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SUPPORTING TRINITY'S ACADEMIC MISSION FOR OVER 25 YEARS

Since 1993, the SCS-SLD-S2S Services have grown to support over 28,000 Trinity students through their academic journey. These services provide expertise in mental health, social, and academic wellbeing for the whole Trinity Community.



Mission

Support through collaboration, connection and compassion.

Vision

To be an internationally accredited service, delivering accessible social, academic and emotional wellbeing initiatives across the Trinity community, keeping students at the centre of everything we do.



2019-20 Highlights



Over 2,200 students were served through counselling



Over 4,126 first-year students received S2S mentoring



6,000 attendances were recorded at SLD services

"I like the fact there are so many diverse forms of help for students.

University can be really challenging, so the fact there is such a multitude of possibilities to be helped is reassuring."

- Service User Feedback Quote, 2019

COVID-19: AN UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGE

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, when lockdown restrictions rendered the Trinity campus largely off limits, the Trinity Student Counselling Services (SCS, SLD and S2S) were presented with a unique challenge: how to support students when face to face contact was no longer possible?



The impact of the pandemic was immediate and severe, as demonstrated by the concerns that students presented to counselling appointments with between March – Sept 2020:

- 55% reported struggling with stress
- 51% with low mood
- 48% were encountering interpersonal problems
- 36% felt lonely
- 11% had experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings
- 28% were struggling academically.

COVID - PIVOT TO ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

It was clear that the Student Counselling Services needed to respond urgently. The Student Counselling Team, with the support of the Administration Team, immediately transferred counselling appointments, group sessions and workshops online. The Student Learning Development Team began delivering online appointments and webinars, transferring the Academic Writing Centre and the Writing Café onto online platforms. The Student 2 Student Team adapted student mentoring to Google Meet and Zoom platforms and revised experiential Mentor training to take place online.

COVID - DEVELOPING NEW RESOURCES

In addition to existing supports, it was apparent that customised new resources were needed. Together the Student Counselling Services generated a series of bespoke content, videos, webinars and self-help modules. This included rolling out two COVID-specific SilverCloud online programmes (SCS), contributing to Trinity's 'Learning to Learn Online' module for all new and continuing students (SLD), and creating 35 resources for the multi-institutional 3Set project, including a whole new model for peer-led orientation online (S2S).

COVID - SERVICE DELIVERY

The level of service delivery during the pandemic has been considerable. Between March - June 2020, the Student Counselling Team undertook 3,028 appointments, attended by 775 students. SCS also reached 177 students through webinars in this period and

supported over 100 through the SilverCloud web-based CBT skills platform. Student Learning Development recorded a rise of 349% in attendance at workshops between March – May 2020 compared to the same period in the previous year. Similarly, between March - June 2020, the Student 2 Student Team used online platforms to train an additional 8 student facilitators, 301 new Mentors and run 57 themed Google Hangouts. They also convened an Operations Team of staff from 11 HEIs and a national Student Advisory Group to design training and implementation of the first ever peer-led online orientation in September 2020.

INITIAL FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS DURING THE COVID CRISIS

The transition to online supports was undoubtedly difficult for some:

"There is no place to have a conversation without being partially overheard."

"Missing the face to face sit downs."

However, the feedback from students in surveys and questionnaires was emphatic: in the **Student Counselling** Team's 2019-20 survey, 84% of students felt that the concerns causing them to contact the service had improved:

"Since starting counselling I've felt more able to deal with my anxiety."

75% said that counselling had improved their overall experience of university:

"The service is fantastic and has stopped me from losing my college years to fear and depression."

And, importantly in the context of the pandemic, 55% felt better at adapting to change:

"The skills I learnt to deal with stress and to cope with a financial burden will stick with me for life."

In the **Student Learning Development** Team's 2019-20 Survey, 96% of students moreover felt that they had learnt something useful:

"Planning my tasks before I begin working on them. I will be able to identify why I tend to procrastinate and identify strategies of overcoming them so that I concentrate"

While 95% of students affirmed that they would implement these skills in their studies:

"I will set aside time this evening between 6 & 8 to finalise my smart goals and timetable and try stick to them and reevaluate weekly"

The feedback received by the **Student 2 Student** Team underlined this sense of care:

"Starting college, I expected to be thrown in at the deep end...the S2S Mentor programmes eased my worries about drowning."

