



TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
COLÁISTE NA TRÍONÓIDE, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF DUBLIN

Student Counselling Services Annual Report 2013-2014



September 2014

This report can be provided in alternative formats on request.

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Executive Summary.....	3
2013-14 Services Provided.....	5
Administrative Team.....	5
Counselling.....	6
Student Learning Development.....	16
Student 2 Student (S2S).....	19
Risks	21
Plans for 2014-15.....	21
Appendix 1: Sample student feedback responses from annual satisfaction questionnaires, 2013-14	23
<i>Sample themes & comments from the counselling questionnaire:</i>	23
<i>Sample comments from the SLD questionnaire:</i>	26

Executive Summary



Mission Statement: *The SCS is a confidential, student-centred service that seeks to assist College in reaching its objectives by promoting mental health and supporting positive learning. To help students achieve their full potential, it provides professional psychotherapy, student learning development and peer mentoring and support. It operates to standards of excellence using evidence-based, short-term interventions to assess and support students.*

Highlights, 2013-14

- The Service reached **over 5,700 students** (over 1/3rd of the student body), including:
 - **4,430** students involved in S2S mentoring programmes
 - **1,904** students receiving counselling support
 - **727** students availing of Student Learning Development support on-site and **2,076** attending workshops embedded within schools.
- Once again, students testified to the Service's quality:
 - **89%** of **counselling** clients reported **positive change** in their problems*
 - **Half of all respondents cited counselling as a factor in remaining a student at TCD**
 - **Over 70%** said counselling was a factor in helping them develop skills applicable to future employment
 - **70%** of **SLD** users giving feedback said their **problems improved** (2012-13 = 85%)
 - **40%** of feedback **credited SLD as a retention factor** (2012-13 = 66%)
 - Trinity's international students ranked the Service **No. 1 among participating UK & European services and No. 4 in the World** with their satisfaction ratings on the *International Student Barometer*.
- S2S diversified its programme of helping with student transition, reaching all JF, Erasmus, visiting student, and Diploma Course new entrants.
- The externally-funded Assistant Psychologist programme/partnership enabled the service to double its online provision to students.

* 30% of counselling clients completed the feedback survey

Key Challenges, 2013-14:

- **A waiting list for counselling was necessary throughout most of the year**, and over 50 students waited longer than 3 weeks for an initial appointment
- **SLD lost its full-time coordinator**, reducing staffing levels by 0.5 FTE, resulting in a decrease in workshop service provision.

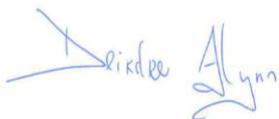
Risks, 2014-15:

- Sustaining service levels with unprecedented **funding cuts and steady referral increases** poses a significant, on-going risk
- **The S2S Mentoring programme remains at-risk** as funding is not consolidated. It requires at least 2 staff to administer, and the coordinator's contract expires May 2016
- **Un-replaced vacancies** from resignations, illness or maternity leave could cause staffing shortages, exacerbate waiting lists, and threaten service quality.

Plans, 2014-15

- Implement a **stepped-care model** of assessment, referral, and wait-list management
- Undertake a full **Quality Review** scheduled for January 2015
- Further embed **Assistant Psychologist posts** in the Service
- **Investigate supplementary funding** sources to support continued service provision and service development.

We in the Student Counselling Service would like to thank all members of College staff for their enduring support in helping provide efficient, quality services to Trinity students throughout the year.



Dr. Deirdre Flynn
Director
Student Counselling Services
Trinity College Dublin
September 2014

2013-14 Services Provided

5,711 unique students received services

= 34.1% of TCD Students *

(Min. estimate without double-counting)

Counselling

1,904 Clients (11.4% of TCD)

9,723 appointments attended

SLD

727 Clients & 2,076 outreach programme contacts †

3,017 student contacts

S2S

4,430 participants, including:

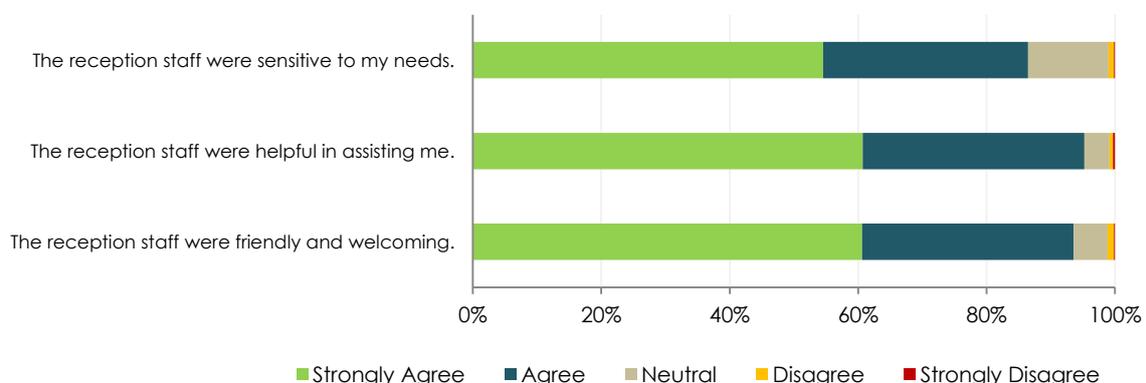
- 3,827 Mentees

- 580 volunteer mentors

Administrative Team

The Admin Team – comprised of the part-time Administrator, Senior Executive Officer and Executive Officers – worked tirelessly to meet student needs this year, ensuring both a warm reception experience and general operational efficiency. Feedback from users is summarised here:

Please indicate your level of agreement for each of the following.



* 34.1% is a conservative estimate for uptake of services as all possible overlaps have been factored out (e.g., JF counselling clients, S2S mentors, SLD outreach clients).

