

# Student Stories

The background is a solid purple color. In the center, there is a large, circular, textured area that looks like a watercolor wash or a splatter. This central area is primarily orange and yellow, with some grey and white tones. Surrounding this central area are several black splatters of varying sizes and shapes, some with long, thin trails. There are also some white splatters at the bottom of the central area.

**Stories About disAbility**



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

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# Introduction



## **Declan Treanor**

disAbility Service Director

The logo for Trinity disAbility Hub features a purple, angular shape on the left. To its right, the text "Trinity disAbility Hub" is displayed in a white, sans-serif font. "Trinity" is on the top line, "disAbility" is on the middle line, and "Hub" is on the bottom line, all aligned to the left.

Trinity  
disAbility Hub

Trinity disAbility Service's mission is to create an accessible, transformational, educational environment in an interdependent University community and provide a platform for innovation and inclusion. To ensure that Trinity remains a welcoming and inclusive university for disabled students, it is important to talk about students' experiences of coping with university with a disability. Talking about disability challenges reduces silence and stigma. Talking about disability makes students feel seen, heard, and empowered. Importantly, it makes disabled students feel like they belong at Trinity, and beyond.



Dear Readers,

As you explore these diverse stories, each unique in its own right, we encourage you to approach them with empathy and an open heart. Students from Trinity College Dublin have courageously shared their varied and distinct narratives, illuminating struggles that often linger unseen in the shadows.

These stories, markedly different from one another, stand as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. While some of the content may be distressing, it is our hope that these multifaceted stories foster understanding, compassion, and a broader awareness of the myriad battles that many endure in silence.

Warm regards,

**Declan Treanor**

disAbility Service Director  
Trinity disAbility Service



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# **The Evolution of our Stories**

## **Amplifying Disabled Students' Voices**

In celebration of Disability Week, we dedicate this section to the courageous journeys of our students. Their experiences enlighten us and pave the way for impactful change, deeply influenced by the biopsychosocial model and the emerging Trinity Inclusive Integrated Model at our university.

## **The Heart of our Approach**

Central to our story-gathering is a principle of empathy: Listen first, understand, then document. We consciously set aside preconceptions or biases shaped by disability documentation, inviting students to share their experiences in their own words.

## **Unveiling the Journey**

Our conversations begin with, "How has your journey been?" This opens a path to understanding the challenges, triumphs, and unique experiences of our students. We hear tales of resilience, innovative solutions to unforeseen challenges, and the everyday realities of navigating an often unaccommodating world.

# **Beyond Challenges to Solutions**

We don't stop at identifying challenges; we explore potential solutions informed by the lived experiences of our students. These solutions are not just theoretical; they are practical, viable, and often, life-altering.

## **Aligning with Models of Inclusion**

Our approach aligns with the biopsychosocial model, recognizing disability as a multifaceted issue, not solely medical or physical. The Trinity Inclusive Integrated Model further guides our conversations, advocating a holistic approach to student well-being and inclusion.

## **The Evolving Role of the Disability Officer**

The Disability Officer emerges as a crucial facilitator, bridging the gap between students' narratives and institutional policy. They shift from a service provider to a partner in the educational journey, advocating for holistic support and championing a collaborative model. This role is pivotal in transforming the university into an inclusive environment where disabled students are valued, heard, and fully integrated.

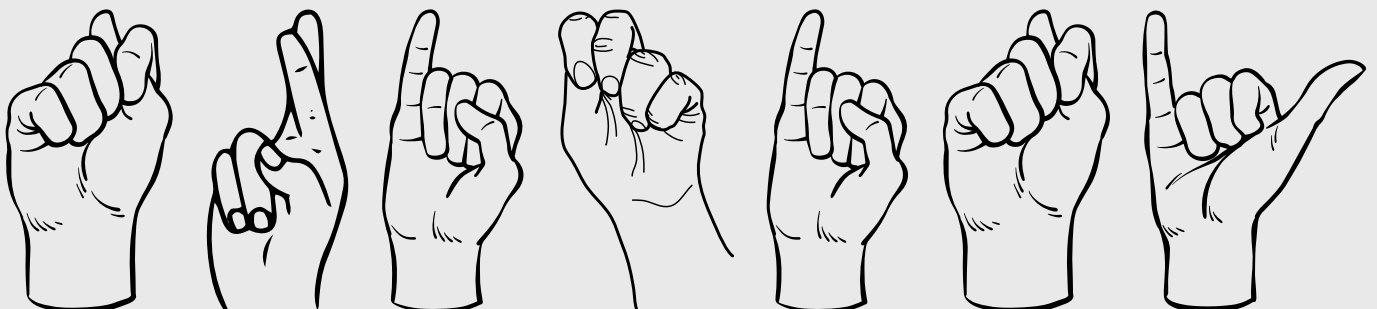


# Impact & Policy Development

These stories are more than narratives; they are catalysts for change, fueling debate, encouraging empathy, and informing policy development. By listening to our students, we grasp the nuances of their experiences, leading to more inclusive and practical policies.

## Conclusion: A Continuous Journey.

This section reflects an ongoing journey towards understanding and inclusion. As we celebrate Disability Week, these narratives remind us that we are not just sharing stories; we are shaping a future. By placing people first and medicalizing second, we transform the narrative around disability into one that is empowering, inclusive, and holistic. This shift is crucial in ensuring our university is a space where every student's voice is heard and valued, shaping a more inclusive and understanding community.



**T R I N I T Y**

# Empowering Voices Through Storytelling

In the fabric of our university's commitment to inclusion and understanding, storytelling stands as a powerful tool. The act of sharing and listening to stories is not just about narrating experiences; it's a profound journey towards empowerment and mutual respect.

## The Power of Being Heard

**Validating Experiences:** When students share their stories, they receive a message that their experiences are valid and important. This validation is crucial in fostering a sense of self-worth and belonging.

**Building Empathy:** Storytelling bridges gaps between diverse experiences, fostering empathy among listeners. By hearing the lived experiences of others, students and faculty develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the challenges and triumphs faced by disabled individuals.

**Creating Connections:** Stories have a unique ability to connect people on a human level, transcending differences. These connections are essential in building a cohesive and supportive community where everyone feels they belong.

# Storytelling as a Catalyst for a Change

**Raising Awareness:** Personal stories can highlight issues and perspectives that might otherwise be overlooked. This awareness is the first step toward meaningful change both in attitudes and policies.

**Inspiring Action:** Often, stories inspire action. They can motivate listeners to engage in advocacy, support their peers, and contribute to creating a more inclusive environment.

**Shaping Policy:** Real-life stories provide invaluable insights that can inform and shape university policies, ensuring they are grounded in the actual needs and experiences of students.

## The Role of the University Community

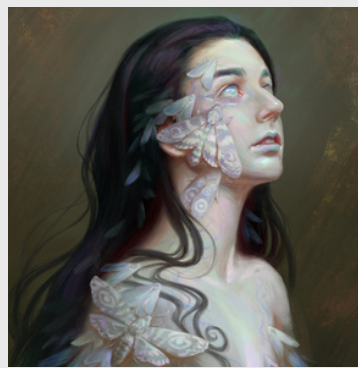
**Active Listening:** The university community is encouraged to not just hear, but actively listen. Active listening involves engaging with the storyteller, understanding their perspective, and acknowledging their experiences.

**Creating Safe Spaces for Sharing:** It's essential to create environments where students feel safe and comfortable sharing their stories without fear of judgment or reprisal.

**Encouraging Diverse Voices:** A truly inclusive storytelling platform represents a diverse range of voices and experiences, ensuring that no story is left unheard.

## Conclusion: A Community United by Stories

By embracing storytelling, we do more than share experiences; we weave a tapestry of understanding and empathy that binds our university community together. The stories of our students are not mere narratives; they are powerful testimonies that inspire, educate, and drive us towards a future where every voice is valued and every story is a tool for empowerment and change.



# Student Stories

## Stories About Disability



Personal stories of students at Trinity who share their experiences of coping with University with a disability.



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



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# An Unexpected Academic Journey: A Student's Erasmus Experience

## **An Unexpected Academic Journey A Student's Erasmus Experience**

Starting my academic year in 2021, I was filled with a mix of excitement and apprehension. I had successfully completed 30 credits of Irish in the first semester, which involved six modules, each worth 5 credits. These modules spanned a range of topics, some of which weren't my primary interests, yet I dedicated myself fully to them. The assessment techniques varied, with some modules relying on continuous assessment like essays, while others had exams.

Having worked diligently, I took on the challenge of an Erasmus program at the University in Paris, a decision that would later have profound implications on my mental and emotional well-being.

From the outset, I faced numerous hurdles. Upon registering for my modules at the University, I discovered that several of my modules overlapped, requiring me to opt for more intricate subjects such as French Revolution Studies and Classic French Literature. This added unnecessary stress early on.

Additionally, the teaching faculty assumed I was a native French student. This oversight made it difficult for me to integrate, as the course's pace was tailored to native speakers. Coupled with the absence of a separate curriculum for international students, my struggles compounded. While I tried to keep up, the vast and rapid content delivery made it difficult. Further intensifying my schedule, I had evening French language classes, which, although beneficial, took away my rest and personal time.

The administrative and teaching staff at the university weren't as supportive as I had hoped. Communication gaps led to missed emails, lost classroom directions, and an overall feeling of isolation. Moreover, I noticed a significant difference in the disability support between my home university Trinity and the host. As someone living with cerebral palsy and autism, the lack of academic support and understanding was debilitating.

The challenges weren't confined to the classroom. Interactions with peers were often strained, with some students making unwelcome remarks. I constantly felt like an outsider, which took a toll on my emotional well-being.

After enduring these hardships for two months, I reached my breaking point. Most nights I found solace only in tears, eventually prompting me to make the heart-wrenching decision to return home early. The thought of this perceived failure weighed heavily on my mind, significantly impacting my mental and emotional health.

Back home, I sought guidance. My discussions with academic counsellors, occupational therapists, and tutors all indicated that while my Erasmus experience was unique, the consequences were universally understood.

The very thought of repeating my previously completed Irish modules next year is distressing. Given my conditions, I put in more effort than most, and the prospect of going through that rigorous process again is daunting. The stress is something I fear may push my emotional capabilities to their limits.

Furthermore, returning to an entirely new set of peers presents challenges. Due to my autism, I often find it difficult to form new connections, making the prospect of integration daunting.