"Virtual office hours and online Head Mentor meetings are much easier to fit around college."

"Though COVID has been devastating, S2S feels more connected than ever."

SERVICE'S AIM: MULTIPLY CONNECTIONS, AMPLIFY SUPPORTS

At the heart of the Student Counselling Services' response to the pandemic has been establishing connections with students and providing intensive support. We will continue with both to protect and promote student wellbeing at this time of immense uncertainty.

Student 2 Student (S2S)

S2S Mentoring provides social and transitional support for all incoming first year and visiting students.

S2S experienced a further decrease in total volunteer numbers, but also experienced a decrease in the number of withdrawals, which suggests clearer expectations and improved recruitment processes are having a positive effect.



S2S Service Levels

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
No. First Years Mentored	5,149	4,419	4,318	4,126
No. Volunteer Mentors	842	695	763	682
No. of Peer Supporters	32	30	32	25
Total S2S Volunteers	874	725	764	707
No. of Peer Supporter - Peer mtgs attended	88	127	104	89

Peer Support meetings ceased in March of 2020, and represented a 7% increase on the number of meetups from that same period the previous year.

S2S Highlights

 Expanded Mentor programme to include students from the Foundation Year course (TAP).

- Successfully completed the tender process for design of a new volunteer data management system (under 3Set Project, Work Package 3).
- Recreated experiential Mentor training for online delivery using interactive polling tools, breakout sessions, annotation functions and video content.
- Fully revised our participant-pace module on Blackboard to instruct Mentors in the 3Set Q&Hey exercise and new protocols for online meetups.
- Hosted a national symposium for peer-led transition co-ordinators under the auspices of 3Set's Work Package 3.

S2S Student Feedback

1ST YEARS

"(My Mentors) made my journey into Trinity much easier. They were always there to support me and have made my time in Trinity amazing. They are so friendly and approachable."

"I really engaged in my first week but after that didn't have time for meet ups due to commitment to a society so I guess I didn't need them!"

"I really felt like I knew my way around and wasn't completely lost."

"I really enjoyed meeting mentors who were experienced in my course of choice and who helped me get to know my course, classmates and Trinity in general better."

"They made a great effort to get involved and arrange things for the group to meet up. The only thing I didn't like was the size of the group - I think there is over twenty in my s2s group, as the class was split in half."

"...my experience with s2s was helpful and a great concept for fellow students to communicate and help each other in times of need before directly contacting college staff. it makes it more comfortable and less intimidating."

"Their emails are like a ray of sunshine!"

"I really felt that S2S was helpful and I became really close to the other students in my mentor group. I found that the weekly meet ups were a great way to maintain communication with the mentors. I also found the emails helpful, as they included information on college events and things we could get involved with."

"They have given me endless amounts of advice & at times have helped me to stay in college when I have felt the course is too overwhelming."

VOLUNTEERS

"I really enjoyed it, it was great to be able to help students who had the same experiences I did and make it less scary for them."

"I really enjoyed facilitating the mentor training sessions and definitely feel having done a fair few sessions by this point that I could take a greater role in presenting the sessions."

"It helps to develop a more empathetic and caring side I think! And also allows you to be more confident in the knowledge you have of college and your course."

"S2S, and in particular Peer Support, have been a major part of my college experience and I have not once regretted getting involved."

"Everyone involved has been so amazingly kind and fun, I'd sign up to S2S just for the weekly emails."

"Definitely helped me come out of my shell and feel confident in my abilities to contribute."

"Helped me with my communication, organisational skills, time management skills and it was nice to see that I was making a difference to students college experience"

"Organising meetups took a lot more time and effort than I expected and not many people showed up - even though we sent out invitations a couple of times." "Being an S2S mentor was one of the best experiences I've had during my studies at TCD. Thank you for the opportunity!"

"I really liked the time I spent with my mentees, as I've grown to become quite good friends with a few of them. In addition, mentoring really helped me realize what I have been and what I should be prioritizing in order to enjoy college."

"The staff in the S2S office have helped me more than words can describe over the years I've been volunteering, and the work that they do is so important to the health and wellbeing of all students."

"It was absolutely fantastic. I learned so much about myself and the mentees, and was able to develop my communication skills in a fantastic way. It has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my college career."

