Supporting Students with ASD at Third Level

Clodagh Nolan, Ph.D., M.Sc., M.A., Dip. COT., PG.Dip, Stats. Director of the Unilink Service and Lecturer Discipline of Occupational Therapy, Trinity College, Dublin
Aims

- Provide the context to this presentation
- Discuss AS and University Life
- Explore the model of support for students with AS at TCD from entering to graduation
- Students perspectives on managing college with AS
Context - Where are we now?

Past

- Less supports at secondary school & third level
- Less information on ASD

Now & Developing

- Increase in supports available
- Increased recognition and diagnosis
- Increased legislation
- Access routes to education - DARE Scheme
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AS / ASD</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind / VI</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/HoH</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyspraxia</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuro</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOI</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SpLD</td>
<td>1152</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>1108</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>1197</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>1199</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>2229</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>2397</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DARE eligibility by disability 2008 – 2012
The Transition
Secondary -v- Third Level
Secondary School
Third level education
ASD & University Life

- Living away from home (Nat. Autistic Soc, UK, 2006):
  - Self-care and domestic occupations responsibilities.
  - Role change; new demands.

- New university environment is challenging:
  - Social aspects of college (Adreon & Durocher, 2007).
  - Orientation.
  - Deadlines – assignments & exams (Graetz & Spampinato, 2008).
  - Unfolding events – difficulty establishing expectations.
  - Self-directed & varying teaching methodologies.

- Poor organisational skills (Adreon & Durocher, 2007).
- Poor self-advocates, decreased leisure engagement & social participation (Gleeson, Nolan & Quinn, 2012)
The Social Model of Disability significantly influenced the field of disability studies as well as educational perspectives. Society examined how it was supporting those with disabilities and the environmental barriers they were encountering. For students with disabilities: services were developed at third level institutions which focused on the environmental barriers to student learning: extra time in examinations, extensions on course work subject specific tuition & photocopying cards.
Reactive Model

- Learning support
- Disabled student
- Academic liaison and advocacy
- Reasonable accommodations
- Physical accessibility
Therefore how do we support students rather than throwing a barrage of supports at them???
Features of the Unilink Service

- Flexible and responsive service
- Establishes therapeutic, collaborative relationship
- Student-centred, driven & led
- Individual sessions on & off campus – contacted via email; texting; phone.
- Occupation-focused service, that is practical & focuses on daily occupations
- Ethos of learning skills to function in the ‘here & now’
- Guided by professional models of practice
- Research-based
Person
Environment
Occupation

Occupational Performance
“Recovery is a deeply personal, unique process of changing one’s attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and roles. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life, even with the limitations caused by illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one’s life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness...”

(Anthony 1993)
The Unilink Process

1. Referral.
2. Assessment of student-perceived need (various assessments used on a needs-basis; TSP).
3. Weekly meetings with students (or as required).
4. Contact as needed via phone, text.
5. Reports back to referral sources – all reports co-signed by student.
Interventions: what the students with ASD and therapists do in Unilink

Some examples of the interventions we use are:

– role playing social interactions/situations
– developing non-verbal communication skills
– making out timetables and setting weekly goals
– developing healthy and balanced routines
– helping with assignments – outline, structure, planning, research, developing study techniques
– planning and organisational skills development
– develop strategies to manage mental health difficulties
Interventions: what the students with ASD and therapists do in Unilink

• providing environmental management/adaptations/suggestions
• providing hands-on orientation of the college environment
• providing relaxation strategies and anxiety management
• providing practical help with understanding and using college systems
• breaking tasks down – activity analysis, chunking
• making suggestions for eating & snacking
• advocating for the student
Pathway’s Model of Support for Students with disabilities
Engaging students across the student lifecycle (entry to graduation) requires an individualistic approach and therefore the Disability Service & Unilink at Trinity College designed a service that would have a three phase structure which is proactive in its design and takes account of the student journey (Doyle, Reilly & Treanor 2012).
Phase 1
• Phase 1: Pathway to College
  • Pre-entry, admission and the first year experience

Phase 2
• Phase 2: Pathway through College
  • Building and maintaining a college career

Phase 3
• Phase 3: Pathway to employment
  • Transition to further study or employment

Pathway’s Model taking account of the total ‘Student Journey’ from pre-entry to employment or further education
Phase 1: Pathway to College
Supporting students as they make decisions

- Individualised meetings with OT’s in supporting transition
- Open Evenings-designed for students with ASD and their parents
- Working with ASD Support Groups-lectures, talks
Take My Advice

We asked students to let us know what advice or knowledge they would have liked to have been given as a first year student. And this is what they said......

