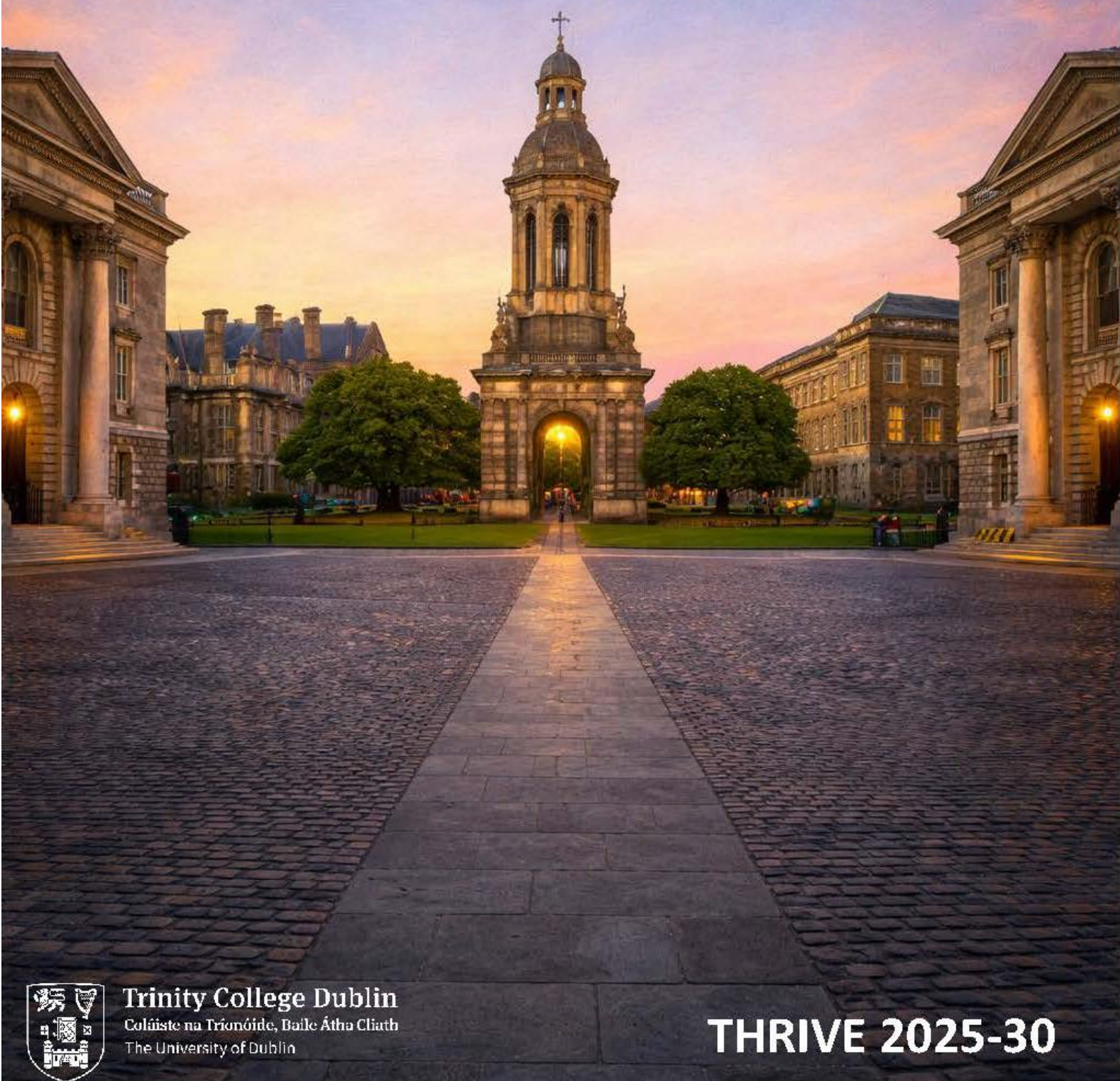


An Extended Access Programme

Draft Heads of Plan

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Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

THRIVE 2025-30

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FOREWORD FROM THE VICE-PROVOST

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1. Our 2030 Vision for Access, Belonging and Inclusion

In this section we will set out our vision statement.

While this statement has yet to be drafted, discussions to date suggest that it will begin from a clear premise: widening participation alone is not sufficient. The Vision will express our belief that Access, Belonging and Inclusion are interconnected institutional commitments. The Vision will also be ambitious in scope as befits a university that is nationally and internationally recognised as a leader in Access, Belonging and Inclusion.

1.2. Defining Access

At Trinity, we define Access as:

The active removal of structural and systemic barriers so that learners from under and non-represented groups can enter, belong, and thrive at Trinity and beyond

We believe that Access extends beyond the process of admission to university, and includes learner transition, participation, retention, progression, employability, postgraduate opportunity and lifelong learning.

The University also recognises the interconnected importance of Belonging and Inclusion. Belonging refers to the experience of students being recognised, respected, connected, safe and able to participate meaningfully within the life of the University. Inclusion refers to the design of systems, cultures, environments and practices so that diversity is anticipated, valued and supported by default rather than treated as an exception.

1.3. The Current National Position

This section will reference:

- The legal obligations governing access in higher education
- The HEA National Access Plan 2022-2028 and its strategic student-centred goals (inclusivity, flexibility, clarity, coherence, sustainability, and an evidence-driven approach)
- Current sectoral reviews of HEAR and DARE schemes

- d) Trinity's current learner statistics (access admission, progression, and degree classification data)
- e) Trinity's evidence-base demonstrating that Access has not meant any diminution in academic standards

1.4. Prioritisation within Resource Constraints

This section will acknowledge that moves to enhance access and widen participation will operate against a backdrop of limited resources. Accordingly, we will need to prioritise investment that is sustainable on a multi-annual basis. The intention of this Plan is therefore not solely to expand activity, but to support scalable and sustainable institutional change through stronger governance, mainstreaming of inclusive practice, improved coordination and evidence-informed decision-making.