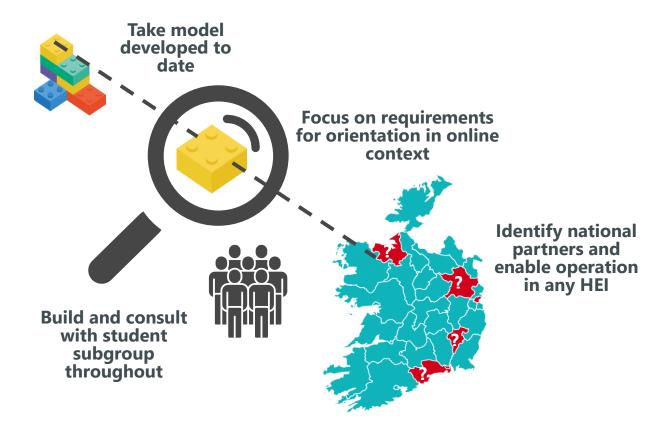
"Helping people is something that is very important to me, and I've seen first-hand how the immensely important S2S is for students and how it has helped so many. I'm very proud to be a part of this community and know that what I'm doing is helping students."

S2S Plans for 2020-21

- To build and implement a new volunteer data management system (under the 3SET Project).
- To develop the infrastructure and training for a Student Advisory Board to work with Counselling, SLD, S2S and our Administrative Team.
- Obtain our first **Investing in Volunteers Accreditation** (process scheduled from Jan 2020-June 2021).
- Develop online office hours for volunteer support.
- Create a Discord platform to host Mentor resources and allow for online social communication between Mentors and amongst 2nd year students.
- Redesign our Awards Ceremony for online delivery.
- Secure additional funding to sustain the S2S internship past September 2021.

- Successfully complete the pivot project within 3SET's Work Package 3 (WP3) to deliver peer-led orientation online.

3SET WP3 Pivot

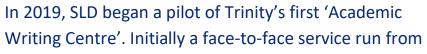


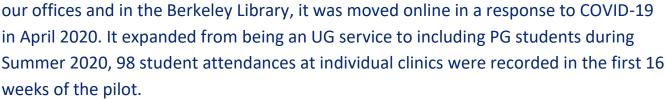
Student Learning Development (SLD)

SLD helps students reach their academic potential by providing a broad, relevant range of academic skills services.

SLD Highlights

All SLD services were redesigned and running successfully online in April last year, after the onset of COVID-19. Daily webinars ran from 18th March 2020 as an immediate response to student isolation and disconnect during College closure due to COVID-19.





SLD ran 161 academic skills workshops with over 5,200 attendances recorded, these included webinars and workshops, some in collaboration with colleagues and students across campus. Our events include PMRC 5 ECTS Module, PG Summer School, Library HITS, PG Transition and Trinity Writing Day.

Embedding Academic Transition skills as part of the HEA Innovation and Transformation Project, Work Package 3 in partnership with S2S.

The SLD Blackboard Module had 1,265 enrollments, an increase of 112% on the previous academic year.



SLD Metrics, 2016-20

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
SLD Workshops No. of student attendances (on-site/in schools/online)	4,208	3,734	4,058	5,231
Academic Writing Centre (individual services only)	n/a	n/a	n/a	98
SLD 1:1 Appointments (includes drop-in learning support)	508	462	589	346
Facilitated Writing/Study Groups	n/a	n/a	107	280

SLD Plans for 2020-21

- The Academic Writing Centre pilot was a huge success with self-booking now enabled for all students. Our plan is now to firmly embed the service via more secure contracts and effective communications and promotion within the University.
- Target more services for PG students affected by isolation during COVID-19 through collaboration with the PG Transition Programme and continuing our facilitated writing groups.
- Redevelop the PhD 5 ECTS module, in collaboration with the PG Advisory Service and the Counselling Service, to equip doctoral students with a personalised, reflective approach to their research practice and professional development, including wellbeing.
- Improve our student reach as part of a consolidated approach to marketing and branding, alongside using existing communication channels within the University and alongside S2S & SCS.

Continue to work alongside S2S as part of the HEA Innovation and
 Transformation Project, Work Package 3 with a vision to producing a funded and replicable model of student transition in the University into the future.