- Accommodation
- Asking for help
- Assignments, coursework and exams
- Books, libraries and resources
- Careers advice
- Living independently
- Money and budgeting
- Orientation
- Professional courses
- Social life
- Student services
Pathways Transition Assessment Tool (PAT)

There are five Units to complete:

Unit 1: Preparing myself for college
Unit 2: Independent living skills
Unit 3: Academic skills
Unit 4: Applying to college
Unit 5: Using college supports
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I should probably....</th>
<th>Done</th>
<th>To do</th>
<th>Now I need to.....</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before I visit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a virtual tour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tcd.ie/virtualtour/">http://www.tcd.ie/virtualtour/</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check buildings and rooms for accessibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at the Students Union website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore the Student Life website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tcdlife.ie/">http://www.tcdlife.ie/</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the Trinity News or University Times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.universitytimes.ie/">http://www.universitytimes.ie/</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at the orientation programme for previous years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tcd.ie/orientation/">http://www.tcd.ie/orientation/</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Download and print out a campus map</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tcd.ie/Maps/">http://www.tcd.ie/Maps/</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When I visit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have something to eat in the student canteen or restaurant.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pathways to Trinity Workshops

• Monthly workshops for students provided by OT’s & DO in order to prepare students for the transition to University.

• Sessions focused on:
  • Managing stress & sleep hygiene
  • Developing skills for learning
  • Self determination and self advocacy
  • Understanding the demands of the university student role
  • Ways to manage my health

• Students with AS attended: 4 prospective students
AS Support Service

AS Video Wall
Check out these videos of students with Asperger’s Syndrome talking about their experiences of university life in Trinity College Dublin.

AS Website launch
Recently our AS Website was launched by the Minister for Health Dr. James Reilly. Click to view the launch and the great speeches made by students involved in the site.

AS Resources
- The A-Z Guide of Asperger’s Syndrome by Dr. Zehanne Kenny
- Third and Fourth Level Guides to Education
- Please see the following links for student guides on helping you manage your role as a student with Asperger’s Syndrome at 3rd and 4th level education:
  - 3rd Level Guide
  - 4th Level Guide

Additional Resources

Contact Us
For more information about the supports and services available for students with Asperger’s Syndrome, contact:

Claire Gleeson
Occupational Therapist, Unilink Service
Phone: 085 7585835
Email: cgleeson@tcd.ie
Website

Deolan Treanor
Director of Disability Service
Phone: 01 8983475
Email: dtreanor@tcd.ie
Website

Films produced by James Dunne and funded by Trinity College Equality Fund.
Welcome Day - Getting to know Trinity

• Orientation/Welcome Day for students with ASD
• Day Schedule
  – Getting to know Trinity - Being a Fresher Student
  – Campus Tour
  – Meeting the DS and SU
  – Being a student learner
  – Getting to know TCD Computers/Library
  – Tour of BLU Library
  – Questions and Answers??
“Everything seems clearer now as a result of the Welcome Day”

“I now know what I must do in the coming weeks”

“I feel better prepared for college & I enjoyed myself.”

“I learned about college, I met new people and help was given to all my problems”

“I wanted to look around and learn about Trinity and I did that!”

“I came to learn names and find my way around”

“Between meeting important staff and being shown around I found I gained the information I wanted.”
Phase 2: Pathway through College

College Life: Building and maintaining a college career...the bigger picture
Phase 2 Supports

- Students with ASD can avail of a number of supports in college:
  - Weekly individualised student centred Unilink appointments with OT
  - Weekly Social Leisure Group
  - Mock exams
  - Low Distraction Exam Venues
  - Meeting with DO-advocate; LENS etc.
Mock Exams & LDV

- Student have the opportunity to experience exams scenarios; reduce anxiety, familiarity

- TCD also provide LDV for students with sensory difficulties.
LENS & Advocate

- LENS: determines the level of services the student may require. The information in the LENS report is made available to the relevant staff within the College (i.e. teaching staff, DS personnel, your Tutor) to help them also provide assistance.
Phase 3: Pathway to Employment
Overview

• Supporting students getting Internships; 2 students with Internships last year
• Workshops- developing CV’s, disclosure & interview skills
• Development of work readiness skills and managing health & wellbeing in the workplace
• Employment booklet developed for use with students
Student Perspectives on University
What do the students want??
Review of the Unilink Service - Audit
1. Audit of files (n = 29)
   - Identified 32 variables relating to:
     • Personal details
     • Use of service
     • Assessments taken
     • Intervention goals