† "Clients" indicates unique students, while "contacts" refers to the number of attendances rather than unique students and may include overlaps.

1,904 Counselling Clients

1,606 face-to-face,
603 online,
305 used both

9,723 Counselling Appts., of which:

- 6,293 One-to-one (↑ 14% on 2012-13)
- 2,242 Online (↑ 119%)
- 1,188 Group (↑ 45%)

11.4% of TCD students used counselling

UK = 4.6%
(Cambridge = 8.7%)
USA = 11.4%*

4,700 case management tasks performed

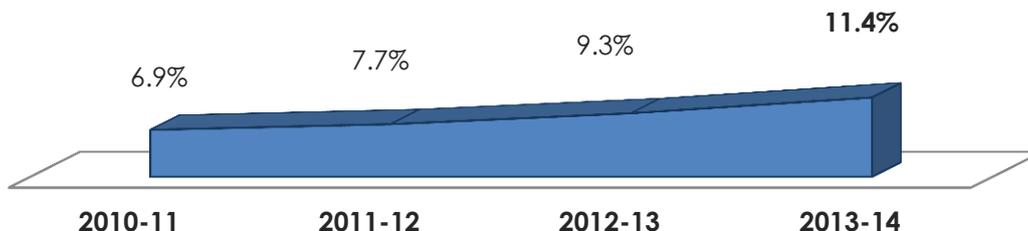
19% of all Students registered with the Disability Service & 16.6% of all Mature Students (SD') rec'd counselling

70% increase in clients since 2009
(2009 = 1,119)

281 Drop-in assessments provided
307 Emergency sessions given

4.05 Face-to-Face sessions/ student avg. (5.1 incl. online)
UK = 4.5
USA = 6.2*

Percentage of TCD students using counselling services, 2010-14



Over 1/10th of the College population used counselling for the first time in the history of the SCS. As the above graph shows, growing demands for counselling supports made this milestone predictable. Increasing severity of student issues has no doubt influenced this growth (see section below “Why students come to the SCS” on page 9). Thus, the SCS has worked hard to maximise resources and diversify service models so that students can continue to access suitable supports. Drop-in assessments, greater use of groups, and particularly the online support programmes –

*Gallagher, R.P. (2013). National Survey of College Counseling.

♦ Special Dispensation access route.

which more than doubled – are examples of such diversifications, accounting for a large amount of the 2.1% increase since last year. Of note is that the service matched the USA 11.4% benchmark for students served (2013 average for 4-year institutions with more than 15,000 students). Service levels over the past 3 years are summarised in the table below, including online clients:

	<i>2011-12</i>	<i>2012-13</i>	<i>2013-14</i>
No. of Counselling Clients	1,305	1,542	1,904
No. of Counselling sessions (including group and online)	5,853	7,409	9,723
Average sessions per client	4.5	4.8	5.1

Who uses counselling?

Each year a broad range of students use counselling services. Demographics of the 2013-14 clients are summarised below, with particular attention paid to non-traditional student groups.

Client gender ratio and percent of College served

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Percent of Clients</i>	<i>Percent of TCD served</i>
Female	65%	13.0%
Male	35%	9.4%

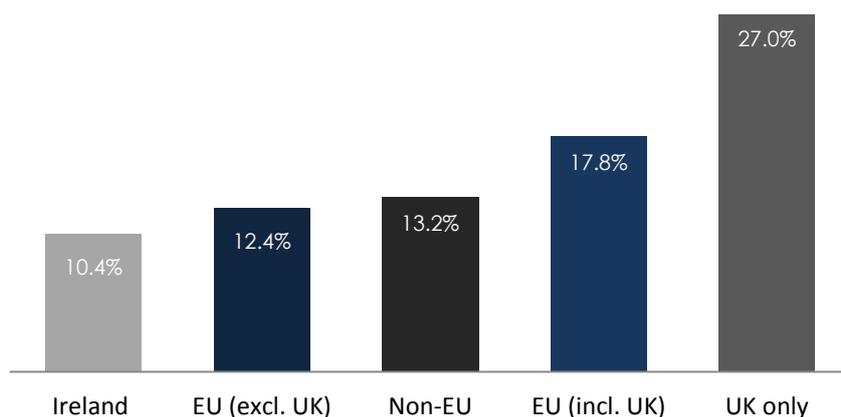
Undergraduate / Postgraduate status ratio and percent of College served

<i>UG/PG Status</i>	<i>Percent of Clients</i>	<i>Percent of TCD Served</i>
Undergraduates	76%	11.8%
Postgraduates	24%	10.6%

International Students

13.2% of all non-EU students at TCD attended counselling. See the table below for comparison to other nation of origin data:

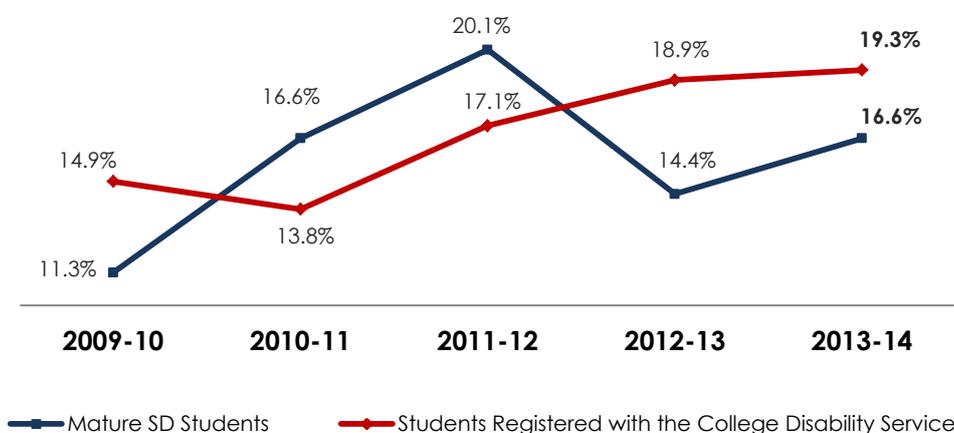
2013-14 percentage of TCD seen for counselling by nation of origin



