52/34</td>
<td>45/29</td>
<td>43/30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 2008 onwards the screening and assessment service was provided solely by DS (previously this had been shared between DS and Student Learning Development), which accounts for the increase after this period. The majority of screenings were requested by students in FAHSS, 31% were requested by FHS students and of those 13% relate to students of Nursing and Midwifery.

The breakdown for student requests by course is as follows:
3.3 Future developments

- The majority of SLD students will register for the Disability Service online to receive baseline accommodations outlined in a document given after registration.

- AST will offer online group tutorials using online tutorial forum at wiziq.com to meet the demand for online and group teaching identified through the student survey on Academic Support conducted in AY 2009-10.

- Skills4studycampus will be piloted with a limited number of students (1000) to monitor uptake in AY2011-12.

- Continue the current screening process and monitor over the course of the next academic year. However a deadline for screening requests should be introduced to coincide with the exam accommodations deadline. Six students requested a screening within the 4 weeks prior to annual examinations. It is generally felt that students should take greater responsibility for identifying difficulties in good time.
4. Conclusion

115 students were seen by one AST during AY 2010-11. Student uptake of Academic Support averaged 68% during the academic year September to April 2010-11 with a high of 79% in January 2011. The distribution of students in terms of hours of uptake per student has levelled. In AY 2009-10 only 2 students (one with SpLD, one with a sensory disability) used over 10 hours of support. The number of students using over 5 hours is the same as last year and the number of students using over one hour has dropped while the number of students using one hour has increased.

Academic Support will continue to streamline provision of support, particularly for the students registered with specific learning disabilities (over 600 students). It is anticipated that the trend that has emerged this year of increased numbers of students with physical, sensory and mental health difficulties accessing individual Academic Support appointments will continue, while online and group work will be available for the majority of students with a specific learning disability. Academic Support will continue to develop online classes for the coming academic year.