SECTION 2 - A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ACCESS, BELONGING AND INCLUSION

2.1. A joined-up approach to realise "Moments that Matter" for learners

This section will review and assess current access provision and services with a focus on improving coherence. The purpose is to move from fragmented, service-specific interventions and approaches to a more co-ordinated institutional model where access, belonging and inclusion services and supports are planned in an integrated way across the full learner lifecycle.

2.2. University strategy with local ownership

This section will set out a model of planning and delivery that is predicated on central strategy with local ownership across Schools and professional services. Central expertise will provide strategy, standards, coordination, evidence, support and challenge. Schools and service units will be responsible for implementation, review and continuous improvement within their own domains.

2.3. Inclusion by design

This section will cover Universal Design for Learning (UDL), inclusive pedagogy and assessment, physical accessibility, and digital accessibility. The goal is to reduce predictable barriers in advance, making the learning experience and the teaching experience better in a sustainable way, for learners and staff.

2.4. Governance, targets and monitoring

This section will recommend the optimal ongoing university governance model for access, belonging and inclusion which will include clear reporting and accountability structures and Quality Assurance mechanisms. This will integrate decision-making on access into the vital academic governance structures of the university.

This section will also set out agreed objectives for the Extended Access Programme to 2030, with targets and associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which will extend beyond admissions and participation metrics alone and include indicators relating to retention, progression, belonging, learner experience, accessibility, graduate outcomes and institutional change. The Access governance structure will ensure that progress and outcomes are monitored, reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis.

SECTION 3 – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

The University recognises that meaningful progress in Access, Belonging and Inclusion requires sustained partnership with learners, communities, external stakeholders and under-represented groups. Engagement should therefore move beyond consultation alone and support ongoing partnership, co-design, evaluation and shared learning.

In this section, we focus on the various stakeholders to whose voices Trinity should be listening and the best methodology for engagement with them.

- 3.1. The fundamental need to reflect learners and alumni views and experiences (learners as co-design partners)
- 3.2. The fundamental need to facilitate external stakeholder participation
- 3.3. Benchmarking our position against other HEIs nationally and internationally
- 3.4. Government/HEA/other State agency positions
- 3.5. EEDI messages and principles – constantly to be relevant, including explicit attention to intersectionality

SECTION 4 - STRENGTHENING ACCESS PATHWAYS AND LEARNER BELONGING

In the context of an interconnected approach to Access, Belonging and Inclusion, this section focuses on current Access-related areas and themes at Trinity, and how they should evolve over the next five years. A central focus will be on what happens after learners arrive – emphasising the vital importance of belonging, as a factor in learner success.

- 4.1. Further Education and Tertiary Degree pathways into Trinity Undergraduate Education
- 4.2. Mature learners at Trinity

- 4.3. Meeting the challenge of socio-economic disadvantage
- 4.4. Empowering Disabled learners at Trinity (including intellectually disabled learners)
- 4.5. University of Sanctuary
- 4.6. Outreach and Community Partnership
- 4.7. Flexible and Lifelong learning (including short courses; micro-credentials and other)
- 4.8. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a key enabler for Access

SECTION 5 – NEW FRONTIERS OF ACCESS

This section will signal areas that will bring a step-change for the coming years. It will describe clear objectives for extending Access beyond the undergraduate domestic cohort, linked back to Section 2.4 (Objectives, targets and KPIs).

- 5.1. Extending Trinity Access to postgraduate offerings
- 5.2. Extending Trinity Access to international learners

Trinity's distinctive contribution will be the delivery of a coordinated institutional model that connects Access, Belonging and Inclusion across the full learner lifecycle. This coordinated model will be applied, with a new energy, to bring our postgraduate education offerings to the fore of our Access planning and support services. Similarly, we will seek to expand Access and Widening participation pathways with regard to international learners.

- 5.3. Trinity driving National Policy for Access and Inclusion

This section will set out how we intend to increase our contribution and impact on national – and international – policy for HE Access and Inclusion.

SECTION 6 - REFORMING OUR MESSAGING

The University recognises that institutional culture, language and visibility shape whether potential learners experience Trinity as a place in which they can belong and succeed. Communications and engagement strategies should therefore support representation, legitimacy, accessibility and connection.

It is clear that one barrier to access for some potential learners is a sense that Trinity is not accessible for them – something that is not overcome by our existing forms of communication of 'Access information'.

- 6.1. Dispelling myths about Trinity ("It's not for people like me")
- 6.2. Streamlined, easily accessible information: "Explore Trinity"
- 6.3. Extending outreach – coming to regard Trinity's Access mission as being as much about bringing Trinity out to the community as welcoming the community into Trinity

SECTION 7 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations will be framed around institutional coherence, governance, learner journey, Universal Design, student partnership, community engagement, pedagogical renewal, postgraduate opportunity, employability and evidence-informed policy and institutional change.

A summary of key recommendations arising from each section, including:

- Adoption of the integrated Access, Belonging and Inclusion model
- String Access Governance and clear KPIs to 2030
- Strengthened existing pathways and new lifelong learning offerings
- Extension of Access to postgraduate and international learners
- Reformed messaging and outreach strategy