These ratios repeat annually, and give credence to the research data on the unique psychological challenges of living/studying abroad. The SCS has worked hard over the past decade to assist international students with these challenges, and is pleased to have again ranked highly in the International Student Barometer, last year achieving the highest student satisfaction score for a European counselling service among participating universities. College’s aim to more than double non-EU student enrolment gives the SCS - with commensurate resources - the opportunity to continue supporting international students’ success.

Students with Disabilities and Mature Students (Special Dispensation)

Students registered with disabilities and mature (SD) students continue to be overrepresented, with percentages of these groups seen for counselling detailed below:



The above graph shows an increasing trend where nearly 20% of all students registered as having a disability attended the Service, the largest cohort being those indicating a mental health disability.

As the number of students with disabilities in College continues to increase, this may have significant implications for the SCS’s ability to provide timely and effective supports. Mature students continue to present in higher proportion than traditional students.

Why students come to the SCS

All counselling clients complete a number of intake questionnaires which allow an aggregate picture to be compiled of both the types and severity of issues they bring. 2013-14 is compared to 2012-13 in the table below, showing the top 9 broad categories of concern which clients bring to the Service. Presenting issues often overlap, or, are “co-morbid.” 8 of the 9 issues increased in frequency:

<i>Presenting issue category</i>	<i>Percent of clients citing issue</i>		<i>Change</i>
	2012-13	2013-14	
Anxiety Issues	61.8%	75.0%	↑ 13.2%
Depression & Mood Issues	59.2%	68.8%	↑ 9.6%
Academic Concerns / Anxiety	38.9%	42.6%	↑ 3.7%
Relationship Issues (incl. family)	38.5%	32.4%	↓ 6.1%
Welfare & Employment Issues	7.4%	13.9%	↑ 6.5%
Suicide & Self Harm Issues	9.5%	13.1%	↑ 3.6%
Eating Disorders / Body Image Issues	9.7%	12.9%	↑ 3.2%
Loss / Bereavement Issues	11.3%	12.6%	↑ 1.3%
Addictions / Substance Misuse Issues	7.0%	9.8%	↑ 2.8%

Cases involving risk of harm to self (personal safety concerns, such as suicidal thoughts/behaviours, deliberate self-harm and high-risk behaviours) have risen 5% since 2011, to 13% of all face-to-face cases. This is a serious concern for the service.

The presenting issue data above is substantiated by the intake data from the Counselling Centre Assessment of Psychological Symptoms-34 questionnaire (CCAPS-34). Completed by clients before their first in-person appointment, CCAPS-34 is a widely-used psychometric measure of the severity of various problems that university students experience. TCD average CCAPS-34 scores are compared in the table below to standardised norms, showing that TCD clients consistently scored

higher on severity in all areas than their USA peers (e.g., TCD clients of the SCS had Generalised Anxiety scores *0.36 of a Standard Deviation higher* than the US norm for university students).

2013-14 CCAPS-34 intake scores vs. USA norms by subscale

<i>CCAPS-34 Subscale</i>	<i>TCD Average Score</i>	<i>USA Average Score</i>	<i>TCD Standardized Difference</i>
Depression	1.87	1.53	0.33
Generalised Anxiety	2.17	1.81	0.36
Social Anxiety	2.00	1.77	0.23
Academic Distress	2.31	1.88	0.38
Eating Concerns	1.04	0.99	0.04
Hostility	0.95	0.92	0.04
Substance Use	0.97	0.67	0.33
Distress Index	1.96	1.64	0.38

International figures confirm that increases in the prevalence and severity of specific symptoms are part of a trend toward greater numbers of students with significant psychological problems at universities. Indeed, 95% of directors of USA 3rd-level counselling services feel that the severity and incidence of such issues are increasing over the past five years. * As can be seen from this section, TCD shares in this trend.

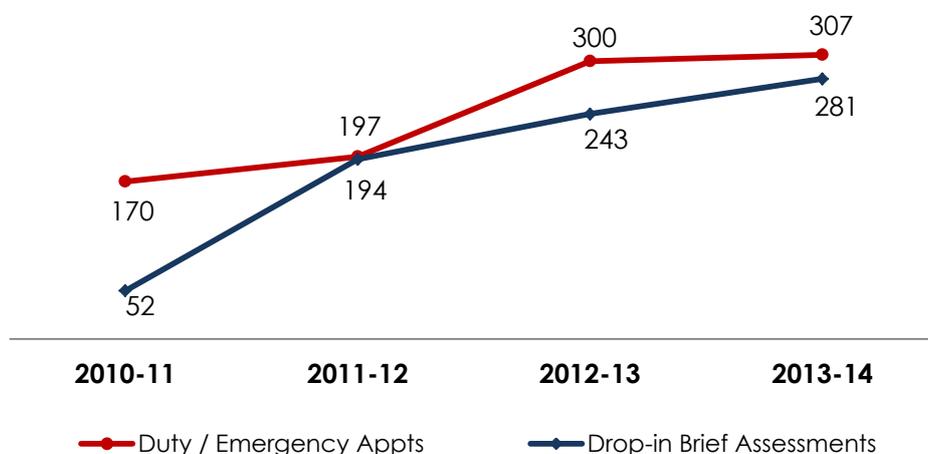
As with previous years, students report that the problems for which they seek support adversely affect academic progression and retention, with **over 55% of clients reporting academic impairment** from their issues, and **10% reporting high risk of drop-out**. The SCS thus has a clear motivation for providing swift access to services: increasing incidence and severity, coupled with impaired performance and drop-out risk require the Service to respond before students fail.