I hope my story conveys the depth of the challenges I faced during my Erasmus program and its aftermath. I humbly request a split-year accommodation to ease my academic path moving forward. I wish to carry forward my hard-earned credits from the previous semester and work through the remaining ones at a pace that ensures my well-being and academic success.





# Living with ADHD at Trinity: My Pelagic Journey Beyond the Labels

## **Living with ADHD at Trinity My Pelagic Journey Beyond the Labels**

The first time I met my disability officer late in 3rd year, I was a confident but burnt out Physical Science student at Trinity, his vivaciousness struck me. However, as our conversations meandered, it revealed a deeper, unspoken truth—a narrative shared by many but voiced by few. Both of us have ADHD.

I am passionate about my lived and shared struggles. "You know, I've always felt this need to prove myself twice as hard. Not because I lacked the intellectual capacity, but because my brain wouldn't cooperate.

" This wasn't just about extensions or deadlines—it was about the silent battles students with ADHD like me fight every single day.

In the world of academia, ADHD often finds itself trapped in a limbo of misunderstanding. Universities, while proud bastions of knowledge, sometimes falter in recognising the intricate challenges ADHD students face. This isn't just about hyperactivity or distraction; it's about a deeply embedded neurological difference.

When an ADHD student asks for an extension, it's seldom a last-minute whimsy. It's the culmination of days filled with mounting frustration, battling cognitive obstacles like time-blindness, emotional mis-regulation, and slow processing. While neurotypical students might see a clear road ahead, those with ADHD often navigate a path riddled with detours.

Yet, the prevailing sentiment among some faculty members is scepticism. "Are these students merely lazy?" they wonder. Such sentiments, although perhaps rooted in concerns of academic integrity, can inflict profound distress on students who are genuinely grappling with their neurodivergence.

My narrative echoes this sentiment. "I remember an assignment," he recalled, "I had every intention of starting early. But each time I sat down, my ADHD took the reins. Hours would melt away, and I'd be left feeling desolate, doubting my own capabilities."

ADHD isn't about a lack of willpower or intelligence. It's about brains that are wired differently. Those diagnosed often possess brilliant minds that, ironically, become their own adversaries. They're not asking for undue leniency but merely a fair chance—a level playing field.

However, the onus doesn't solely lie with the faculty. Students, too, must proactively communicate their needs. Trinity's Disability Service provides the LENS report, a tool to bridge the gap of understanding between students and professors. This report, coupled with open dialogues at the semester's start, can usher in a new era of understanding.

My story isn't unique, but it's pivotal. His courage in sharing it sparked this article, a clarion call to universities everywhere to understand, empathise, and adapt. Our academic spaces must not just be places of learning but also bastions of inclusivity and understanding. For in recognising and supporting the Leos of the world, we pave the way for a richer, more inclusive future in education.

Over recent years, there's been a discernible shift in the way ADHD is perceived and understood. Across the globe, increasing numbers of students are identifying with ADHD, bringing to light the nuances of this neurodiverse condition. At Trinity, this shift is palpable. In just one year, the university witnessed a staggering 40% growth in students who identify with ADHD. This surge not only underscores the growing awareness and acceptance of ADHD but also heralds the changing dynamics of our student population.

Recognising the burgeoning needs, Trinity has taken commendable steps forward. A notable milestone was the opening of an ADHD clinic, a pioneering initiative that marked its place as the first of its kind in any European university. While services like these play a pivotal role in supporting students, it's abundantly clear that more needs to be done, especially in the realm of academia.

The recent enhancements in support services are laudable, yet the broader academic landscape remains largely unchanged. Tailored to cater to conventional learning styles, it inadvertently sidelines neurodiverse students. If Trinity, and academic institutions at large, aspire to create inclusive environments, a profound reform in the way we perceive and structure education is paramount.

It's not just about support services; it's about reshaping the very fabric of our academic world to ensure everyone, irrespective of their neurological wiring, can fully participate and thrive.

Now, as we delve deeper into the heart of Trinity and the stories of its neurodiverse students, the call for change becomes not just a recommendation, but a pressing imperative.

### **ADHD & Me: More Than Just a Diagnosis**

For many, the term ADHD conjures visions of hyperactive children bouncing off walls or adults with thoughts that dart like hummingbirds from flower to flower. These notions, while not entirely baseless, merely scratch the surface of the profound depths and complexities associated with this neurodevelopmental disorder. To truly understand ADHD, one must imagine it as a pelagic journey, one that dives deep into the vast expanses of the mind, revealing realms filled with both turbulence and wonder.

### **The Diagnosis Journey: A Labyrinth of Emotions**

Starting with the diagnosis process, many experience it as a labyrinth. Before even being considered for a diagnosis, individuals often grapple with a series of internal questions: "Why can't I focus? Why do simple tasks seem so challenging? Is something wrong with me?"

These questions often arise from years of unexplained struggles, culminating in a moment where seeking answers becomes inevitable. Once you enter the realm of professional evaluations, the journey can be equally puzzling. Lengthy tests, comprehensive interviews, and the constant oscillation between hope and fear make it an emotionally taxing experience. "Will this test finally give me the answers I've been seeking?" "What if they say there's nothing wrong, and I'm just lazy or unintelligent?"

## **Misunderstandings and Stereotypes:**

### **The External Battles**

Beyond the internal struggles are the battles against societal misunderstandings and stereotypes. While ADHD is recognised medically, society's grasp of its nuances remains tenuous at best. Expressions like "Everyone's a little ADHD" or "You just need to try harder" reflect a lack of comprehension and empathy. Such misconceptions can be debilitating, leading those diagnosed to sometimes doubt the legitimacy of their own experiences.

### **Guilt and Isolation: The Silent Tormentors**

Guilt frequently accompanies an ADHD diagnosis, especially in adults. Thoughts like "I should've achieved more by now" or "Why can't I manage what seems easy for others?" can be oppressive.

Furthermore, given the lack of widespread understanding, many feel isolated, reluctant to share their diagnosis for fear of being labelled or misunderstood.

## **Navigating Uncharted Waters: The Unexplained Challenges**

One of the harshest realities of ADHD is the feeling of being thrown into an ocean without a compass. While there's ample information on the diagnosis itself, practical day-to-day coping strategies can be elusive. It's like being handed a puzzle with no image to guide you. The struggles extend beyond focus and attention; emotional regulation, time management, and even establishing meaningful relationships can become herculean tasks.

In schools or workplaces, those with ADHD often feel they're expected to instinctively know how to "fix" themselves. But without guidance or understanding, how is one supposed to navigate these challenges? The overwhelming sentiment becomes, "I'm supposed to know this, so why don't I?"

**A Mosaic of Student Experiences: Trinity's Neurodiverse Tapestry** At Trinity, there's an unspoken bond among students who sail the tumultuous ADHD waters.

Through conversations, shared experiences, and support groups, a unique narrative unfolds, showcasing both struggles and triumphs. Trinity's new Neurodiversity Society and the ADHD drop in group run in the Trinity disAbility Hub allowed me to amplify these voices, I delved into the personal stories of four fellow students.

### **Niamh, BESS Program:**

"Chaos," that's how Niamh described her initial experiences. The cacophony of lecture halls was overwhelming. But she wasn't one to admit defeat. "I found solace in ambient noise apps," she revealed. "It might sound counterintuitive, but having a consistent background noise, like rainfall or white noise, cushioned those jarring, unexpected sounds, letting me focus." In discussion groups, her ADHD brain became her superpower, turning distractions into connections.

### **Lucas, Physical Sciences:**

Drowning amidst a sea of academic rigor, Lucas felt the weight of ADHD like a millstone around his neck. His saving grace? "Strategised study zones," Lucas shared. "I designated specific areas in my room for certain tasks. One for reading, another for problem-solving, and a separate one for relaxation. This spatial segmentation made transitions smoother and reduced my overwhelm."



Coupled with the 'body doubling' technique, Lucas began to chart a course through the academic tempest.

### **Aiden, English Literature:**

Aiden's enchantment with words was both a gift and a curse. Lost in literature, he often found himself adrift. But Aiden had a trick up his sleeve. "I began using colour-coded note systems," he explained. "Each hue represented a theme, character, or emotion. This visual cue helped anchor my thoughts, preventing them from wandering too far." Alongside 'body doubling', this colourful strategy allowed Aiden to sail through the vast oceans of literature.

### **Clara, History:**

For Clara, every exam was a multi-fronted war. Yet, her solution was beautifully simple. "I adopted the Pomodoro Technique," she said. "Twenty-five minutes of intense focus, followed by a five-minute break. It resonated with my ADHD rhythm, granting my restless mind moments of liberty, before guiding it back." Clara also found solace in mindfulness exercises during breaks, which rejuvenated her, preparing her for the next sprint.

Each of these stories, filled with hurdles and revelations, paints a vivid picture of Trinity's neurodiverse community. They highlight not just the challenges ADHD students face, but also their resilience, innovation, and unyielding spirit. They are a testament to the idea that with understanding, support, and a dash of creativity, every mind can find its place and thrive.

## **Unity in Neurodiversity: Finding Belonging at Trinity**

My personal journey with ADHD at Trinity was transformed by the community I found. The ADHD peer group and the Neurodiversity Society were sanctuaries. These spaces, brimming with empathetic individuals, became platforms for mutual support and understanding. Here, we weren't anomalies; we were part of a vibrant tapestry, each thread essential, each story valued.

ADHD, while a journey fraught with challenges, also offers unique perspectives. At Trinity, through shared narratives and communal support, students like Niamh, Lucas, Aiden, Clara, and myself find not only coping mechanisms but also a sense of belonging. Our stories underscore the importance of understanding, empathy, and community in navigating the intricate world of ADHD.

# **Trinity's Embrace: Co-Creation and Discovery in a Neurodiverse World**

Trinity, renowned for its academic prowess, offers more than just scholarly excellence. It presents a microcosm of understanding, acceptance, and growth. For students like me, navigating the world with ADHD, it's not just about the classrooms and textbooks; it's about finding a space where our neurodiversity isn't just tolerated but embraced and celebrated.

## **The Power of Peer Discovery**

One of the most transformative elements of my time at Trinity was the serendipitous discovery of peers who shared my experiences. Our informal gatherings soon evolved into structured meetings, where stories of struggles were met with nods of understanding and tales of triumph with shared jubilation. There's a unique strength derived from realising you aren't alone, that there are others sailing the same tumultuous waters.

