Disability Service

Strategic Plan

2015-2020

Contents

No Limits – The Disabled Student Journey in Trinity

Trinity College Dublin Disability Service Strategic Plan 2015-2020

Executive Summary:

The Disability Service (DS) strategic plan (2015-2020) outlines the alignment between DS activities and Trinity objectives, and provides information on how the DS aims and objectives will be delivered over the five years of the strategic plan. The DS has embarked on a major transformation in the provision of services and organisational change, in order to achieve our ambition of being the number one choice for disabled students in Ireland. We are committed to providing modern, integrated, high quality, and cost effective front-line services that make a real difference to the Trinity community. This will be achieved through an innovative approach and continuous review of service delivery, whilst also maximising opportunities for partnership/joint working. DS activities will be an evidenced-based service that is customer-focused and customer-facing.

A key development of this strategic plan is to widen participation and align resources with the Trinity Access Programme. This will ensure greater efficiency in the use of finite resources. The student voice will be central to the strategy, with the DS student ambassador programme allowing students to enhance core 21st century student attributes, whilst also acting as a voice for DS delivery and improvements.

With changing demographics and delivery channels, it is anticipated that both internal and external opportunities and challenges will present themselves. In Trinity, an educational and digital transformation is underway, with new developments in teaching, learning, assessment, and technology. This will fundamentally change how education is delivered and experienced across the university. The development of online learning, and the increasing availability of CPD, will impact on services over the five years of the strategic plan. The DS will continue to promote these technologies as providing increased independence for disabled students.

The financial constraints of 2008 will continue over the five years, and a key challenge for the DS will be to reconcile the anticipated growth in disabled student numbers with a corresponding reduction in funding from HEA and external sources. The core funding issue continues to be a challenge for the DS, and the alignment of funding methodology and demographics with strategic targets will need to be addressed by Trinity over the term of this plan.

The projected move to the new Wellbeing Centre in Oisín House, and the development of a DS specific module in SITS, will provide key opportunities for the service. The DS will continue to monitor and improve services to ensure they are adapted to student needs, and are more effective and efficient in terms of delivery. This will impact on resources in the DS and will therefore be closely monitored. Scalability of services is critical over the term of the plan; this will be a key focus of the service over the coming years. The appointment of a new Director of Student Services is welcomed by the DS.

The DS has a diverse remit, interacting with both academic and administrative areas of Trinity to ensure that the disabled student, staff, and visitor experience is equal to that of all others as they navigate the university. The DS will continue to bring a flexible and responsive leadership role to managing and addressing these – and other yet unknown – challenges, in order to ensure that students and staff with disabilities achieve their full potential through a fully integrated university experience. This is an exciting time for the DS and we look forward to meeting the challenges presented over the five years of this strategic plan.

SMART principles will apply in the development and delivery of the DS strategic objectives. The DS objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time based. Reporting on this plan will be via the DS annual reports, KPI's, and on the DS website at: http://www.tcd.ie/disability/strategic-plan/.

Introduction:

Previous DS Strategic Plan: The first DS strategic plan (2011-2014) had as its main objective the introduction of a new support system across three phases of the disabled students' Higher Education journey. This used a proactive strategy as opposed to the traditionally reactive model of support. This placed the student at the centre of all decision-making as they transitioned into, through and out of Trinity. Support and resources were aligned to the three phases of the student journey. The Disability Service produced their first strategic plan, 'Pathways to Trinity – The Disabled Student Journey 2011-2014, which developed clear and effective support systems at all stages in the student journey, from college entrance, to graduation, to employment.

- **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

The DS Strategic plan (2015-2020) builds on the success of this transformational model in which the disabled student continues to be at the core of DS activities.

DS Vision: To make Trinity the number one choice for students with disabilities through a fully inclusive education that incorporates all aspects of student life, both within and beyond the classroom.

DS Mission: To empower students with disabilities to achieve their potential and, in collaboration with students, engage the University community in creating an inclusive transformational environment and provide a platform for innovation and inclusion.