Student Feedback on SLD

"I found the service very reassuring in that I was experiencing dilemmas familiar to many students. The main reason I used the service was for advice on practical issues such as writing formats specific to Trinity. As someone who returned to college after 30 years, I found I was lost in terms of knowing how to access information, and plan a dissertation."

"I felt that overall the immediate help, support and guidance that I received with the SLD has definitely enabled me to become a more well rounded and confident academic."

"Planning and Managing my Research and Career module was the best decision I ever made in my PhD."

"It helped me find inspiration and guided me to write my first academic writing assignment."

"I was a third year mature PhD student struggling without school support. The service was excellent, accessible and very relevant. I wish I had found it sooner. An induction programme could have been recommended by school."

"The service takes time to book an appointment. so often my appointments are overtaken by events."

- 95% of students that responded said that they would make a positive change or changes in their practice because of the workshop attended.
- 95% of students that responded said that the workshop attended would help them improve as a student.
- 96% of students that responded said that they had learned something useful at an in-house workshop.

Counselling

The Counselling Service provides expertise in student mental health for the whole Trinity community.

Services are delivered in 4 locations: 7-9 S. Leinster St., Trinity Hall, Marino Institute of Education and in rooms in The Rubrics on the main campus, where the SCS currently uses 6 temporary counselling rooms.



After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an initial drop in counselling client numbers because all groups were cancelled in mid-March and didn't resume until September, when they were held online. Some students opted to wait for return to in-person appointments rather than take up the offer of telephone or video counselling appointments.

Counselling Highlights

Since 2016, the student body has grown by 7.6%. The number of students seeking counselling services has grown by nearly 22%:

Overall Clients

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total unique Clients	1,851	2,008	2,236	2,257
Total TCD Students	17,630	18,081	18,545	18,982
% of TCD Students served	10.5%	11.1%	12.5%	11.8%

One-to-One Clients

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
1:1 Counselling Clients	1,750	1,822	2,141	2,074
% of TCD students served	9.9%	10.1%	11.5%	10.9%
1:1 appts attended	7,400	7,383	9,193	9,679
Avg. 1:1 Appts per Client	4.2	4	4.3	4.2

Group Clients

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Group Counselling Clients	288	341	354	297
Group appts attended	1,155	1,395	1,526	1,257
Group Sessions	197	225	288	252
Avg. Group Appts per Client	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.2

Online Clients

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
SilverCloud users	358	422	607	955
SilverCloud Sessions	1,300	1,609	2,283	1,952

Emergency Provision

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
No. Emergency Appts Attended	505	588	721	553
No. Clients Attending Emergencies	447	440	540	406
No. Emergency Phone Triage	0	275	323	212
No. Clients Receiving Phone Triage	0	223	255	182

Wait Times (in working days)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Average days wait for a triage appointment	4	5.4	8.4	10.8
Average days wait for counselling following triage	6.1	15	15	23.5

The Counselling / Sessional Counselling staffing FTEs have remained at around 12 for the past 3 years. Wait times for triage and follow-up appointments have increased with the numbers of students seeking services over the past 3 years. The Administration and Counselling Teams work closely with the Clinical Coordinator to try to keep these wait times as short as possible by:

- Operating a system for prioritising clients after triage
- Communicating with waiting clients regularly
- Filling cancelled and rescheduled appointments
- Ensuring that students have urgent access to counsellors for crisis situations regardless of their wait list status
- Students may also avail of S2S Peer Support while waiting for counselling.

Outreach: Increasing online workshops and trainings was a key deliverable in 2019-20

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
No Students - Preventative Trainings (Consent, Resilience, etc.)	830	689	991	964
Psycho-educational Workshop attendances	482	292	103	1,017
No Students – Trained by request in Schools	426	302	180	1,113
Student Advisory Group Members	20	40	48	16
Total Outreach Programme student contacts (excl. Social Media)	1,758	1,323	1,322	3,094
No. Trinity Staff Trained	240	321	333	250

The Counselling Team invested heavily in reaching students with preventative outreach programmes in 2019-20. The result of these efforts can be seen in the 134% increase in students reached via outreach programmes. The "TCD Headspace" social media channels also provide excellent psychoeducational materials via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with over 4,000 followers.