In these gatherings, the most poignant moments often revolved around shared strategies. Lucas, from Physical Sciences, would demonstrate how 'body doubling' transformed his study sessions.

# **Designing an ADHD-Friendly Academic World**

With the support of Trinity's Disability Service, our collective voice began to resonate in academic settings. Recognising the power of co-creation, we collaborated with faculty to design more ADHD-friendly learning environments. Here are a few notable changes we championed:

- 1. Modular Learning Sessions:** Breaking down lectures into smaller, manageable chunks, ensuring students with shorter attention spans could engage effectively.
- 2. Interactive Learning:** Promoting discussions, debates, and interactive sessions which harness the rapid associative thinking of ADHD minds.
- 3. Customised Examination Protocols:** Recognising that traditional exam settings might not be conducive for all, we proposed alternatives like oral examinations, project-based assessments, and extended time slots.
- 4. Designated Quiet Spaces:** TCD Sense is carving out corners across the campus where students can find solace, focus, or simply regroup.
- 5. Workshops and Training:** Regular sessions for both students and faculty to understand ADHD better, dispelling myths, and fostering empathy.

Trinity, in its embrace of neurodiversity, showcases how academic institutions can transcend traditional methods. Through peer discovery, collaborative design, and a willingness to adapt, Trinity has created an environment where neurodiverse students don't merely fit in; they flourish. The journey underscores the idea that when we co-create solutions, the academic world becomes richer, more inclusive, and undeniably transformative.

## **Stepping Beyond: Spreading Awareness and Advocacy**

Outside Trinity, misconceptions lingered. Comments insinuating that ADHD was an "excuse" hurt. It emphasised the dire need for awareness. Inspired by peers like Sean, who initiated ADHD-centric workshops, I embarked on a mission to enlighten both faculty and students. It wasn't solely about elaborating on ADHD, but about unmasking its dual nature—the obstacles and the unparalleled strengths.

## **Towards a Brighter Tomorrow**

As my chapter at Trinity concludes, gratitude fills me for an institution that truly saw and nurtured me. Yet, the ADHD voyage continues. Every shared story, be it Lucas's fiery passion or Clara's sheer determination, adds to the rich tapestry of ADHD experiences.

I dream of a world where all academic hubs emulate Trinity's model, fostering genuine comprehension of neurodiversity. Where ADHD isn't an outlier but is acknowledged, esteemed, and revered for its distinct vantage point.

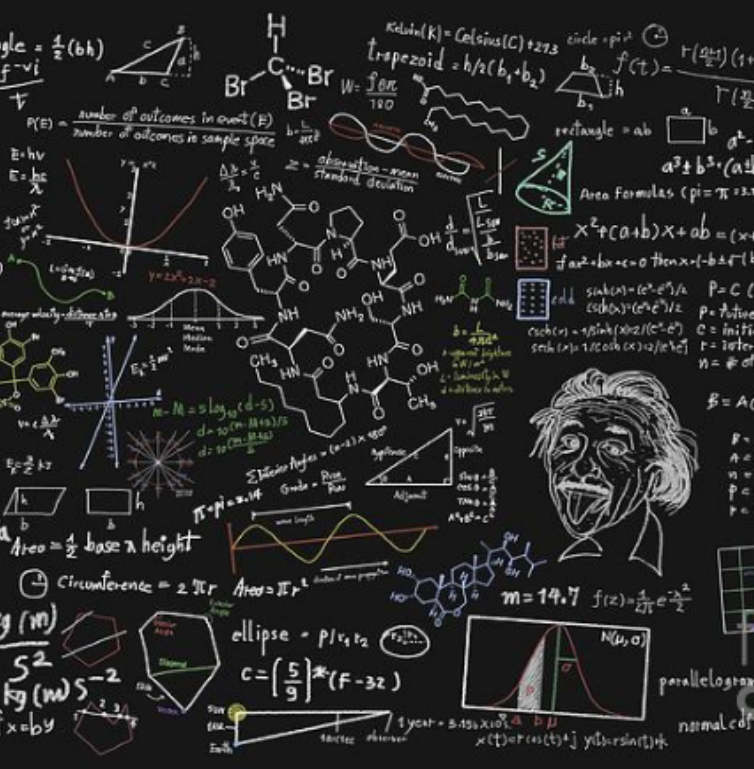
In this expansive ocean of ADHD, there are depths of challenges but also vast expanses of potential and beauty. It's time society dived deeper, recognising and celebrating the myriad hues that define ADHD.

## **What is ADHD?**

ADHD, which stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, is a condition that affects how a person's brain works. It's like having a brain that sometimes has a hard time focusing, staying still, or controlling impulses. People with ADHD might find it difficult to pay attention for a long time, especially on things that don't interest them much. They might feel restless and have a lot of energy, which can make sitting still in class or during homework challenging.

It's important to know that having ADHD doesn't mean someone is less smart or capable. In fact, many people with ADHD are very creative and think in unique ways. It's just that their brains work a bit differently, which can sometimes make certain tasks more challenging.

It's important to know that having ADHD doesn't mean someone is less smart or capable. In fact, many people with ADHD are very creative and think in unique ways. It's just that their brains work a bit differently, which can sometimes make certain tasks more challenging. But with the right support and strategies, they can manage these challenges and do really well in school and other areas of life.



# Alex's Journey: An Insight into Navigating Academia with Autism

## Alex's Journey An Insight into Navigating Academia with Autism

In a quiet corner of the bustling college campus, Alex often sat, immersed in complex physics equations. Diagnosed with autism at the tender age of nine, Alex's academic journey was unlike that of many students. The early years were marked by comprehension challenges that cast long shadows of doubt, making communication a maze and writing a dreaded task. Each written word felt like a potential mistake, and this fear became a constant companion.

While most students thrived in the lively discussions and group projects, Alex found solace in the predictable world of Maths and Physics.



It wasn't just a subject; it was a refuge. The structured environment of secondary school, with its timetables and predictable routines, acted as a scaffold for Alex's academic growth. But college, with its open-ended expectations and demands for autonomy, felt like being thrust into a vast ocean without a life vest.

There were triumphs, of course. Alex beams with pride when recalling the self-study of Physics, done entirely through distance learning. Then there was the Fourier analysis lab report, a herculean task given Alex's writing apprehensions, which earned a near-perfect score.

But, college labs were a battleground. Long sessions often introduced topics not yet covered in lectures. The pressure to quickly grasp new concepts, combined with the fear of errors, made laboratory sessions an anxiety-ridden experience. Even more challenging was reaching out for help, the ever-present fear of written communication making emails to professors an ordeal.

One of Alex's unexpected lifelines was an internship with the Disability Service.

This platform offered a safe space, helping hone communication skills and offering insights into tools that could aid academic pursuits, such as assistive technologies tailored for physics coursework.

The journey hasn't been easy. There have been skipped meals leading to headaches, missed lectures due to overwhelming assignments, and moments of paralysing self-doubt. But Alex has learned that seeking help and opening up, whether it's discussing a concept or sharing personal struggles, can make all the difference.

Alex's story is not just about the challenges faced by those with autism in academia; it's a testament to the indomitable human spirit, resilience, and the difference understanding can make. As academic staff, there's a lesson for all of us: to look beyond the grades, to understand the battles our students face, and to create an environment where every Alex can thrive.



# Theo's Story: Navigating Academia with ADHD

## Theo's Story Navigating Academia with ADHD

One of the most pressing difficulties presented to students with ADHD during their time at university comes in attempting to justify the provision of leniency with deadline extensions as a reasonable accommodation. In spite of an abundance of empirical evidence for the significant impact of ADHD on executive function, there is a prevailing sense among faculty that citing ADHD as a criterion for being allotted extra time is a technique adopted only by lazy or unwilling students.

In layman's terms, having ADHD makes it objectively more difficult to sit down and engage in a prescribed task in the first place, then subsequently makes it more difficult to stay focused on that task for a significant time period.

It is often rebutted that this should be accounted for in advance when planning studies, however this technique is generally incompatible with an ADHD brain – students experience time-blindness, slower cognitive processing, emotional misregulation, and those being medicated may have specific windows of efficacy during the day which limits their ability to effectively balance responsibilities. Since ADHD is mutually exclusive from intellectual capacity, many bright students also exhibit overcompensatory and perfectionist tendencies to iron out every detail of one assignment before moving on to the next, fueled by an innate desire to prove themselves as capable students in spite of neurological setbacks.

These well-documented symptoms, among others, lend credence to the idea that for a level playing field to be implemented, students with ADHD require more time than their neuro-typical peers for the same assignments.

Of course, we must duly acknowledge that unpredictable extension requests can inconvenience staff members by complicating their already busy schedules. It is completely understandable that this may result in frustration, and people are naturally inclined to superimpose lazy or even flippant intentions on the part of the student.

Nonetheless, it is equally true that accommodating for disabled students is part and parcel of the job requirements and we should all strive for a society that is as equitable as possible. Due to the nuanced and complicated way in which neurodivergent people are affected by growing up in an environment that is designed for people who do not think or function in the same way as them, students affected by ADHD are not always well equipped to articulate why it is that they need more time, and this can be interpreted as a last-ditch excuse to get an extension. In reality it is much more likely that the student has been agonising over this and other pieces of work for days and experiencing a mounting sense of frustration and helplessness. I can attest first hand that an understanding staff member who will accommodate for this will have more of a positive impact on that student's studies and wellbeing than you could imagine.

It is important for students with ADHD who anticipate that their studies will be affected in this way to make sure this is clearly outlined in their LENS report. This report from the Disability Service will communicate your support needs to your professors – no further proof beyond the LENS report will be required to confirm your extenuating circumstances.

It is equally a good idea to inform your professors early on in the semester about your condition so they are prepared for provision of reasonable accommodations.



# Ben's Off Books Experience

## Ben's Off Books Experience

Trinity Student (Off Books for 2021/2022 Academic Year)

In the time of pandemic, more students are going off books now than ever. Whether it's on account of their mental health, or there's a medical reason behind it, it's slowly but surely becoming more the done thing.

As someone who's recently been off books, I can say that it's not always the most fun having the year off, especially when you're not sure what you should be doing for the first few months.