DS Values: To encourage independence and inclusive participation; to eliminate discrimination; to champion and celebrate a positive approach to equality and diversity in which all are encouraged to use their talents to achieve their potential; to communicate regularly and effectively within and across Trinity in order to deliver positive outcomes and to promote universal access; to work in a planned and managed way to the highest national and international standards.

Disability Service Strategic Plan 2015-2020

The DS Strategic Plan (2015-2020) aims to develop clear and effective support systems at all stages of the student journey. It supports disabled students by continuing to move from a transactional to a transformational model of service delivery. This model engages students across all three phases of their Higher Education journey:

1. pre-entry, admission, and the first year experience
2. building and maintaining a Trinity career
3. transitioning to employment and developing work-related skills and experiences

One of the key elements of this plan is to deliver on Trinity's strategic objective to 'encompass an ever more diverse student community, providing a distinctive education based on academic excellence and a transformative student experience', as well as its declared objective to increase the percentage of under-represented groups enrolled on undergraduate courses to 25% by 2019.

The DS and the Trinity Access Programme (TAP) are aligning strategic developments of institutional measures on access, participation, and progression of students from the Widening Participation Groups[1] (WPG) in Trinity. Since the early 2000's, the number of WPGs entering first year in Trinity has increased from 5% to 21% of the undergraduate student population.

A further key element for the DS is to deliver on the Trinity's Performance Based Compacts with the Higher Education Authority (HEA). This includes a range of objectives relating to access, participation, and lifelong learning. This incorporates a commitment to growth in student numbers, as well as expanding provision for flexible and blended learning opportunities. It specifically commits to:

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[1] Both 'widening participation' and 'fair access' involve removing the barriers to higher education, including financial barriers, that students from lower income and other under-represented backgrounds face. However, 'widening participation' refers to the participation of disadvantaged groups in higher education generally. 'Fair access' refers to the distribution of such students across universities and colleges and whether this is fair by a number of socio-economic and educational criteria (while recognising that institutions vary in their missions and characteristics).

a) Admitting more students with sensory and physical disabilities (doubling the participation of these groups 2016-2019)

b) Continuing the focus on retention and the first year experience

c) Achieving a target of admitting 25% new entrants to the Widening Participation Group

The DS & TAP are currently contributing towards the development of a Trinity Teaching and Learning strategy. As part of the Disability Service Quality Review (Nov. 2014), it was proposed that the Trinity Inclusive Curriculum be embedded in the Trinity Education project. The DS Quality Review Implementation Plan, approved by the Trinity Quality Committee (Oct. 2015), supports this initiative to ensure all teaching, learning, and assessment is inclusive for all WPGs.

This strategic plan is influenced by the national targets for students with disabilities set by the HEA National Access Plan (2015-2020), and recommendations from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD,2011), which reports on students with disabilities in higher education, as well as recommendations from the DS external Quality Review of November 2014. The plan is further informed by reviews of good practice nationally and internationally, changes in sector and institutional policies, and statistical analysis of access routes and student demographics.

DS Strategic Goals:

The DS Strategic goals for 2015-2020 are as follows:

DSG1	Trinity to be recognised as the No.1 choice for disabled students
DSG2	Champion and celebrate a positive approach to disability
DSG3	Provision of a fully inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment environment
DSG4	Ensure that DS activities support the DS transformational model in developing independence and transferable skills across the student educational journey.

DSG5	Build on existing and new internal and external interdependencies
DSG6	Continue to monitor the ongoing implementation of best national and international practices to ensure that Trinity is at the forefront in supporting disabled students to achieve their full potential
DSG7	Enhance disabled student opportunities through development of strategic external relationships
DSG8	Enhance the disabled student experience through academic and social interaction
DSG9	Promote the values of equality, pluralism, and sustainability in our work
DSG10	Optimise operational efficiency

DS Alignment to Trinity strategy:

Trinity's 2014-2019 strategic objectives inform the DS Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

The DS has taken each of the nine Trinity goals and matched them to activities and deliverable outcomes described in table 1 below. An implementation plan further explains the activities and deliverables that will be undertaken as part of this plan. The implementation plan will be updated annually to capture the SMART principles applied.