3SET Project (Work Package 1):

Year 2 work continued on the Work Package 1 of the 3Set Project. In partnership with UCD's Youth Mental Health Lab, work continued towards establishing an Irish National Student Counselling Service database. Key outputs for the year included: (1) agreeing a Standardised Data Set for client demographics, issues, and outcomes with the Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland; (2) successfully tendering for a 3rd party software developer to build a secure / GDPR compliant database. Year 3 will focus on gaining ethical approval for contributing data to the project.

Student Feedback on Counselling

All students using counselling services are invited to complete an anonymous online feedback survey. **642** unique service users responded (28% of all clients).

491 clients gave qualitative feedback, including 716 unique statements. These statements were grouped based on their central meaning/intention:

Meaning Unit	No. Of	Percent of	Description
(MU) Type	MU's	All MU's	
Praise	412	58%	Positive experiences of the SCS, including impact on retention, mental health, and student experience
Service Resources	120	17%	Comments on session limits/spacing, wait times, and staff size
Suggestion	103	14%	Ideas for improvement of service processes and interventions
Criticism	81	11%	Negative experiences of the service
Total	716	100%	

Word Cloud of most frequently used words from client comments:

emergency appointments one listened counselling well understand offered good phone time Trinity found even help nice feel attend appointments came service staff counsellor improve sessions didn t felt important need met really different think wish helpful change issues past great life experience

Anonymised Feedback Comments:

Praise

"Counselling has helped me in so many aspects of my life - motivation for college, relationships at home, my own feelings of self-worth. The emergency appointments really helped in a time of crisis this year."

"The actual service itself is fantastic and stopped me from losing my college years to fear and depression, but it seems clear that they are stretched for resources and I think they need to be prioritized more by the college."

"It was brilliant. I am not overstating the situation when I say that the counselling service saved my life. I went from being unable to eat or get out of bed to regaining my life and my confidence. I can't thank you enough."

"I am forever indebted to my counsellor, who was the first professional to ever truly get through to me. [They] challenged me on my negative beliefs, offered me hope and honestly saved my life."

"My experience has been very positive and it is one of the best aspects of Trinity College. It would be my hope it can be made more accessible so other students receive the benefits and crucial support necessary to have a fulfilling college experience."

"The addictive behaviours group saved my life and changed my life entirely for the better. A few years ago I couldn't imagine myself succeeding at anything and had incredibly low self-esteem... Today, I am thriving and succeeding beyond any of the goals I dreamt of..."

"The service was honestly one of the best things about my time at Trinity. You guys do an invaluable job."

"The service has gotten me through the worst period of my life. I feel extremely grateful to my counsellor, without whose support I think I certainly would have left college, and that would have been the least of it... Also, from what I understand from people in other colleges and my own experience, Trinity has a really great counselling service compared to some other colleges, which is really well integrated with other student services and the tutor system. This ought to be made so much more of in selling the college..."

Criticisms & Suggestions

"One thing that could be improved is appointment timing. It is unfortunate that waiting lists can be so long and that appointments must be weeks or months apart. It is understandable given the demand and the number of students at the school, but often the low frequency of appointments is a problem for some students."

"Overall really good and useful, it is just a shame about the overcrowding and underfunding. This is a really important service which has helped me greatly throughout my four years at college so far, and I hope that it can be expanded to accommodate a greater quantity of students."

"The service was very helpful. I wish the time spent on the waitlist had been shorter, but I know there was a high volume of need and I was happy to end up being seen."

"The service was very important to me as I experienced a traumatic event during college and it helped me to know there were people in Trinity that cared about my wellbeing. I would have liked to see someone more often, as two weeks in between sessions was not enough."

"Great service, I'd prefer if we could continue with the same counsellor in different years. Didn't find phone counselling very helpful but still definitely better than nothing."

"If I would like to suggest a change it would be making the counseling sound as a more positive and a stronger solution available for a student in a difficult time, this is especially with regards to the international students. Where counselling is not too openly talked about and may be considered as a service they don't need but don't even know that it really was something that they needed."

"The whole place is too insistently, self-consciously friendly, it's infantalising and I don't like it."

"I understand that there is an issue with funding, but I do feel there is an over reliance on online programmes and applications... There is no one size fits all substitute for an actual conversation."

"There is no support when off books."