Frankly, I've discovered for myself that a lot of the supports that should really be in place for off books students, simply aren't in place. Whether it's access to student counselling, academic material, the library or other such facilities, the lack of these supports means that unfortunately a certain percentage of students who go off books will simply not return to college, which only adds to the dropout rate. This is already a problem within and of itself when it comes to autistic students in particular, so suffice it to say that this is an issue that needs to be targeted sooner rather than later.

According to the 2020/2021 TCD Academic Registry Report, there were 334 students off books that year. This is a pretty staggering number considering this is only for one year, and also just to give you a sense of how many people we're talking about when I'm outlining the problems with being off books and just how they're affecting this group of students.

This is actually an area I'm interested in targeting within Trinity College right now as part of my work with the TCD Disability Services, and frankly my dream is that one day all these supports will be in place so that students can go off books and come back better and stronger, ready to complete their rewarding degrees.



In this article, I'm going to outline the issues that off books students currently face and why they're such huge issues in recent times. Additionally, I'm also going to give you some tips on how you can best conduct yourself throughout the year so that you can come back in September totally refreshed, and essentially make the most out of the year. I myself am really looking forward to returning to college in September and getting back into my studies again! In the meantime, I'm going to give you an insight into what I went through this year – the barriers that off books students are currently facing, and why they have caused so much logistical mayhem!

The first big issue I faced during the year was not having access to academic material. This stemmed from having no access to Blackboard (and thus the lecture notes contained within it) as well as exam papers from the TCD Academic Registry. Both were as a result of my student number “being expired” as it was put to me on several occasions. Truth be told, one of the main reasons for me going off books in the first place was so I could be working away on this material in my own time, although I dive into this in more detail later on.

Following that was a predicament relating to the Office365 account that every student has, or should have at least.

As someone who was maintaining regular contact with the TCD Disability Services while being off books, I quickly ran into the problem of not being able to log in to any online meetings, because we were all using Microsoft Teams as a means of communication. Thankfully my Occupational Therapist found a temporary solution to this issue, but I was still unable to see the chat on occasion, so it should be made clear that this is still an ongoing issue, and a better solution needs to be found.

Another major issue is the general attitude the college has towards students being off books, specifically in terms of the way they phrase things. In an attempt to try and resolve the Office365 (specifically Teams) conundrum myself for instance, I got told in two separate emails by the IT Services and the Academic Registry respectively, that they were unable to help me because my student number “has expired.” This can quite easily be interpreted as me not existing as far as the college is concerned, and I found this extremely degrading and demoralising to deal with, to the point that I can see quite clearly why a lot of students simply don't come back after spending a year off books.

Interestingly enough, with the exception of my close ties with the Disability Services,

the college itself made no real effort to stay in contact with me, nor did they give me any real reason to step foot on campus over the year that I was off books, which I know would've been very difficult for me to navigate in September had I not actually been on campus for the duration of that time. Once again, it's easy to see why students don't return after being off books for a year, as they simply drift away from any prior ties to the college.

Perhaps most appalling of all was the lack of mental health support on offer after the student has deferred the year on mental health grounds. This is disconcerting enough in a normal setting, but in the era of COVID, where more students are off books than ever, you have to think that these services are more of a necessity than they were before. In fact, I even heard of a case where one student went off books on mental health grounds and actually had their Student Counselling privileges taken OFF them. If this isn't counterintuitive then I don't know what is, and this is why it is a personal mission of mine to fix this problem.

Ironically there are even issues with the off books scheme which I have yet to face – the Disability Services having been kind enough to warn me about them – as well as issues I haven't encountered that may well face other students.

For instance, getting back on books for the next academic year can be a long and drawn-out process, which often results in students only being able to register again just before the academic year begins, and in some cases, even after the year has already started! This in turn means off-books students are the last to pick modules and electives, and sometimes don't even get given a timetable and thus have to send a plethora of emails searching around for one! To give another example, those who go off books with assessment often get missed out on for reassessment, and once again don't get issued their timetables – all as the result of an admin glitch! One other such problem on the back of this is not being able to apply for accommodation while off books, as well as often being forgotten about come exam time and falling into the same timetable conundrum on their portal. This additional stress at the beginning of the year is completely unnecessary and thus it needs to be organised another way.

These are simply the big issues I faced during the year. As someone who is looking to make drastic changes in these areas through my work with the Disability Services, I quickly discovered that there were many rules and legalities within the college that were the root of all these issues, and I felt it was important that we identified these as soon as possible so that we could begin breaking down these issues and resolving them.

In that time, we were lucky enough to engage with a lot of powerful people within the college, including the Senior Lecturer Dr. David Shepherd, on ways we can target this problem as a whole, and start coming up with solutions, creating resources, raising awareness, etc. In the case of the Senior Lecturer, a resources and information page for off books students is now in the works thanks to his enthusiasm. In addition to that, we got into great talks with the TCD Inclusive Curriculum Project throughout the year, and even got to present our case for change in the big CINNTE Institutional Review which took place in Trinity earlier this year. I believe this is a terrific start to what is ultimately going to be a long-haul initiative, but every idea we can get under way is another student who graduates, so it is very much be worth our while pursuing this further!

In spite of all the challenges and logistical issues, I will tell you now that there's still a lot you can achieve in the year of being off books, and things you can put in place to allow yourself to feel good during the year. In fact, I would say it's vitally important to know how to look after yourself while you're off books, especially with regards to your mental health.

This year is a chance for you to regroup and feel as fresh and rejuvenated as possible before going back into full time education, and you should be feeling like you're ready to go back come the next academic year. So here, I'm going to give you a few dos and don'ts for being off books from my own experience, so that you can make the most out of the year as possible.

I'm going to start with the don'ts first just so I can make a couple of things clear:

**Don't put too much pressure on yourself.** I went off books in October 2021, merely four weeks into the academic year, simply because I was burnt out. After a year-and-a-half in lockdown, I just couldn't study in the same way anymore, so I needed that break. Give yourself that break! I made the mistake of trying to go through academic material that I feel I had missed during lockdown when I clearly wasn't able for it at that time. Of course, it's okay to go through your study material while you're off books (and perhaps even encouraged, hence my point earlier about having access to it in the first place), but only once you begin to feel a bit more refreshed and rejuvenated having stepped back from that environment, should you then slowly but surely begin to look over your work again.

**Don't let yourself fall out of a routine.** From the time when I went off books in October to that Christmas, I had virtually no routine, and as it happened, it was some of the hardest months of my life. Having nothing to do simply results in boredom which in turn can convert into frustration and even despondency. So having a solid routine from as early on as possible is essential. One of the easiest ways to do this is by getting a part-time job, or by structuring your week around any extra-curricular activities that you might have. For instance, I did some work for the TCD Disability Services, and started my Gold Gaisce Award.

**Don't talk yourself into not going back.** A year is a long time, which means a lot of time to think about things, even unnecessary things, as happened with me. At one point I did in fact talk myself into not going back, but only after realising what a foolish decision that would be, knowing just how much work I had put into myself and the degree to get this far, I knew I just had to stay the course (no pun intended!) and keep working towards getting better within myself before returning. REMEMBER: You're in your course for a reason, and you've made all these friends and connections for a reason. There's still a lot to be achieved!

**Don't expect everything to go smoothly all the time.** Being off books is a very different experience than what anybody is used to, so there's going to be some tough moments for sure. Whether it's a sudden lack of motivation from time to time or something happening in your personal life, it's about how you manage those tough moments and come out of them stronger. I didn't feel I could face anything for the first couple of months, but gradually I realised it's these moments that set you up again for going back so that you're able to navigate all the various challenges college throws your way, of which there'll be many for sure!

Now here are some of the dos I realised for myself, which brought me great clarity:

**Do spend lots of time with family and friends.** In a year where you're not necessarily sure what's going on all of the time, I learned that it was important to surround myself with the people who care about me the most; my mum and dad, my closest friends, and any other confidantes I have who have always gone out of their way to check up on me. They've seen what you've been through, and hopefully they bring out the best in you too. Moreover, they helped me get this far. As someone who went off books on mental health grounds, this was a key thing for me to get back on track.



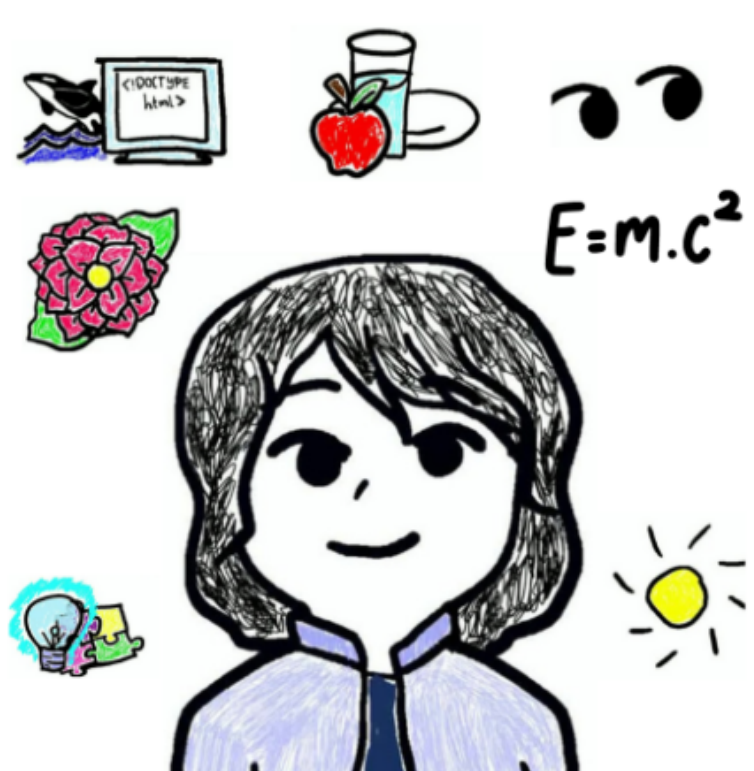
**Do take time to do the things you've always loved doing.** Over the course of the pandemic, I stopped playing chess, I stopped writing music, I stopped reading, and frankly, it's kind of a long list. I was truly burnt out, having lost all my motivation for the things that brought me great joy. But taking the time off-books was the time I absolutely needed to finally get back into my various passions, which ultimately was the real starting point for getting back on track for me. Frankly, I've found myself doing stuff I never thought I'd do as well. Right now, I'm setting up a telescope and learning Spanish!