2. Client-Satisfaction Survey (n=12)
   - 19 questions relating to:
     • Contact methods
     • Therapeutic sessions
     • Assessments utilised
     • Progress
Part 1: Audit Results
| Gender       | 27 Males (93.1%)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Females (6.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Mean = 20 years; Median = 20 years; Mode = 18 years; SD = 2 years; Min = 17 years; Max = 26 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Year of study| Junior Freshman (1\textsuperscript{st} Yr): n= 10  
|              | Senior Freshman (2\textsuperscript{nd} Yr): n= 6  
|              | Junior Sophister (3\textsuperscript{rd} Yr): n=7  
|              | Senior Sophister (4\textsuperscript{th} Yr): n=2  
|              | Masters Level: n=1  
|              | PhD Level: n=3 |
| Faculty      | Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences: n =13 (44.8%)  
|              | Engineering, Maths and Science: n = 15 (51.7%)  
|              | Health Sciences: n = 1 (3.4%) |
| Additional diagnosis* | Depression: n = 4  
|              | ADD/ADHD: n = 4  
|              | Dyspraxia: n = 3  
|              | OCD: n = 3  
|              | Anxiety: n = 2  
|              | Dyslexia: n = 1 |
| Living Situation | Living at home n=14 (48.3%) |
|                | Living independently: n = 15 (51.7%) |
# AS Service evaluation: Audit Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>Number of Students completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Student Profile</td>
<td>N=25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Occupational Self Assessment</td>
<td>N=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory Profile</td>
<td>N=7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Wheel Assessment</td>
<td>N=11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Styles Questionnaire</td>
<td>N=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interest Checklist</td>
<td>N=1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Students’ top five most difficult and least difficult concerns identified on the TSP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern: Most difficult</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Concern: Least difficult</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting started with study</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>Managing medication</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing how best to study</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>Managing alcohol intake</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procrastination</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>Getting to the exam hall</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining concentration during study</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>Using computers</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving goals</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>Avoiding other substances (e.g. drugs)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage in College</td>
<td>Concerns (Score)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Cycle (N=30)</td>
<td>Getting started with study (122)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowing how best to study (121)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining concentration during study (115)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achieving Goals (113)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procrastination (107)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Cycle (N=10)</td>
<td>Getting down to writing (53)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting started with study (51)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procrastination (47)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing anxiety (46)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achieving goals (46)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Years (N=8)</td>
<td>Being confident (47)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making friends outside college (41)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making friends inside college (40)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting enough good quality sleep (38)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining good mental stamina/endurance (37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicating with people (37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicating with other students (37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Goals

Academic skills

Understanding College systems & meeting college demands

Lifestyle Design/Social Relationships

Anxiety Management

Organisational & Time Management skills
Students Use of the Service

- Total number of appointment: 550 appointments.
- Mean number of appointments: 19
- Standard Deviation: 20
- Weekly use of service: n=21 (72.4%) Fortnightly: n=4 (13.8%)
- Once/Twice per term: n=3 (10.3%)
- Contact outside sessions: Text Messages: Mean: 33 (sd.= 31)
- Email: Mean: 9 (sd.=18)
Part 2: Student Satisfaction Survey- The Student’s Perspective
Students Preferred Method of Contact

- Preferred method of contact to arrange sessions was texting (83.3%)
- When discussing problems preferred to communicate by email (n=5, 41.7%) and texting (n=5, 41.7%)
- 58.3% (n=7) believed therapist was always available
- 66.7% therapist always available to meet
- 50% wanted to always meet the same therapist.

- “I found the service excellent – constantly available, helpful, listening to my problems and helping me deal with them, non judgemental, and responsive”
- “I emailed a fair bit (once or twice a week between sessions), feedback was good and supportive.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passed exams incl. graduated</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>5 (55.6)</td>
<td>10 (66.7%)</td>
<td>12 (52.2%)</td>
<td>22 (75.8%)</td>
<td>32 (82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed year</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (44.4%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 (30.4%)</td>
<td>4 (13.7%)</td>
<td>2 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-books</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
<td>1 (3.4%)</td>
<td>2 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrew from Course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (6.8%)</td>
<td>3 (7.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>23 (100%)</td>
<td>29 (100%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is the Future in supporting students with ASD at Uni??

- Unilink now provided in DCU, UCD, DIT & Marino
- To continue to provide student needs based services- listening to the voices of students & adapting to the need
- Encourage more & more students to think about the possibility of college life
Student Perspectives on University

AS Support Service

Disability Service
UniLink Service
Student Union
Tutor Service
Student Counselling
College Health Center
Student Societies
Sports Centre

Contact Us
For more information about the supports and services available for students with Asperger’s Syndrome, contact:

Claire Gleeson
Occupational Therapist,
UniLink Service
Phone: 085 7585835
Email: cgleeson@tcd.ie
Website

Deolan Treanor
Director of Disability Service
Phone: 01 8983475
Email: dtreanor@tcd.ie
Website

Films produced by James Dunne and funded by Trinity College Equality Fund.

AS Video Wall

Check out these videos of students with Asperger’s Syndrome talking about their experiences of university life in Trinity College Dublin

AS Website launch

Recently our AS Website was launched by the Minister for Health Dr. James Reilly.

Click to view the launch and the great speeches made by students involved in the site.

AS Resources

The A-Z Guide of Asperger’s Syndrome by Dr. Zehanne Kenny

Third and Fourth Level Guides to Education

Please see the following links for student guides on helping you manage your role as a student with Asperger’s Syndrome at 3rd and 4th level education:

3rd Level Guide
4th Level Guide

Claire Gleeson, Occupational Therapist, UniLink Service - Phone: 085 7585835 - Email: cgleeson@tcd.ie
Any Questions?
Thank you for listening!

Claire Gleeson Email: clgleeso@tcd.ie
Dr. Clodagh Nolan Email: nolancl@tcd.ie

http://www.tcd.ie/disability/AS
http://www.tcd.ie/pathways-to-trinity/
References


Thompson, D., & Emira, M. (2011). ‘They say every child matters, but they don’t’: an investigation into parental and carer perceptions of access to leisure facilities and respite care for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). *Disability & Society*. 26(1), 65-78.