Timely Access

It is crucial to respond to the rising number of requests for services as quickly as possible and to do so within the constraints of the academic year structure. The Service has operated an ethos of timely access since its foundation, and has fine-tuned its practices as client numbers have swollen. Staying open during the lunch hour and Tuesday evenings until 8 p.m. were changes voluntarily introduced by the staff to address this need years ago. Lunchtime drop-in sessions are now a popular way for students to obtain an initial needs assessment. In addition, the number of

* Gallagher, R.P. (2013). National Survey of College Counseling.

emergency appointments (for urgent problems, e.g. risk of harm to self, drop-out risk, crises and/or traumas, typically booked on the same day) remains at an all-time high. The chart below shows the growth in emergency sessions and drop-in appointments over the past 3 years.



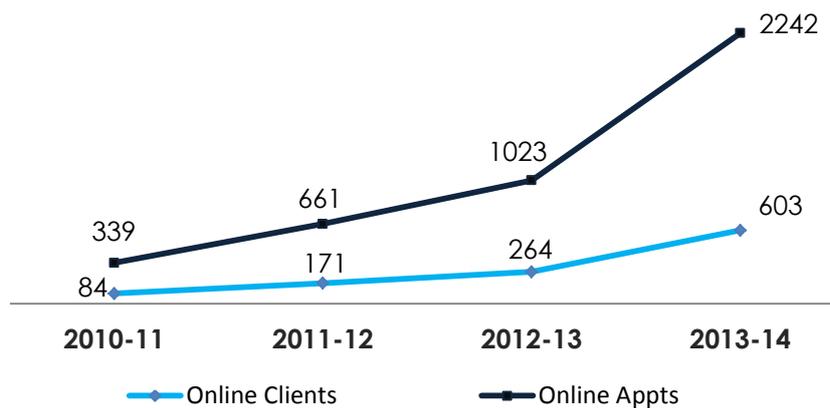
NB: Drop-in Brief Assessments were offered on a pilot basis in 2010-11 during Trinity Term.

Access to services remains resource-dependent regardless of staff innovation, as there is a finite number of appointments which can be offered. The majority of students are able to book an initial appointment within a fortnight of contacting the service, however, 287 students were placed on a waiting list for such an appointment over the course of the year. While the Admin Team worked hard to fill cancelled and rescheduled appointments so that most of these students could meet a counsellor within 2 weeks, unfortunately over 50 of these students had to wait 3 weeks or longer for this meeting.

Growing Online Support Services, 2010-14

For many years the SCS has utilised the internet to deliver accessible, relevant, and evidence-based psychological supports. This is an efficiency which allows the Service to reach more students spending fewer resources through a stepped-care, therapist-monitored approach. In 2013-14 our strategic partnership with SilverCloud Health Ltd. (SCH) further evolved with the placement of 2 Assistant Psychologists in the Service to conduct a large-scale study on the effectiveness of the “Mind Balance –Anxiety” programme. Funded by SCH, this randomised controlled trial attracted 327 students, more than doubling the number using online supports (see graph below).

Number of online clients and online counselling appointments, 2010-14



Feedback on the SilverCloud programmes is largely positive, and it is hoped that clients will increasingly use such supports as an initial step in addressing the biggest problem areas of anxiety and depression before using higher intensity supports like face-to-face counselling.

Feedback on counselling

590 counselling clients gave feedback on their experience of the Service (30% of all clients). **Nearly 89%** of these **reported positive change** in the problems they initially brought to counselling (30% “improved greatly”). Feedback is summarised below on counselling’s contribution to key student outcomes like retention, academic performance, student experience, and generalisable skills. **Notably, half of all respondents cited counselling as a factor in remaining a student at TCD.**

<i>To what extent would you say...</i>	<i>The most significant factor</i>	<i>An important factor</i>	<i>One of many factors</i>
<i>Counselling has helped you to stay at College?</i>	6.4%	24.1%	20.4%
<i>Counselling has helped you do better in your academic work?</i>	6.7%	29.4%	25.4%
<i>Counselling has improved your overall experience of College?</i>	5.4%	39.6%	27.3%
<i>Counselling has helped you develop skills that might be useful in obtaining future employment?</i>	11.6%	32.5%	27.3%

(Remaining response choices were: “To a limited extent” “Not at all” or “This was not an issue for me.”)

419 students gave qualitative feedback (774 distinct comments). **65% of these praised the service** – a sub-theme being that counselling provided invaluable support in a time of serious need (see sample comments in Appendix 1). Just under **10%** of comments took issue with **service resources** (e.g., 8 session limits, wait times, appointment spacing), down from 11% of comments in 2012-13), and 25% in previous years. The Service aims to reduce these comments to 5% of all feedback, and appreciates College’s continued support in providing students with the counselling resources to meet this goal. **13%** of comments offered **suggestions** for improving the Service, such as enabling easier access to appointment booking through the internet (currently being trialled in the UK). Finally, **11%** of comments were **critical**, many of these stating that the service received was not suitable for their needs. Suggestions and criticisms inform annual planning discussions on how services can be improved.