**Do stay in contact with the college.** I mean this in both the physical and the communicative sense. I was fortunate enough to remain in touch with the Disability Services in Trinity while off books, and as I say, even did some work for them over the year. That communication and being on campus every so often really helped me stay tethered to the college as it were, and now I know it won't seem anything as strange to me when I return to studying full time again. The goal is to get the best start to the year as possible. The last thing you want going back is any unnecessary additional stress, but doing this should alleviate some of that.

**Be in the present moment.** Before anyone gets nervous here, there's no spiritual rant coming I promise! But the fact is if you spend the whole year thinking about nothing but next September, you're only going to do yourself more damage, as happened with me in the early months. For a while I struggled to try and live in the present moment, not really knowing what that meant frankly, but then I realised that I just have to try and enjoy everything as it is happening. I didn't really know how to do this until I had started reading books on mindfulness and meditation in my own time, but for others it may be a different kind of journey. Letting go of the past has been the most difficult thing for me as part of my burnout, but I have even found a way to deal with that too, which just goes to show what a time of healing this was for me.

Suffice it to say that it's been quite a journey since first going off books. In the beginning it was very stressful, but I honestly found myself learning a lot more about myself, and I'm a better person because of it. Honestly, I'm most proud of the work I did trying to dismantle the aforementioned barriers facing off books students, or at the very least, draw attention to them within the college. It's something I will most likely keep up even after going back on books, because it's an initiative that's really gained traction now, and I really want to be a part of it to see what happens in the future.

If anyone is contemplating going off books at any point during their academic career, whether it's to regroup after a tough mental experience, or simply just to look after your general health, have a good think about what you would want to achieve in that year, and what steps you would take to make sure you came out of it more refreshed. It's not a decision to take lightly of course, hence why I've written this article – to help give you an insight as to what to expect, and what's expected of YOU if you want this year to work out the way you envision for yourself. I know for me that it was the right call, and that that was the time I needed to recharge and realise who I wanted to be – but also to realise who I DIDN'T want to be, which was perhaps an even bigger revelation.



# Eimear's Journey: Overcoming Burnout & Embracing Unique Learning Needs

## Eimear's Journey Overcoming Burnout & Embracing Unique Learning Needs

Eimear, an incredibly talented student at Trinity College Dublin, has a journey that many might not entirely understand at first glance. Living with autism, the transition from school to college was intensified by the uncertainty and chaos of the global pandemic. The constant burnouts made every subsequent recovery seem longer, more strenuous, and more demanding.

Bright lights and bustling crowds became adversaries. Simple tasks turned complicated, driving became a hazard, and the academic rigor of college seemed insurmountable.

What many neurotypical people might describe as mere fatigue or stress, Eimear experienced as a severe and debilitating burnout. The profound exhaustion intensified sensory sensitivities, and challenges in information processing made every day a colossal task.

It wasn't just the physical fatigue. It was the cognitive overload. Sitting through lectures felt like watching a movie in a foreign language without subtitles. Books turned into mere compilations of words, with their essence seemingly evading capture. And this wasn't a matter of willpower. For Eimear, as for many autistic individuals, the symptoms are not just more severe; they linger, demanding extended recovery periods

By the end of the last term, Eimear had mustered every ounce of strength to cross the finish line, sacrificing mental well-being for academic progress. But the looming thought of revisiting the same courses was haunting. For an autistic individual, delving back into previously traversed content can be akin to replaying a distressing memory. Fresh material offers hope, a renewed chance at understanding without the shadows of past difficulties.

Autistic burnout isn't just tiredness; it's a profound sense of being drained, mentally, emotionally, and physically. It stems from the constant balancing act of adapting to a world that isn't always designed for neurodiverse minds. While anyone can experience fatigue, autistic individuals often encounter it with amplified intensity.

However, there's hope, and Trinity College Dublin can play a pivotal role. By understanding and accommodating Eimear's unique challenges, the college can set a precedent for inclusivity. Splitting the academic year, in line with Trinity's accommodation policy, would not only uphold the college's commitment to inclusivity but would also actively support Eimear's right to education.

It's not about leniency. It's about acknowledging the unique challenges students like Eimear face and offering them the platform to shine, learn, and contribute. Eimear's journey isn't one of defeat; it's one of resilience, strength, and the hope for a brighter, more inclusive future.

Eimear's story serves as a potent reminder that understanding, compassion, and reasonable accommodations aren't mere policies; they're catalysts for change and pathways to inclusivity.



# Leo's Story: Living with ADHD at Trinity

## Leo's Story Living with ADHD at Trinity

The first time I met my disability officer late in 3rd year, I was a confident but burnt out Physical Science student at Trinity, his vivaciousness struck me. However, as our conversations meandered, it revealed a deeper, unspoken truth—a narrative shared by many but voiced by few. Both of us have ADHD.

I am passionate about my lived and shared struggles. "You know, I've always felt this need to prove myself twice as hard. Not because I lacked the intellectual capacity, but because my brain wouldn't cooperate."

This wasn't just about extensions or deadlines—it was about the silent battles students with ADHD like me fight every single day.

In the world of academia, ADHD often finds itself trapped in a limbo of misunderstanding. Universities, while proud bastions of knowledge, sometimes falter in recognising the intricate challenges ADHD students face. This isn't just about hyperactivity or distraction; it's about a deeply embedded neurological difference.

When an ADHD student asks for an extension, it's seldom a last-minute whimsy. It's the culmination of days filled with mounting frustration, battling cognitive obstacles like time-blindness, emotional mis-regulation, and slow processing. While neurotypical students might see a clear road ahead, those with ADHD often navigate a path riddled with detours.

Yet, the prevailing sentiment among some faculty members is scepticism. "Are these students merely lazy?" they wonder. Such sentiments, although perhaps rooted in concerns of academic integrity, can inflict profound distress on students who are genuinely grappling with their neurodivergence.



My narrative echoes this sentiment. "I remember an assignment," he recalled, "I had every intention of starting early. But each time I sat down, my ADHD took the reins. Hours would melt away, and I'd be left feeling desolate, doubting my own capabilities."

ADHD isn't about a lack of willpower or intelligence. It's about brains that are wired differently. Those diagnosed often possess brilliant minds that, ironically, become their own adversaries. They're not asking for undue leniency but merely a fair chance—a level playing field.

However, the onus doesn't solely lie with the faculty. Students, too, must proactively communicate their needs. Trinity's Disability Service provides the LENS report, a tool to bridge the gap of understanding between students and professors. This report, coupled with open dialogues at the semester's start, can usher in a new era of understanding.

My story isn't unique, but it's pivotal. His courage in sharing it sparked this article, a clarion call to universities everywhere to understand, empathise, and adapt. Our academic spaces must not just be places of learning but also bastions of inclusivity and understanding. For in recognising and supporting the Leos of the world, we pave the way for a richer, more inclusive future in education.

Over recent years, there's been a discernible shift in the way ADHD is perceived and understood. Across the globe, increasing numbers of students are identifying with ADHD, bringing to light the nuances of this neurodiverse condition. At Trinity, this shift is palpable. In just one year, the university witnessed a staggering 40% growth in students who identify with ADHD. This surge not only underscores the growing awareness and acceptance of ADHD but also heralds the changing dynamics of our student population.

Recognising the burgeoning needs, Trinity has taken commendable steps forward. A notable milestone was the opening of an ADHD clinic, a pioneering initiative that marked its place as the first of its kind in any European university. While services like these play a pivotal role in supporting students, it's abundantly clear that more needs to be done, especially in the realm of academia.

The recent enhancements in support services are laudable, yet the broader academic landscape remains largely unchanged. Tailored to cater to conventional learning styles, it inadvertently sidelines neurodiverse students. If Trinity, and academic institutions at large, aspire to create inclusive environments, a profound reform in the way we perceive and structure education is paramount.

It's not just about support services; it's about reshaping the very fabric of our academic world to ensure everyone, irrespective of their neurological wiring, can fully participate and thrive.

Now, as we delve deeper into the heart of Trinity and the stories of its neurodiverse students, the call for change becomes not just a recommendation, but a pressing imperative.



# Amy's Journey: Navigating College with Anorexia Nervosa

## Amy's Journey

### Navigating College with Anorexia Nervosa

Amy, an ambitious student at TCD, has always been passionate about her studies, especially the nuances of Biological Sciences. But, like any journey, Amy's academic path hasn't been without its challenges. She battles anorexia nervosa, a condition that has, over time, drained her energy, fatigued her spirit, and restricted her mobility.

Anorexia hasn't just taken a toll on Amy's physical health; it has infringed upon her cognitive capabilities as well. The energetic student, once known for her sharp attention and unwavering concentration, now finds it daunting to process information at the pace she once did.

Everyday tasks have become mountains to climb – attending lectures, participating in labs, and even the simple act of studying demands an energy that is often hard to muster.

However, Amy's resilience shines through. Despite the daily challenges, she has endeavoured to stay connected with TCD and the studies she adores. She's not alone in this fight. TCD, her tutor, the Disability Service, and most importantly, Amy herself, have collaborated to ensure that she gets the necessary support.

For Amy, securing accommodations tailored to her needs was essential for her academic journey. She was provided a distraction-reduced examination venue with an added 20 minutes per hour, permitting her a fair chance at showcasing her abilities. Additionally, Amy was granted permission to record lectures, ensuring she could grasp the content effectively. These accommodations, combined with specialised library privileges, assistive technology training, and dedicated academic support, played a pivotal role in making her academic experience more inclusive and equitable. Outside of the academic realm, Amy has also been in close contact with medical professionals at her hospital, ensuring her mental health is tended to with utmost care.

These supports, though instrumental in helping Amy, aren't exhaustive. The symptoms of anorexia nervosa are complex, and as such, Amy's support system needs to be adaptive. This was the rationale behind the split year request.

The proposed split-year structure, combined with an online format, was designed to suit Amy's present needs. By reducing her physical campus presence, she can manage her energy more efficiently. Online lectures offer her the luxury of pausing, rewinding, and understanding at a pace that suits her, ensuring she doesn't feel left behind. Amy is thriving now as a result of these supports and understanding.

Amy's story serves as an inspiring testament to the strength of the human spirit and the importance of support, understanding, and adaptability in education. Through collective effort, we can create an environment where every student, irrespective of their personal battles, has the opportunity to thrive.



# John Champions College with Dyspraxia

## John Champions College with Dispraxia

John had always been a diligent student, pushing himself to the limits and often beyond. He had dreams of joining Trinity, and when he finally received the acceptance letter, it was a dream come true. Yet, stepping into the vast university corridors, he felt both excitement and a familiar, niggling apprehension.

