Examining potential reasonable accommodations and supports for students experiencing mental health difficulties: Enabling Participation.

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The Student Journey – Service perspective: Trinity College Dublin - Disability Service Strategic Plan 2011-14

Phase 1 Pre-entry, admission and the first year experience

Phase 2 Building and maintaining a College career

Phase 3 Progressing through College to employment
Retention: Withdrawn by disability type 2003 to 2013
Student Role

1. Increasingly broad with employability and work-ready graduates seen as key outcomes

2. ‘Soft Skills’ & Graduate Attributes in addition to academic achievement and extra-curricular activities

3. Professional Development / Internship / Placement

4. Personal Development in the context of Disability (Management of self, disclosure, self-advocacy)
Employment

• RAs in mental health highly individualistic (Fabian et al., 1993) and require students that are self-aware and can self-advocate.

• Employers and employees may not be aware of what constitutes an RA, this can be a barrier to finding a job/ keeping a job (Fabian et al., 1993)

• Many do not disclose and therefore do not receive RAs due to fear of stigma (Mancuso, 1990)

• 80% of graduates do not disclose a disability (AHEAD, 2008)

• Combination of low rates of disclosure, lack of awareness of rights and reasonable accommodations in the workplace.
What are the aims of Reasonable Accommodation?
The Balancing Act

1. Enabling participation: The here and now of being a student (retention, progression, meeting academic demands)

2. Enabling participation: Building for the future (employability; graduate attributes; personal and professional development)
Philosophy....

• Aims to move from a transactional service delivery model, to a transformational resource.

• Process that moves from the provision of accommodations by the HEI (transactional) to a dialogue with the student in the acquisition of transferable skills (transformation).

• Student taking ownership of the accommodation, applying and refined to his / her life.

• Proactive strategy as opposed to traditionally reactive models.

• Facilitates the acquisition of skills such as self-awareness, self-determination and self-advocacy

• Student at the centre.
The Student Journey: An Opportunity to Learn and for Recovery?

• College can be an opportunity for recovery from an individual perspective through the development of personal self-management skills and strategies, the instilling of hope, and serves as a natural environment for social inclusion.

• College is perhaps the one time where an individual’s work, leisure, social groups, accommodation and support services are based in one location, (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2011) all presenting opportunities for learning through experience and personal reflection.

• Tailored support and provision of reasonable accommodation can enable retention and progression and prepare for the world of work.
Pre-entry, admission and the first year experience | Building and maintaining a college career | Progressing through College to employment

Needs Assessment, RAs in place, LENS report, Connection to department, Developing support structures in college, Course specific RAs, Ambassadors.

Support for repeat years, Deferral of exams, Extensions as required, Peer support, Transitioning in and out of college, Learning personal strategies, AT, Placement planning, Human Support, Onward referral.

Enabling participation: Engaging Students

• The supportive role in providing RAs is a key aspect.
• Strengths based approach.
• Not just focusing upon the academic roles, but what student is engaging in / has to do outside of academics.
• Maintaining a connection to staff, college, and to role of student.
• Support in developing own awareness of strengths and giving insight to the possible issues and pitfalls in college. Especially important with recent diagnosis / onset.
• Collaborative approach in fostering self-management and ownership of personal strategies.
Integrated Approach

• Student Counselling
• Health services within and external to colleges
• Tutorial System
• Peer Support (Formal and Informal)
• Careers
• Department
• Placement Supervisors
• Other Staff.....
References