Table 1: Summary of DS strategic objectives aligned against the Trinity Strategy 2015-2020

Trinity's 9 strategic Goals:	How DS strategy supports these goals:	DS activities to deliver on these goals:	How DS will evidence delivery:	Timeframe:
A1. Strengthen Community: continuing to enrol high performing students from diverse backgrounds.	DSG1.Trinity to be recognised as the number one choice for students with disabilities.	Develop effective Widening Participation Group outreach, recruitment, and transition initiatives with the Trinity Access Programme (TAP). Identify barriers to entry for students with disabilities. Continued development of Student Ambassador Programme. Continue to work with Dean of Students and Student Services to enhance orientation and first year experience activities.	No. of students choosing Trinity as university of choice. No. of pre-entry events and activities; no. of attendees. Through the training of Student Ambassadors and the proposed plan to deliver monthly continuous professional development and leadership skills. First year student satisfaction rating.	2019

			Results included in DS Annual Report and Senior Lecturer's Annual Report.	
A2. Promote Student Life: Transition to College.	DSG2. Champion and celebrate a positive approach to disability.	Develop and provide tailored support for students with particular disability types.	Increase no. of students: registered with DS; availing of general levels of support, and additional levels of support; attending themed information sessions throughout the academic year.	AY 2015/16
A3. Renew the Trinity Education Curriculum.	DSG3. Provision of a fully inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment environment; provision of a Student Charter.	Identify a range of activities that assist disabled students through university and into employment and/or further education. Promote and encourage independence, self-determination, and self-advocacy through engagement with DS; provide Ambassador development	Increase no. of students availing of: educational supports; AT; examination accommodations; professional placement support; residential accommodation; Student Ambassador involvement; Occupational Therapy support; Erasmus;	Annually

		programme; include careers element in all DS interactions with students throughout their time in Trinity.	Promote TIC's inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment principles and integrate with all curriculum changes.	
		Ensure that the needs of students are reflected in Trinity's curriculum reform by implementing good-practice inclusive guidelines for teaching, learning, and assessment.		
		Promote TIC to academic staff so they are aware of student needs.	Student Ambassador and career pathways student referrals.	
		Identify issues that prevent career access for graduates with disabilities.	Results included in the DS's Annual Report.	
		Develop initiatives specifically targeted to assist disabled students		

		in their transition into postgraduate studies and employment.		
B04. Activate Talents:	DSG4. Ensure DS activities support the DS transformational model through developing independence and transferable skills across the student educational journey through to employment and/or further education.	Develop mechanisms to ensure the student voice is central to the development of the DS. This is achieved through collaboration with students and empowering them to take ownership of activities/initiatives, with students acting as agents of change in the service. Opportunity for students to develop event management, communication skills, etc. Students to run orientation, group session, boot camps, etc., with the support of DS staff. Identify a DS student's needs and supports provision as appropriate,	No. of students participating in the DS Ambassador Programme; no. of activities organised each term Change +/- in number of students registering with DS; number of LENS reports completed; ESW supports provided; AT supports provided; OT referrals; OT appointments; students retained; students transitioning to 2nd, 3rd, 4th years etc.	AY 2015/16

| | | based on the challenges presented by the particular disability.

Identify and provide new developments in AT and other non-traditional supports. | Offer Student Ambassador Programme. | |
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| B05. Build Valuable partnerships. | DSG5. Build on existing and new internal and external interdependencies. | Support student development and innovation within our service through resources from Trinity such as: Innovation hub; Launchbox; Social Entrepreneurs Ireland; CPD development pathways.

Development of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with interdependencies such as: Admissions Office, Examinations Office, HR, COO, ISS.

Further Development of External relationships: HEA, AHEAD, DARE, | Number of partnerships developed across all possible opportunities.