On his first day, while other freshers eagerly engaged in introductory conversations, John hesitated to approach anyone. He had been diagnosed with dyspraxia during his high school years.

Dyspraxia, a developmental coordination disorder, made everyday activities - writing, tying shoelaces, organising thoughts - a real challenge. While he didn't view himself as 'disabled', he knew he was different. And it was this 'difference' that made him wary of asking for help.

Another student named Alice caught his eye. Her visible fatigue was evident, even if she tried to mask it with a determined smile. Over time, the two struck a bond. Alice shared her struggle with chronic fatigue and how it made her day-to-day activities at the university exhausting. Her challenge with daily tasks, like studying and commuting, mirrored John's struggles, albeit for different reasons. She revealed that her life transformed when she finally decided to approach the Disability Service. They didn't just help with exam accommodations but provided guidance on managing daily challenges by setting up meetings with an academic specialist called Alison.

Inspired by Alice's experience, John decided to approach the Disability Service himself. Hesitant at first, he soon realised that they offered more than just academic accommodations. They provided coping strategies, exercises to improve coordination, and a safe space to discuss his feelings and apprehensions.



Embracing the services, John began to excel both academically and socially. He joined a study group, improving not just his own grades but aiding others with their challenges. He even spearheaded an awareness campaign, shedding light on lesser-known conditions like dyspraxia.

Years later, when John stood as the valedictorian of his batch, he recounted his journey. "If there's one thing I've learned during my time here," he began, "it's that we all have our battles, visible or not. But there's strength in seeking help, in admitting that we're not alone. Trinity isn't just a place of academic excellence; it's a community that supports, uplifts, and propels its students to unimaginable heights." Alice, sitting among the audience, smiled at John, their shared journey a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of support.



# Chloe's Journey: Embracing the Pace

## Chloe's Journey

From a distance, the Mediterranean always sparkled a bit brighter for Chloe. She had a unique way of looking at the world, one honed from years of living with chronic fatigue. Every day was a challenge, like waking up in the wee hours for an early morning flight. Yet, like those early flights, every challenge bore a silver lining.

As a child, Chloe often found herself drained faster than the other kids. While they'd play for hours, she'd be exhausted after just a short while. The fatigue she felt was not mere tiredness; it felt like a weight pulling her down, as if her energy was being siphoned away.

But Chloe's spirit was indomitable. She learned to adapt, to value the small moments of rest, and to make the most of the energy bursts when they came.

In college, she watched as her friends pulled all-nighters and juggled back-to-back classes. She couldn't. Her body demanded frequent breaks. But in those breaks, while everyone else rushed, she found pockets of serenity. She'd read, or write, or simply take in the beauty of the campus, noticing the blossoms on trees or the patterns the clouds made.

This slower pace came with its advantages. While others ordered quick fast food between classes, Chloe brought homemade meals, saving money and often enjoying healthier choices. When lectures were a blur for many, she was the one sitting up front, absorbing information clearly, and taking impeccable notes. By the end of the year, students would line up for her notes, and her popularity in study groups was unmatched.

But beyond academics, chronic fatigue taught Chloe invaluable life lessons. She learned to appreciate the details, like the play of light on water or the beauty of a starlit sky, moments that many took for granted or simply missed in their hurry.

It also brought her closer to people who mattered. Her true friends understood her condition and always ensured she was comfortable.

One summer, a trip to the Mediterranean with her friends became a transformative experience for Chloe. While they had groaned at the thought of waking up at 2 am for a 6 am flight, Chloe smiled, knowing well that the best experiences often come after the toughest trials. And as they touched down, the blaring Ryanair trumpets and the shimmering blue sea was a testament to her belief: life's greatest views are savoured most after the hardest climbs.

Chloe's journey wasn't without its trials, but it was filled with treasures that she wouldn't trade for the world. To her, chronic fatigue wasn't just a condition; it was a lens that made the world shine brighter.



# Oisin's Quest: The Code to Connection

## Oisin's Quest The Code to Connection

In the vibrant heart of Dublin, Trinity College stood as an emblem of knowledge and tradition. Here, amid its historic halls and buzzing lecture rooms, Oisin began his journey, one that would take him deeper into the digital world of Computer Science and the intricate web of human connection.

Oisin's world was coloured differently. Being on the Autistic Spectrum, he perceived nuances of conversation as if through a different lens, often missing the subtle cues most took for granted. This unique way of perceiving gave him an uncanny knack for coding. While most saw the world in abstract shades, Oisin's vision was delightfully literal, translating perfectly to the logical precision required for coding.

Yet, outside the digital realms of zeros and ones, Oisín faced challenges. His internal radar struggled to pick up the soft undertones in conversations, leading to misinterpretations. Shyness already built a wall around him, and his desire for clarity and stability often made group projects feel like navigating a ship through a storm without a compass.

The anxiety bubbled beneath the surface during group assignments. In leaderless groups or when tasks seemed nebulous, Oisín felt a rising tide of stress. That familiar sequence - stress, weariness, resignation - played out repeatedly, leading him to the side-lines.

But Oisín was not one to stay down. His resilience and recognition of his challenges became his strength. Taking the initiative, he bridged the gap between his world and the world outside. With the help of his Disability Officer, Oisín reached out to the Course Coordinator, shedding light on the challenges he faced. Together, they carved a path tailored for Oisín's success.

The Disability Service became Oisín's sanctuary, equipping him with skills not just for college, but for the real world beyond.

The journey was transformative. With every session, every conversation, and every strategy, Oisín learned to face his challenges head-on.

One day, during a particularly challenging group project, Oisín surprised everyone, including himself. Drawing from his newfound skills and confidence, he gently steered his group, clarifying the task at hand, and leading them to a successful conclusion. It was a victory, not just for Oisín, but for the entire team.

As Oisín ventured deeper into his academic and personal journey, he realised that acknowledging one's challenges was only the first step. The real magic lay in facing them, learning from them, and turning them into stepping stones.

Oisín's story wasn't just about conquering codes on a computer screen; it was about decoding the intricate dance of human connection. And in that dance, he found his rhythm, one that resonated with both logic and heart.



# Maeve's Tapestry: Threads of the Unseen

## **Maeve's Tapestry Threads of the Unseen**

In the heart of Trinity College's vast library, amongst the sea of scholars and rustling pages, Maeve sat engrossed in an old, worn-out book. The pages whispered tales of bygone eras, heroes, and secrets lost to time. Yet, for Maeve, history wasn't just about the past. It was a mirror reflecting her own battles, a world that often felt invisible.

The challenge of Maeve's invisible disability was like navigating through history's mists without a lantern. Sometimes, she felt it was unmistakably noticeable, as if "invisible disability" was inked across her forehead, each letter echoing the judgments and biases of those around her.



On other days, its absence was so profound that Maeve would question its existence. Was her mental struggle even real, or was it a figment of her overactive imagination? The absence of a tangible yardstick for her mental illness made her journey all the more treacherous. Doubts enveloped her, casting shadows on her capabilities and drowning her self-worth in the depths of despondency.

Amidst her ancient texts and research papers, Maeve's mind often wandered back to a lecture on the unknown soldiers of history—those unsung heroes whose names never made it to the grand annals but whose resilience shaped epochs. It was a lesson not just in history, but in self-recognition.

One particularly gloomy evening, Maeve found herself pouring over a diary from the 17th century. The writer, an unknown woman, wrote of her battles with what seemed like depression. The raw, unfiltered emotions etched on those pages mirrored Maeve's own struggles. The realisation that she wasn't alone, that people centuries before faced the same invisible battles, ignited a spark within her.

It was a defining moment. Maeve realised that if she were to rewrite her narrative, she needed to reach out. She joined a student support group for those with invisible disabilities.

As she listened to fellow students share their stories, she found solace and strength. The sessions became her beacon, guiding her through her academic challenges and personal lows.

Over time, Maeve began to view her disability not as a hindrance but as a unique lens, offering a different perspective on history and life. She started a project, weaving together the stories of historical figures who might've had invisible disabilities, drawing parallels between their tales and the modern-day challenges.

Maeve's journey, interspersed with victories and setbacks, became an inspiration for many. Her research on the unseen heroes of history earned accolades, but more importantly, it gave a voice to those who felt voiceless.

The vast corridors of Trinity College bore witness to Maeve's metamorphosis—from a student grappling with her unseen battles to a historian who brought to light the invisible tapestries of time. In her quest, Maeve discovered that true strength wasn't in battling alone but in seeking support and finding hope amidst the pages of history.



# Anthony's Uncharted Path: Beyond the Spectrum of Seizures

## Anthony's Uncharted Path Beyond the Spectrum of Seizures

The pristine labs of Trinity College's Pharmacy School echoed with the buzz of learning and experimentation. Amidst the eager students stood Anthony, his focus razor-sharp, hands steady, as he carefully mixed concoctions and charted new territories in drug research. But beneath his calm demeanour, Anthony grappled with a constant, lurking challenge: epilepsy.

For Anthony, the world was a double-edged sword. On one side lay the uncertainty of his condition—seizures that could strike at any moment, their nature and duration unpredictable.

He had lost count of the number of times his body had betrayed him during crucial moments—be it lectures, labs, or leisurely lunches.

Yet, on the other side lay the fortress of support that Trinity College provided. They recognised Anthony, not for his disability, but for his unwavering spirit. The additional time for assignments, a more accommodating exam venue, and the flexibility with his placements were not just accommodations; they were a testament to the college's faith in his capabilities.

However, not all battles were external. As a pharmacy student, Anthony was well-versed with risk assessments, safety protocols, and the medical intricacies of his condition. But more than the seizures themselves, what pained him was the scepticism—whispered doubts about his suitability for the rigorous demands of the pharmacy profession. Many viewed him through a clinical lens, reducing him to a mere 'case' rather than acknowledging him as a passionate young pharmacist.

Anthony often felt trapped in a vortex of being over-medicalised. But, he was determined to shatter these biases.

He collaborated with the college's health department to develop an individualised epilepsy care plan. It wasn't just about managing seizures; it was about ensuring that he, and others like him, could safely navigate the challenges of a demanding academic environment.

Outside the academic realm, Anthony spearheaded awareness campaigns. Through seminars and workshops, he shared his story—highlighting not just the struggles but the triumphs. He aimed to paint a picture of epilepsy that went beyond the clinical, one that showcased the indomitable human spirit.