Clinical Outcomes

798 clients (approximately 51% of 1-to-1 clients) completed a psychometric measure of general wellbeing before each counselling appointment (the Outcome Rating Scale, or ORS). **78% of clients scored in the “clinical” range at intake** (indicating lower levels of well-being). **56% reached target outcome scores** on the measure. Using the ORS at each session helps monitor clients’ progress as they work to make changes. This progress feedback assists counsellors in providing a quality service, helps in planning treatment approaches, and in deciding when to conclude counselling. ORS data will be augmented in 2014-15 with repeated administrations of the CCAPS-34 questionnaire as described above.

Crisis Intervention

The Service coordinates the TCD Critical Incident Psychological Response Team, which remains available 24/7 to assist the College in preventing widespread mental health difficulties from major emergency situations. Additionally, in 2013-14 the service responded to three (3) weekend crises involving students, while over 16 hours of crisis response work and 12 crisis-related queries received within working hours were logged in the service database.

Research Activities

- The College’s Student Death Response Plan was comprehensively reviewed by the Director of the Service, Dr. Deirdre Flynn.

- Some team members collaborated with SilverCloud Health, Ltd. on publishing the trial protocol for the RCT:

Richards, D., Timulak, L., Doherty, G., Sharry, J., McLoughlin, O., Rashleigh, C., Colla, A., & Joyce, C. (2014). Low-intensity internet-delivered treatment for generalized anxiety symptoms in routine care: protocol for a randomized controlled trial. Trials, 15, 145.

Consultation, Training and Development Activities

The Counselling Team provides on-going liaison and support of College staff (including tutors, supervisors, and other student services personnel) and external stakeholders (parents and other family members). In 2013-14 this comprised thousands of pieces of case management and advisory work. In addition, the staff delivered training and outreach services including:

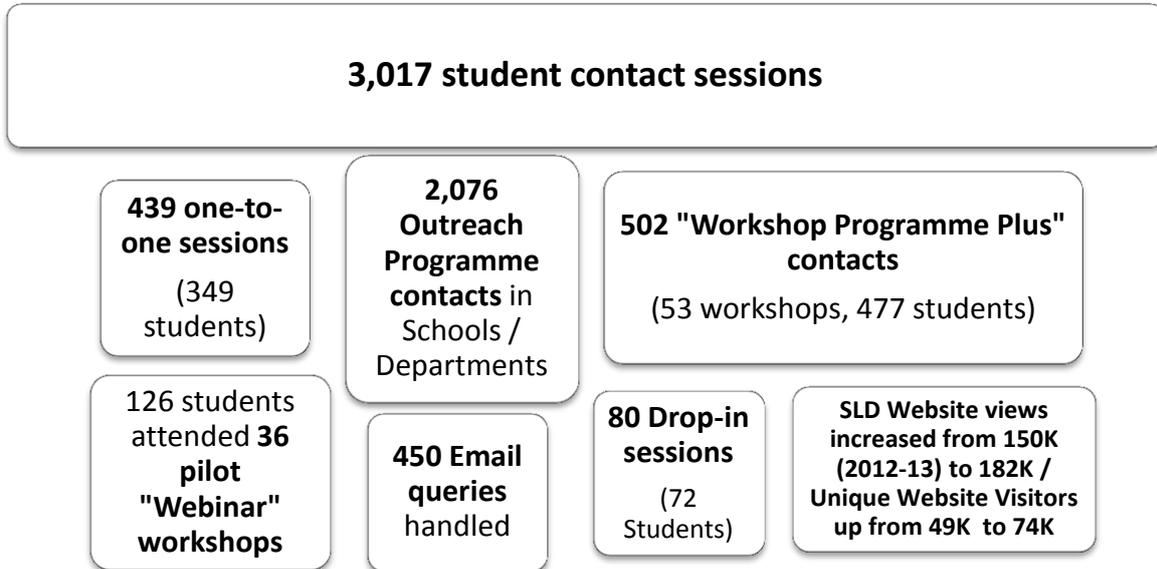
- **3 Critical Incident Psychological Response Team** training & organisational sessions (part of the College's Emergency Response Plan)
- **Over 15 hours of training courses for TCD Staff** (e.g. Campus Security Staff, Assistant Wardens, Trinity Hall Security, and the School of Nursing & Midwifery)
- **12 hours of support to the student volunteers of Niteline**
- **10 hours of orientation talks**
- **TCD Chaplaincy:** a partnership which stretches back nearly 20 years, an SCS counsellor co-facilitates the annual Bereavement Support Group with one of the chaplains.

External Partnerships & Collaborations

The SCS has formed numerous strategic partnerships over the past several years. These links help the Service address the mental health needs of students and include:

- **Aware:** provide a weekly support group on-site in TCD and also provide their Free 6-week Life Skills courses for TCD students
- **SilverCloud Health Ltd.:** as previously mentioned, the Service has helped develop and validate SCH's online mental health programmes and has in return been able to provide these services to all TCD students
- **Centre for Psychotherapy Research, University of Heidelberg, Germany:** for the past 3 years the Service has partnered on the **ProYouth** programme (an EU-funded initiative for the online prevention of eating disorders)
- **Bodywhys:** provide a support group in College for students struggling with eating problems and/or body image issues