Satisfaction rating from internal and external stakeholders.

Partnerships will be reported annually in DS report. | Annually |

		Careers agencies, and HEI Shared service developments (Marino Institute of Education, DIT, UCD). Business partnerships.		
B06. Research for Impact.	DSG6. Continue to monitor the implementation of best national and international practices to ensure Trinity is at the forefront in support of disabled students, allowing them to achieve their full potential. Evidence-based research to develop new mechanisms for disability service	Conduct research across the three phases of students' higher education journey in order to identify and support the needs of students with disabilities. Attend national and international DS events (DAWN, Ahead, NADP, CSSI, EU horizon, etc.).	Present and disseminate research findings. Analyse and benchmark retention, withdrawal, progression, graduations, and employment rates of students with disabilities with other HEIs, particularly UCC and UCD.	Ongoing

	delivery and student support.			
C07. Engage Wider Society.	DSG7. Enhance disabled student opportunities through development of strategic external relationships.	Develop strategic relationships and liaise with external business partners to develop career opportunities for students with disabilities.	Increase no. of both pre-entry and career events developed and delivered by DS.	AY 2015/16
C08. Demonstrate institutional Leadership. C8.2. Equality, Diversity and the Irish Language – embedding the commitment to equality and diversity in all policies and	DSG8. Enhance the disabled student experience through academic and social interaction.	Ensure Clubs, Societies and Student Union bodies are creating accessible and inclusive facilities for DS students while at Trinity. Continue to supply mainstream supports for students with disabilities. Monitor the Equality Committee to ensure the disability agenda is included and that student and staff	Gather feedback from students on accessibility and inclusivity issues.	Ongoing

practices and further developing diversity awareness and training programmes.		diversity is promoted and celebrated.		
C09. Secure Trinity's Future: As a major social and cultural institution, the university has a significant role to play in the creation and development of a more just society.	DSG9. Promote the values of equality, pluralism, and sustainability in our work.	Deliver revised Student Charter. Continue to supply mainstream supports for students with disabilities. Enhance and encourage the voice of the disabled student to promote equality within the University community. This will be achieved through the Student Ambassador Programme.	Gather feedback from students on Student Charter. SITS, technological improvements, and Service Level Agreement mainstream successes will be reported annually. KPIs will be reported annually in DS report.	AY 2015/16

Annually |

C9.2. Ethical Responsibilities		Ensure the KPIs, as identified in the DS processes, are delivered.		
	DSG10. Optimise operational efficiency.	Develop and implement a disability module in SITS to assist in the financial and operational management of DS activities.	Successfully implement DS SITS module.	AY 2017/18
		Optimise service delivery and management to ensure DS is fit for purpose, relevant, and scalable.	Collate stakeholder feedback at end of AY 2015/16 and ongoing.	AY 2015/16
		Maximise benefits from the relocation of the DS to the Wellbeing Centre in Oisín House.	Resource sharing efficiencies with Health and Sports, and stakeholder feedback, will be reported.	AY 2017/18

Context:

The external DS Quality Review in November 2014 made eight high-level recommendations, with six of these relating to Trinity level responsibility and other service areas. Overall, the recommendations can be categorised into three main areas: Systems and Processes, Trinity's responsibility towards those with disabilities, and DS funding. Incorporated into these recommendations was the delivery of the DS module in SITS, the mainstreaming of key disability activities, and core funding issues. The review also included recommendations to assess the DS structure and current processes. They noted key strengths of the DS, stating that there is clear evidence that the service is customer-focused and well-regarded by both staff and students with disabilities. They commented positively that DS staff are highly-regarded, professional, and hardworking.

Human Resources: Service delivery within the DS utilises a multi-disciplinary approach. The DS comprises of an experienced team of individuals who work to support the disabled student to get the most out of their time at Trinity. They comprise of one full time Disability Officer, one half time Disability Officer, three Occupational Therapists, one Assistive Technologist, sixty Educational Support Workers, and two administrative staff: all of whom offer a quality service based on the disabled student's individual needs. The expected increase in student numbers will have a direct impact on the staffing levels in the DS. It will continue to be monitored closely to ensure maximum return for investment in staff.