His classmates soon began to see the person beyond the diagnosis. Anthony, with his unwavering resilience and determination, became an inspiration. He wasn't just a student with epilepsy; he was a future pharmacist with dreams as vast as the universe.

Years later, as Anthony stood at the forefront of ground-breaking pharmaceutical research, those who had once doubted him watched in awe. His journey was a testament to the fact that challenges, no matter how daunting, could be surmounted when met with grit and an unwavering spirit.

To all the determined souls who defied their disabilities, Anthony's life stood as a beacon—a reminder that every individual, no matter their challenges, holds within them the power to redefine their destiny.



# Sara's Blueprint: Navigating the Unseen Terrain of Invisible Disabilities

## **Sara's Blueprint**

### **Navigating the Unseen Terrain of Invisible Disabilities**

The intricate schematics and precise calculations that covered Sara's desk at Trinity College's Engineering Department were a reflection of her meticulous nature. Her fingers often danced over complex designs, sketching out innovative solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges. However, as clear as these blueprints were, the internal blueprints of Sara's life weren't as straightforward.

Growing up, Sara's world oscillated between seemingly 'perfect' health and sudden, debilitating flare-ups.

To many, her condition was an enigma, its invisible nature making it difficult for others to comprehend or even acknowledge. The nuances—fatigue that wasn't just "being tired", the emotional toll that silently gnawed at her spirit—were often lost in the broader discourse about disability.

Navigating the labyrinth of adolescence and young adulthood, Sara felt herself buffeted by dual challenges: the unpredictable nature of her condition and the scepticism of a society that often invalidated what it couldn't see. Being a woman in the male-dominated field of engineering was already a formidable challenge, but being a woman with an invisible disability added another layer of complexity again.

It wasn't just the occasional flare-ups that Sara had to contend with. It was the dismissive glances, the veiled doubts, and sometimes, outright disbelief. Even in environments that were meant to nurture and support, like hospitals and schools, Sara felt her experiences were downplayed, her concerns sidelined.

But as the semesters rolled on, Sara's understanding of her disabilities evolved. She began to view her experiences through a lens of



introspection, recognising the myriad ways in which her condition influenced her life beyond the obvious flare-ups. This epiphany was liberating. No longer was she bound by the reductive perceptions of others; she was free to define her experiences on her terms.

It was this newfound clarity that spurred Sara to be an advocate, not just for herself but for others in her shoes. She founded an on-campus group dedicated to raising awareness about invisible disabilities, particularly in high-pressure academic environments like engineering. Through workshops, talks, and mentorship programs, Sara aimed to foster a culture of understanding and empathy.

Time passed, and Sara's prowess as an engineer became well-known. But more than her technical acumen, it was her resilience, her ability to traverse the unseen challenges of her life, that left an indelible mark on those around her.

Sara's story is a testament to the indomitable spirit of individuals who navigate the complexities of invisible disabilities. It is a reminder that understanding, empathy, and self-acceptance can pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future.



# Grace's Alchemical Journey: Finding Clarity in the Quiet

## **Grace's Alchemical Journey Finding the Clarity in the Quiet**

The busy corridors of Trinity's Chemistry department echoed with animated discussions, excited exclamations, and the hum of machines. But for Grace, these sounds were often distant, like whispered secrets just beyond her grasp. Growing up, the world was a softer place for Grace.

Conversations faded when people turned their backs, and the loud rev of car engines felt more like gentle vibrations underfoot. It was in this muffled soundscape that she found solace in the vivid worlds of books, where tales unfolded in silent brilliance.

Ironically, it was during an ISL class that Grace's unique auditory journey became more apparent.

What began as a light-hearted examination of eardrums transformed into a profound revelation: her eardrums, scarred and rigid, did not respond to the percussion of sounds like they should. But this discovery didn't weaken her spirit; instead, it introduced her to the expressive world of sign language. And while Grace wasn't deaf, her diminished hearing made ISL an invaluable bridge to better communication.

Then came the unforeseen challenge of the Covid era, turning her academic world upside down. Online lectures, which became the new norm, posed a unique challenge. Audio glitches, poor sound quality, and the absence of visual cues often left Grace grappling for clarity. Many a time, she would find herself buried in notes and texts, racing to bridge the gaps her ears missed. But in this uncertain sea, her anchor was the unwavering support from her peers and lecturers.

Her fellow chemistry enthusiasts became her allies, both in experiments and experiences. Their wit, intelligence, and genuine empathy made the journey bearable, if not enjoyable. Their camaraderie was a testament to the bonds that form when collective empathy meets individual tenacity.

For Grace, the experience at Trinity wasn't just about mastering chemistry's intricacies. It was about recognising that challenges, be it personal or academic, are but stepping stones to resilience.

With every muted lecture or missed sentence, Grace found strength in her determination and the support of her community. In her world, the silent alchemy of perseverance and friendship echoed louder than any roar of thunder.



# Sandra's Silent Symphony: Dancing to the Rhythms of ADD

## **Sandra's Silent Symphony Dancing to the Rhythms of ADD**

Amidst the historic arches of Trinity, Sandra found herself pursuing her dream on the Access Foundation Programme, setting the stage for a future in science. But every passionate stride she took was harmonised with an invisible melody that only she could hear — the unpredictable cadence of Attention Deficit Disorder.

Walking the cobbled paths, while her peers saw the graceful ballet of a young scientist, she was orchestrating a complex dance, a silent symphony playing out in her mind. In a world that often revelled in order and precision, Sandra's thoughts fluttered and swayed like the leaves on a breezy day.

This unchoreographed rhythm, though unique, often felt out of tune with the expectations of those around her.

She vividly recalled the apprehension that accompanied each conversation with her boss. Words, which should have flowed like a cascading stream, often ended up disjointed, like a river interrupted by sudden bends. And the world's response was predictable. The occasional raised eyebrow, a hasty judgment, or worse, being branded as 'disinterested' or a 'bad listener'. The irony? Sandra listened, perhaps too deeply, to everything — the unspoken cues, the hidden meanings, the silent judgments.

But, like many performers who trip on stage, Sandra had mastered the art of using humour as her safety net. Jokes, often self-deprecating, became her tool to diffuse awkwardness, a shield she wielded with practiced ease. But every jest, every chuckle was an attempt to mask the underlying exhaustion — the weight of trying to fit into moulds she wasn't cast from.

And yet, behind this façade was a brilliant mind — one that looked at the world with a perspective few could fathom.

For where others saw a linear path, Sandra saw a web of endless possibilities. It was this unique vision that she brought to her scientific pursuits.

In the echoing chambers of Trinity, amidst lectures and labs, Sandra's journey was a testament to her resilience. Navigating the dual challenges of societal expectations and her invisible disability, she continued her dance, gracefully moving to the beat of her own silent symphony. It was not about fitting in; it was about redefining the rhythm of success.



# Jean's Curtain Call: Embracing the Unseen

## **Jean's Curtain Call Embracing the Unseen**

Under the soft gleaming lights of the Lir Academy, Jean gracefully moved across the stage. Each step, each breath, told a story – a story of resilience, of pain, of transformation. Yet, what the audience saw was the radiant performer, an actress in her element, and not the invisible battles she waged offstage.

Jean's journey into the realm of acting wasn't just a quest for fame; it was a pilgrimage into self-discovery. For someone who had lived 15 years without the constraints of a disability, the subsequent transformation was profound. While some might have crumbled under the weight of sudden adversity, Jean chose to see her situation from a different vantage point.



Her body, once a canvas of vitality, began displaying mysterious signs. The silent blisters growing inside her lungs felt like ticking time bombs. With each sudden burst, her life was thrown into disarray. The drains, the surgical procedures, the unending medical jargon – it was like being thrown into an unplanned act with no script to follow.

But just as in theatre, where one wrong step doesn't stop the show, Jean learned to pick herself up, scene after scene, crisis after crisis. She embraced her reality, pain interlaced with moments of relief, drawing strength from vulnerability.

Yet, the invisibility of her condition was its own kind of crucible. At a glance, Jean's clear skin, bright eyes, and infectious laughter painted the image of a healthy young woman. This discrepancy between perception and reality often led to unintentional insensitivity. Questions like "Are you better now?" felt like an unintentional stab, trivialising the chronic nature of her condition.

Jean's journey at the Lir wasn't just about perfecting her roles – it was also about challenging stereotypes and advocating for those with unseen battles.

She used the stage as her platform, subtly embedding the struggles of invisible disabilities into her performances, making audiences reflect, think, and understand.

On International Women's Day, as Jean took her curtain call, she didn't just bow to the applause. She stood tall, representing countless souls who faced daily battles away from prying eyes. Jean's time at Lir wasn't just about honing her craft; it was a call to arms – for awareness, empathy, and understanding for all those with silent struggles. And as the curtains fell, it was clear that Jean had not only etched her mark as an actress but also as a beacon of hope for those with invisible disabilities.



# Aoife's Microscopic Revelation

## Aoife's Microscopic Revelation

In the fascinating world of microbiology, Aoife often found metaphors for her life. Just as she peered into her microscope to uncover the mysteries of the unseen, she, too, had aspects of her life that remained invisible to the untrained eye.

Diagnosed with type one diabetes and hydrocephalus, Aoife's life was a careful balancing act. Her world was a symphony of fluctuating blood sugar levels and perpetual headaches that seemed to play a relentless crescendo. Yet, to an outsider, she was just another student, possibly a tad more emotional or seemingly dramatic. People's inability to understand the unseen was a source of both frustration and determination for Aoife.

What many didn't realise was that beneath Aoife's infectious smile was a will of steel. Every day, she waged silent battles, not only against her medical conditions but also against the misconceptions and biases surrounding invisible disabilities. With each raised eyebrow, every dismissive glance from those who couldn't fathom her pain, Aoife found renewed strength. It was a constant tug-of-war: on one end, trying to validate her pain to others, and on the other, pushing boundaries to prove to herself that she wasn't defined by her illnesses.

For Aoife, her conditions weren't just challenges but also teachers. They taught her resilience, endurance, and empathy. They shaped her perspective, making her appreciate the beauty in the small moments, the victories in seemingly ordinary tasks. In the vast realm of microbiology, she often mused about the unseen and the overlooked. It mirrored her own journey, where she learned to celebrate the microscopic victories, the unseen struggles, and the resilience that shaped her very essence.