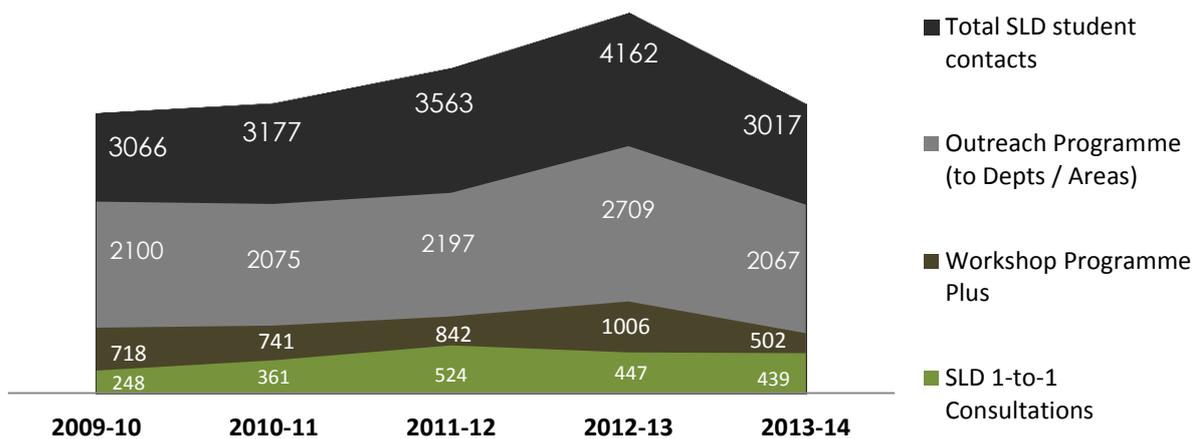
- **OCD Ireland:** provide a support group for students suffering with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- **The Marino Institute of Education:** The Service has a Service-Level Agreement to provide counselling and learning support to MIE students.
- **Console** facilitated 2 workshops for students bereaved by suicide.



662 unique students attended one-to-one and "Workshop Programme Plus" services (4% of TCD), while a portion of the 2,067 Outreach Programme students may have attended more than one programme.

SLD Contact Trend, 2009-2014

(No. of student attendances rather than no. students)



Current human resource policies meant it was not possible to replace the full-time SLD coordinator upon resignation in September. Though a part-time coordinator was appointed a concomitant reduction in workshops and outreach programmes ensued. As can be seen above, the SLD Team did succeed in preserving service levels to individual students. The team also produced a targeted marketing plan to reach out to students, make connections with academic staff, and raise

awareness of services. Always the Service leader in embracing new technologies, the team leveraged College's **Blackboard** system to make all its learning support resources available in this forum. Also, workshops routinely delivered on campus were simultaneously offered as "webinars" so that students could attend remotely. Altogether, 126 students availed of this pilot service.

Why students come to SLD

Many of the students who attend SLD are already high-performing, yet over 60% of SLD clients felt that their academic performance was suffering on account of skills deficits, anxieties, and other factors. While struggling with study is an essential part of learning, students may at times experience impairment in meeting these challenges and require extra support. The SLD Team provide **both undergraduates (406 unique) and postgraduates (243 unique)** with advice on practical generic study skills (approaches to literature reviews, thesis and academic writing, presentation skills, exam skills, etc.), as well as tailored interventions to teach key self-regulation skills that students frequently report they lack, including:

- Concentration and motivational skills
- Time management and anti-procrastination skills
- Engagement/participation skills

International Students

Successfully studying abroad requires meeting unique challenges: linguistic, cultural, and psychological. Not surprisingly, 8.3% of all TCD's non-EU students and 8.8% of all EU students accessed learning support compared to 2.8% of Irish students. SLD has long been aware of this disparity and will undertake research to understand the learning support needs of international students in 2014-15.

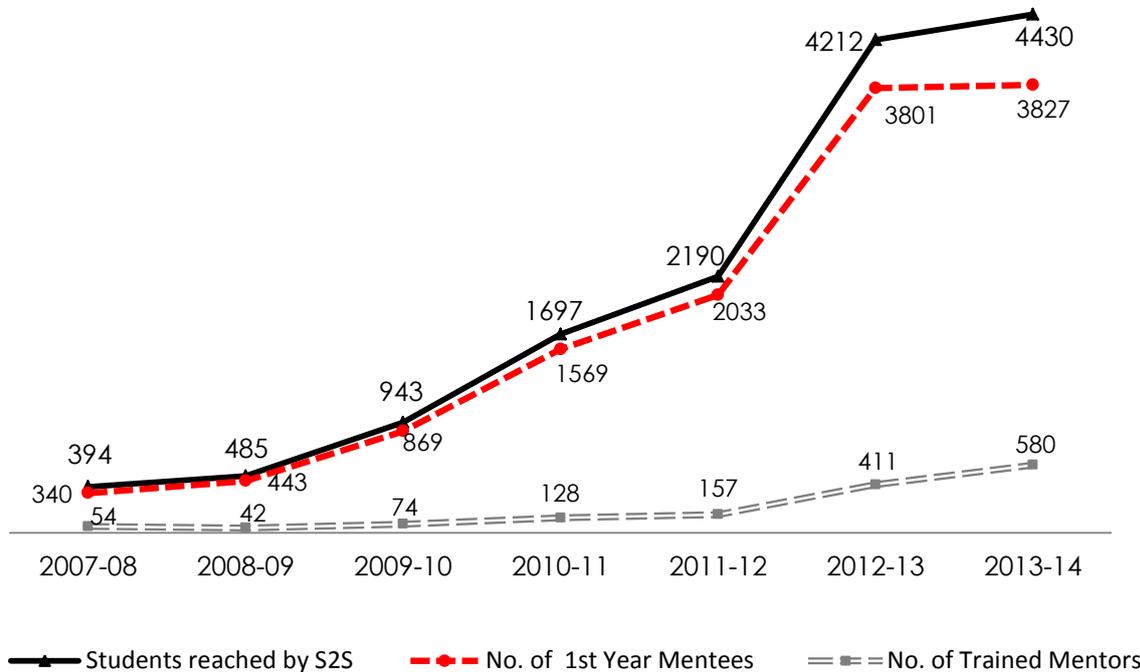
Retention

Nearly 27% of students attending SLD one-to-one appointments indicated some risk of dropping-out of College. Figures available for the previous year (2012-13 data, as 2013-14 progression data is incomplete) show that 93% of SLD clients returned to College the following year. While a number of factors impact on a student's ability to sustain and progress in their chosen area of study, it is clear that SLD assists numerous students in remaining enrolled. The feedback figures below also support this correlation.