Counselling Impact on Student Retention & Net Benefit to Trinity

As seen above, clients often testify to the important role SCS/SLD/S2S services play in helping them persist in their courses. This is backed-up by quantitative feedback. All clients are asked to answer the question:

"To what extent would you say that counselling has helped you to stay at college?"

Clients choose from this rating scale:

N/A (not an issue for me)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = To a limited extent
- 3 = One of many factors
- 4 = An important factor
- 5 = The most significant factor

In 2019-20, 205 students rated this question a 4 or 5 and a further 132 chose a 3 rating. Conservatively estimating the per-student income to Trinity in a subsequent year at €8,000 (some students bring much higher income to the university), the Counselling activities of the SCS/SLD/S2S services delivered a potential net benefit to Trinity of €1.34 million, calculated below:

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205 (No. of students rating 4 or 5)
- 37 (No. of final year students rating 4 or 5)
168 (minimum students retained with counselling support)
168 x €8,000 = €1.34 million minimum net benefit to Trinity in 2020-21.
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Counselling Plans for 2020-21

In collaboration with SLD and S2S and with the support of the Administration Team, the Counselling team aims to:

- 1. Seek government support to employ a part-time Case Manager, part-time Addictions Counsellor, Consent and Disclosure Counsellor and an Assistant Psychologist for Suicide Prevention.
- 2. Expand the number of online groups and workshops available to meet the ongoing needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3. Adapt and develop the staff training programme for online delivery.
- 4. Strengthen partnerships with student groups (e.g. SU, GSU, Student Advisory Board, Student Societies) to better understand how to meet students' mental health needs during the pandemic and beyond.

Administration

The Administration Team are vital to ensuring the efficiency and broad reach of all services, providing central admin services to the Department - from Human Resources, Finance, Systems and Facilities management, to year-round, comprehensive cover of the Services' phone, email, and reception.



Key Achievements

This year, the Administration Team enabled the Service to pivot to an online delivery model at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- procurement, set-up and support of necessary telephony and hardware.
- set-up of video counselling solutions and drafting of training documentation.
- ensuring all COVID-related compliance documentation was complete and accurate to meet University requirements.
- documentation of all new appointment management procedures.
- staff communication and engagement in a remote and hybrid working environment.

Key Metrics

- Sent over 12,000 appointment reminders.
- Filled approx. 900 cancelled/rescheduled counselling appointments with other clients to ensure efficient use of counsellor time.
- Remained open daily during lunchtime to enable student drop-in assessments and scheduling of emergency appointments (on-site prior to March 2020, and then remotely).

- Managed a counselling waitlist totaling c800 across the academic year. Average number of days on waitlist was 23.52 days.

Systems and Process Improvements

- Replaced manual SMS reminder service with automated appointment reminder feature in Titanium system.
- Development of task management blueprints for recruitment, onboarding and leaver processes.
- Pivoted fully to email appointment management from March 2020 on.

OTHER ADMINISTRATION TEAM ACHIEVEMENTS

- Management of 14 separate recruitment competitions.
- Induction and training of new staff, sessional workers, volunteers and trainees.
- Participation in University GDPR compliance project.
- Participation in Student Services Expo.

The Administration Team would like to gratefully acknowledge our close work with our colleagues in Human Resources, IT Services and Estates & Facilities, who helped us to maintain our high level of service to students during a particularly difficult year.

Staffing & Budget

Staffing Full-time Equivalency

Numbers reported are actual FTEs (rather than approved contract FTEs), to take account of vacancies etc.:

Area	FTE
Admin Team*	4.74
Assistant Psychologists	1.63
Counsellors	9.71
Director**	1.20
S2S	2.55
Sessional Counsellors	2.42
SLD	1.90
Case Coordinator	0.20
3Set Project (HEA Funded)	2.11
Total	26.46



Budget 2019-20

Туре	Amount
Income***	€296K
Pay Costs***	€1.8M
Non-Pay Costs	€124K

NB: Financial year runs 1st Oct to 31st Sept

^{*}Temporary increase of 0.5FTE, that has since been discontinued.

^{**} Acting Director 1.0 FTE, Director 0.2 FTE as Principal Investigator of 3Set HEA Project.

^{***}Includes €153,530k HEA funding for 3Set multi-institutional project (Trinity, UCD, AIT).