Management Information: A key issue for the DS over the term of this strategic plan is the successful development and implementation of a DS specific module in SITS, and the introduction of a contact management system. This will address existing issues regarding data management, integrity, and reporting. In the interim, every effort will be made to manage this risk.

Physical Environment: The DS currently occupies eight offices in the Arts building which were deemed 'not fit for purpose' in the 2014 external Quality Review report. It is a primary objective of the DS to move to the Wellbeing Centre based in Oisín House, along with Health and Sport support services. These plans are well advanced and it is envisaged that the move will take place in AY 2018-19. The DS has undertaken a full review of existing office space

and usage, and in 2015 the general office space was reconfigured. Other facilities have been reviewed to optimise use of available space and to increase the number of interview areas for students while maintaining student confidentiality.

Funding the DS is a key challenge over the term of this strategic plan. The DS's total budget for 2015/16 was €1,090,841 of which:

40% (32% in 14-15) came from the access allocation in the HEA core grant

49% (46%) from the European Social Fund, Fund for Students with Disabilities

8% (16%) generated from self-financing and shared services

The remaining 1% (1%) arising from one-off allocations for funds required to support non-EU disabled students

Financial resources: This funding has steadily reduced year-on-year over the past ten years with a significant drop in 2015/16 by 28%. A key recommendation from the DS external Quality Review 2014 was for Trinity to consider providing core funding for the DS, thus removing the requirement for additional income generation in order to support the development of the DS. External funding has reduced by 56%this year with the cessation of shared services to DCU. This will also have an impact in coming year with the cessation of shared services to DIT and UCD. It is expected that ESF funding will continue to be under pressure (reduction by 43% over the past nine years). Student numbers registering with the DS continue to increase, with a 58% increase in numbers over the past six years alone (2010/11 to 2015/16). The impact of ongoing reductions in external funding, together with projected increases in student numbers, presents a very challenging environment for the DS.

Evidence-based research: The mission of the DS is to move from a transactional model of provision - where students are passive recipients of supports - to a transformational model of resource usage, where students take an active part in planning their educational journey. Research informed by this ethos utilises Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) that meet prescribed criteria: design, quality, quantity, which effect the size of the supporting research. These have the potential to help bridge the research-to-practice gap and improve disabled student outcomes. Transformative mixed methodologies provide a mechanism for addressing the complexities of research in culturally complex settings that can provide a

basis for social change. The DS will continue to use evidence-based research to develop new mechanisms for service delivery and disabled student support.

Student partnership: Key to the implementation of this strategic plan will be the development of real partnerships with students who require disability support from the DS. The Student Ambassador programme is central to the transformational service model evolving in the DS. Students' views on service developments within the DS and in Trinity will be encouraged via the recruitment of students to the Student Ambassador programme. Students will become leaders, representing the DS at key events and fora. Over time, students will communicate disability issues to Trinity so that these may be addressed from the customer perspective.

Operational Efficiency: In 2015, the DS conducted a full review of their service offering with a view to optimising service delivery and management, and to ensure that the DS is fit for purpose, relevant, and scalable. As a result, a new service delivery model with a more focussed management system has been developed. The new approach ensures a general level of support is provided to all disabled students, whilst also providing tailored specialist supports to those who require them. The AY 2015/16 will see the implementation of this delivery model. It will be closely monitored over the academic year to identify areas for improvement.

Conclusion: This strategic plan outlines the DS goals and activities over the next five years. It is an ambitious and challenging plan. We look forward to working with colleagues in Trinity, and in the wider community, to support students with disabilities in achieving their full educational potential through championing an inclusive, supportive, and diverse society in Trinity and onwards to further education or careers. Progress on these goals will be reported via the DS annual reports, which will be available on the Trinity website.

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November 2015