Feedback on SLD

97 students who had attended SLD consultations completed a feedback questionnaire (28% response rate). Nearly **40%** said that SLD was a factor in **keeping them enrolled** at Trinity. Over 77% said that the issues they sought help for had improved. **313 workshop participants** gave feedback, 93% of whom felt their academic performance would improve after attendance. Students rated workshops **4.3 out of 5** for usefulness, slightly higher than in 2012-13.

S2S Mentoring Programme, 2007-2014



S2S succeeded in further embedding itself in the College community as an inclusive programme promoting student transition and civic engagement. As the above graph illustrates, the S2S Mentoring Programme continues to grow and diversify. The Mentoring Programme trains senior students to help new entrants develop positive relationships, establish social networks and build academic confidence. It aids new students in taking their first steps in Trinity by giving them a friendly, personal relationship with an experienced student from the moment they arrive for orientation to the end of their first year. The volunteer mentors – now involving 3.5% of the student body – also benefit greatly from the programme as they gain valuable extra-curricular learning and develop transferable skills necessary for future employability.

S2S Highlights

- All Junior Freshman and visiting/Erasmus were matched with trained mentors
- To accelerate academic engagement for new entrants, S2S worked with the College Library to facilitate mentor-led library tours during Orientation
- The “New 2 Dublin” programme was run in conjunction with the Global Room to help with the transition of new international students

- In partnership with the Mature Students Office a special Mature Student Mentor programme was initiated
- Diploma course students received mentors for the first time
- The Peer Support Programme – which matches students with trained peers for social support – expanded its training course and developed its links with the Students' Unions (SU & GSU) by including the SU Welfare Officer, SU Education Officer, and GSU Vice President as participants in its annual training.

Feedback on S2S

755 new entrants provided feedback on the S2S mentoring programme (20% of participants).

- 82% had established a relationship with their mentor, with half of these indicating the relationship continued during the academic year, such as with group meetings.
- 31% indicated that the mentoring programme helped in their remaining enrolled and progressing from first year.

Risks

- While great efforts have been made to balance smart use of resources and meeting student needs, the reality is that current funding for the service is inadequate to keep pace with demand. Unprecedented funding cuts, both outside and inside College, restrict the Service in supporting College in its strategic objectives of retention, transition, and enhancing the student experience. In the context of yearly increases in student referrals this poses significant, on-going risk to quality, which will impact negatively on students.
- The S2S Mentoring programme remains at-risk as funding is not consolidated. It requires at least 2 staff to administer, and the coordinator's contract expires in less than 2 years (May 2016).
- Un-replaced vacancies from resignations, retirement, illness or maternity leave could cause staffing shortages, exacerbate waiting lists, and threaten service quality.
- The College has yet to appoint a Child Protection Officer and remains vulnerable in this respect.

Plans for 2014-15

To further improve service quality and responsiveness to student needs, the Service will undertake several key objectives in the coming year:

- Implement a stepped-care model of assessment, referral, and wait-list management for counselling
- Undertake a full Quality Review scheduled for January 2015
- Identify new revenue streams to supplement the budget from Cista Communis
- Further embed Assistant Psychologist posts in the Service
- Develop a 5-year Strategic Plan for the Service
- Consolidate and embed staffing on both the S2S and Admin Teams

- Source and roll-out an electronic Time & Attendance system
- Identify and cost a suitable platform for the delivery of online counselling
- Continue to support College in its aspirations to climb in the World University Rankings and increase the number of international students by maintaining the excellent ratings received from this student cohort.
- Develop relationships with more external psychology and psychotherapy training programmes to increase supervised trainee opportunities.

Appendix 1: Sample student feedback responses from annual satisfaction questionnaires, 2013-14

Sample themes & comments from the counselling questionnaire:

A professional, sensitive, and helpful response from the Service in times of client need was praised often:

"I came to the counselling service at a time of emotional crisis in my life. I was in my final year and had many important deadlines.... From the first session I felt a sense of relief... Without the support of the service my academic work would have suffered greatly."

"I'm very grateful to the service...I had hit an incredible, incredible low and the counselling service literally saved my life that Thursday. I will never forget it. Thank you."

"I started using this service as I [experienced a trauma] and had very high anxiety levels. I found the service very helpful and welcoming. I found it really helped me cope with this traumatic event."

"I was going through a hard time in college, unable to concentrate or study. The service helped me a lot...I liked that it was confidential..."

"...I was experiencing panic attacks as a result of college stress. They were very understanding and helped me to develop strategies to calm myself before the panic could set in. I was able to complete all of my summer exams using these coping strategies. For this I am very grateful."

"My experience with the counselling has had a really positive impact on, not only my academic work but also on my self-confidence. I was going through a really challenging time ... By going to the counselling service... life has become a lot happier, stress free and I have become the confident person I was before. The counselling service went above and beyond their call to help me. I am extremely grateful for this."

Friendly, welcoming, and flexible service:

"The people working in SCS are welcoming, patient, and understanding. More urgent needs for a meeting are generally facilitated quickly and kindly, in my experience."

"I found the Service very accessible, from initial phone call on, the staff were kind, supportive and extremely helpful. The one to one sessions were key to my staying the course ...I felt understood, that I wasn't alone and that support was always there. I can't emphasise enough how much this helped me to not fall apart."

"I found the service to be superb. The staff were very helpful and friendly and did their best to work around my schedule to arrange appointments. My counsellor was excellent; extremely attentive and constantly asked for feedback on whether or not her approach was working for me. Cannot fault the service in any way."

"All of the staff that I had interactions with were friendly and helpful beyond what I might have hoped for, so thank you for that - it makes coming for help a lot less painful and embarrassing."

"It provided me with the support I needed during a difficult time and allowed me to talk freely about what was affecting me without fear of judgement. There were plenty of options available to me when booking an appointment in advance and the reminder text message was helpful."

Physical space praised as relaxing and ease of access to services appreciated:

"I would encourage any student struggling with any issues in college to get in touch with the Counsellors. They are so helpful, welcoming and approachable and I immediately felt settled and at ease when I first used the Service. I really liked the relaxing, almost homely setting and the way in which the Service offers different services to the students in order to cater for the varying difficulties that could possibly arise in college life."

"I was impressed with how quickly an appointment could be made for me..."

"I liked the familiarity and comfort of the waiting room, the bright, airy feel of the offices, all of these gave the impression of welcome and acceptance. Also the availability of the service over the holidays was definitely a plus."

"Luckily there was a waiting list and I was able to be seen 2 weeks after I called. I liked the emergency sessions because without it, my issues would have lingered on for weeks before they were resolved."

"Very responsive service with follow up by reception staff and counsellor when urgent appointment requests were made. Telephone calls returned."

"I loved the professionalism, and the caring attitude of all the staff involved. I also really liked the calming atmosphere of the waiting room."

"I was quite nervous but that quickly subsided... They created a very safe atmosphere where I felt safe to open up and show the emotions that were the result of my anxiety at the time."

Counselling's key role in student retention was mentioned:

"My experience with SCS has been amazing, without the support from the service I more than likely would have dropped out of college alongside having detrimental consequences to my existing mental health."

"The service has been invaluable. Outstanding results for me and my academic life and my personal life. Could not have completed my degree without this support."

"Excellent... the reason I will graduate :-)"

"My therapist was an essential component of my decision to remain in full-time education, and helped me immeasurably to stop self-destructive habits."

Selected Suggestions and Criticisms – Counselling

"I would like to be able to book appointments directly online, especially the first time. Took me ages to build up the courage to ring up... Completely anonymous online counselling would be good too."

"I think it would be beneficial if there were some more options available for the 20 minute lunch time appointment. I went twice quite in advance and they were booked out."

"I was given the impression that counselling is a limited resource and was worried that I'd be taking up service time that might be more beneficial to others."

"My sessions were cut short as the counsellor was only employed by the service for a limited time. To build trust with a counsellor and then for [the counsellor] to leave had a very negative impact on my overall experience of counselling."

"If I could change one thing it'd be being able to have more than eight appointments."

"I'm not sure how you could make the service more visible, but a bigger presence on campus would perhaps be helpful to those who like me needed help but didn't realise it."

"I found that the specific counsellor I was assigned wasn't initiating sessions in a style that suited me!"

"The hard limit of 8 sessions was regularly said – I think this is not helpful – the college should be more flexible."

"In an ideal world, I would like to see more workshops on anxiety and compassion for oneself."

"I understand that the non-directive nature of counselling is a principle of the practice, but I have found it frustrating whenever it feels like the counsellor is merely actively listening and reflecting back what I say."

"One thing I did not like about the service was the survey I had to complete before and after each session as I felt it was a little artificial and forced. I didn't feel very comfortable filling this out and didn't feel like it was of any personal help."

"Initially I saw a counsellor that, although very nice, I knew was not the right person for me. I was unsure how to 'not return' to that same [counsellor]. I suppose I didn't know how to go about changing."

Sample comments from the SLD questionnaire:

"I liked that the appointment was one to one. I felt listened to and that the advice was better tailored to my needs as opposed to it just being a lecture on study skills."

"I loved the welcoming atmosphere which helped me feel at ease. Attending the service was a hugely beneficial experience for me. I first made an appointment when I was struggling with my college workload and behind on several deadlines; the service helped me to organise myself and implement a plan of action to submit all my assignments and get as much revision done as possible. Ultimately I ended up passing the year, and I am sure that the SLD was one of the most important factors leading to this."

"I feel that these [seminars] may have helped were they more heavily promoted throughout the year earlier, or prior to exams periods starting - at the start of the year for example, an email saying 'Want to avoid the giant stress pile at the end of the year? Come in and get to know what we can do!' or some such. You may already do this, but with either I was not attentive enough to take advantage, or I didn't notice it."

"It being my first year at Trinity I didn't really know anything about how I should be studying. The person I spoke to at SLD helped me greatly as I was wasting a lot of time in the library and not getting much done. Personally I wouldn't change anything about the service."

"I was very happy with my experience, I found the waiting area comfortable and welcoming, it was easy to make an appointment, I was seen promptly and I found my appointment very helpful."

"I had 2 sessions at the start of this year and they were useful on giving me insights on how to manage time and procrastination."

"I was having problems with essay writing and the solutions were unfortunately mostly stuff I used already - pre planning and making notes etc. Had I not already had experience in these things it would have been more helpful but as it stood it all seemed very basic. Session still helped me brainstorm for how to approach essays, however it was useful if not fully suited to me."

"I used the dissertation writing workshop. It could be improved by including more sections of the dissertation, apart from just the literature review."

"I had help with an assignment. I feel like I struggle with organisational skills. I would like this service to be ongoing for me. To drop in every 2 weeks and then monthly but it was too late in the academic year for this to happen."

Office staff were very friendly and readily accommodated me. I saw [SLD counsellor] on my appointment and [counsellor] gave me tips to organise and how to manage workloads. It was an hour of strategic and focused help in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Overall a great experience and it really has helped me to plan better."

"... I would like to see more events for helping international students as they have some difficulties with academic language by somehow."