Each time Aoife stepped into her laboratory, she wasn't just a student studying microbes – she was a beacon of hope for those battling invisible challenges.

Her journey exemplified that pain and adversity, as tough as they might be, could mould one into a formidable force of nature. In Aoife's case, it shaped her into an unwavering, resilient microbiologist, ready to uncover the mysteries of the unseen, both in her petri dishes and in the vast landscape of human emotions and experiences.



# James's Hidden Battles in the Biosphere

## James's Hidden Battles in the Biosphere

In the world of biosciences, James often contemplated the vast unseen mechanisms that drove life. He often likened the cellular processes to his own life. Beneath the surface of cells, there was a constant tumult, much like the battle James waged against his invisible disability every day.

For James, the laboratories at the university were a refuge, a place where things made sense. He could look into a microscope and see a world where every action had a reaction, where every process had a purpose. However, the human society outside wasn't as understanding or predictable. The outside world often questioned what it couldn't see, and James bore the brunt of this scepticism.

Every day was a game of numbers for James. Where most saw a continuum from 0 to 100, his life was a constant struggle around the 90s. Every morning was a challenge. Some days, he could handle it, pretending the pain was at bay, even if it was always lurking. Other days, the pain would surge, becoming impossible to hide. The transition wasn't sudden, but to the external world, it seemed so.

This dual life took its toll. There were times when the physical manifestations of his disability would overpower him, landing him in bed, desiring the sweet embrace of sleep to escape the pain, or worse, waking up in unfamiliar surroundings, hurt and disoriented. There were moments when hope came in the form of experimental medications, and he willingly transformed into a lab subject, desperately seeking a slice of normalcy.

The irony was not lost on James. Here he was, a student of biosciences, dedicated to understanding the intricacies of life, yet constantly defending his very existence to those who couldn't comprehend his pain. Still, James was determined not to let his disability define him. Yes, he had limitations, but he also had a drive, a passion, and a mind sharp as a scalpel.

His journey through biosciences became more than just academic. It became a reflection of his life, a testament to his endurance. While he delved into cellular mysteries, he also unravelled his own strengths. Every molecule, every gene, and every cell he studied served as a reminder of his resilience and the vibrant, albeit painful, life he led.

For James, his disability might have been invisible to most, but his spirit, his perseverance, and his passion for biosciences were palpable. And as he navigated the complex world of academia and personal challenges, he emerged not just as a promising scientist but also as an emblem of strength and determination.





# Gemma's Dual Journey in BESS

## **Gemma's Dual Journey in BESS**

For Gemma, life at the Business, Economics, and Social Studies (BESS) faculty was always a blend of academic rigor and deep self-reflection. Her days were filled with lectures, group assignments, and the regular student grind. However, the late nights were moments of introspection, often delving into her past, her identity, and her place in the world.

Walking through the university's iconic cobbled pathways, Gemma often felt like she was straddling two worlds. There was the visible world, where her disability stood out, marking her different from her peers. Then there was the invisible world of her emotions and sexual identity, a space she was still exploring and coming to terms with.

For as long as she could remember, the disability was always there, a constant companion. It made her acutely aware of differences, of boundaries, and of the subtle and not-so-subtle ways society tried to pigeonhole her. When she realised her feelings towards her own gender didn't align with societal norms, a new struggle emerged. The fear of a new label, of being "different" once again, weighed on her.

While BESS was a place for academic pursuits, for Gemma, it was also a sanctuary for understanding her dual identities. Conversations with friends, student counsellors, and even some professors helped her connect the dots. She recognised a pattern – a habit of diminishing her own experiences just because others might have it worse. Whether it was living with a disability or identifying as LGBTQ+, she felt she didn't have the "right" to complain or feel down because others had more significant challenges.

But over time, with support and introspection, Gemma's perspective began to shift. She understood that while the challenges of her disability and her sexuality were different, they both shaped her journey of self-acceptance. Embracing one helped her come to terms with the other.

One evening, as she sat with her close group of BESS friends discussing a project, the conversation veered towards personal stories. Gemma, feeling the warmth and trust in the room, shared her journey. The floodgates opened, and stories poured out. Each story was unique, yet the undercurrents of struggle, acceptance, and the quest for self-identity were common.

Gemma's BESS journey was not just about economics or social studies; it was about understanding the economies of emotions and the sociology of identity. By graduation, she emerged not just with a degree but with a deeper understanding and acceptance of her multifaceted self. She became a beacon of hope and inspiration for many in the faculty, reminding everyone that true strength is derived from embracing and celebrating all aspects of oneself.



## Ralph's Odyssey of Inclusion at Trinity College

### Ralph's Odyssey of Inclusion at Trinity College

For many, navigating the college landscape is about juggling academics, part-time jobs, and social commitments. For Ralph, a student of Occupational Therapy at Trinity College, it was an odyssey through uncharted terrains of social anxiety brought on by his autism.

Walking through the majestic archways of Trinity, Ralph was always struck by the juxtaposition of the historic buildings and the ever-evolving student community – a community that pulsed with energy, creativity, and camaraderie. Yet, for Ralph, this very camaraderie often felt like an insurmountable wall.

It wasn't that he was ostracized or bullied. No, Ralph's struggle was subtler. His autism rendered social situations, which many took for granted, a battlefield of anxiety. Society meetups, which should have been avenues for connection and relaxation, often turned into an orchestra of overwhelming noises, sights, and feelings.

It was a silent struggle, one that many didn't understand. While others looked forward to social gatherings as a break from the rigor of academic life, for Ralph, they represented another challenge to tackle. Yet, his desire to connect, to be a part of the camaraderie, never waned.

This yearning led Ralph to the Ability Co-op, a cooperative that celebrated differences and championed inclusion. Ralph found his voice and his mission. He didn't just want to highlight the challenges faced by students like him; he wanted to provide solutions, to craft an inclusive environment where everyone, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities, could thrive.

Ralph's initiatives were simple yet revolutionary: sensory-friendly rooms during major society events, quiet hours, visual communication aids, and training sessions for society leaders on how to make events more inclusive, especially for those on the autism spectrum.

The impact was palpable. Ralph's efforts not only created safe spaces for students with autism but also sparked a campus-wide conversation on inclusion. Many began to understand that inclusion wasn't just about physical access but about emotional and social access too.

The narrative began to shift. No longer was autism seen as a barrier but as a unique perspective. Thanks to Ralph, Trinity College started its journey towards becoming not just an institution of academic excellence but a beacon of inclusive education.

Today, Ralph's legacy isn't just his academic achievements or his contributions to the Ability Co-op. His true legacy is the countless students who, like him, found their place in the social fabric of Trinity, all because one student decided to challenge the status quo and champion inclusion for all.



# **A Journey of Clarity:** Oisin's Path to Academic Success and Self-Advocacy

## **A Journey of Clarity** **Oisin's Path to Academic Success and Self-Advocacy**

In Dublin, there lived a young man named Oisin whose passion for languages and classical studies burned brightly. He had always dreamed of studying at Trinity College, a place where his love for Irish and Classics could flourish in harmony. Oisin's aspirations were unique, but his determination was unwavering.

Oisin was not just any student; he was autistic, and like many on the autism spectrum, he faced challenges, particularly in social communication and interpreting sarcasm. But Oisin was never one to let his differences hold him back.

He recognized his strengths and was determined to overcome any obstacles that stood in his way. As he embarked on his journey through secondary school, Oisín's sights were set on the coveted Leaving Certificate, a milestone that would pave the way for his dream of studying at Trinity. He worked diligently, studying the subjects he loved with a passion that was unparalleled. However, one incident during his preparation for the mocks would forever stand out in his memory.

During a class review session, Oisín overheard his teacher make a statement that he would never forget: "Under no circumstances study Plato!" The teacher's words echoed in his mind, and he took them to heart. With unwavering commitment to his studies, he decided to omit Plato from his preparations, thinking it was a wise choice.

The day of the mock exam arrived, and Oisín diligently answered every question, confident in his knowledge of Irish and Classics. But when he turned the page and saw a question about Plato staring back at him, he was utterly disconcerted. He had followed his teacher's advice and omitted Plato from his studies, yet there it was, a question about the very philosopher he had ignored.



After the exam, Oisín approached his teacher, seeking an explanation for the baffling situation. To his surprise, the teacher simply shrugged, offering no clarity or justification for the contradictory advice. Oisín felt frustrated and misunderstood, and he knew something needed to change.

Determined to ensure that such misunderstandings would not recur in his academic journey, Oisín decided to take proactive measures. He recognised the importance of clear communication and unambiguous instructions, especially for someone like him with a unique perspective.

Oisín sought the assistance of the university's Learning and Educational Needs Support (LENS) way of communicating his needs. He made it his mission to have his LENS report specify a crucial point: "No ambiguous messaging and clear signposting." He understood that with clear instructions, he could excel academically in the subjects he loved.

Oisín was confident in his academic abilities, but he was also open to seeking help with his social and communication challenges.

He knew that by addressing these aspects, he could fully embrace the university experience and engage with his peers and professors in a meaningful way. Oisín's story serves as a testament to the power of determination, self-advocacy, and the pursuit of one's dreams. He was not just a student; he was a trailblazer, a beacon of inspiration who showed that with the right support and a clear path forward, anyone, regardless of their challenges, can achieve their goals and thrive in their chosen field.



During his second year at university, David was diagnosed with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and anxiety. These conditions manifested in various ways – a relentless drive for perfection in his assignments, a crippling fear of failure, and a chronic struggle with managing time. Patterns, which once brought joy in the form of numbers, now seemed to trap him in a cycle of repetitive thoughts and actions.

David's challenges with time management, stemming from his conditions, led to an unfortunate series of events. Despite his profound understanding of the subject matter, he often found himself unable to complete exams within the allotted time. This resulted in a number of failed courses, not because he didn't understand the material, but because the clock became his greatest adversary.

Recognising his struggles, the university offered support in various forms: extended exam durations, counselling sessions, and specialised tutoring. But another challenge arose for David: trust. With OCD and anxiety affecting his everyday interactions, building relationships, especially with tutors and counsellors, was an uphill battle. The very notion of relying on others or admitting his vulnerabilities seemed like an insurmountable task.

However, David's story isn't just about challenges; it's about resilience. Despite the odds, he pushed forward, seeking out support groups for individuals with similar conditions and gradually learning to accept and seek help. He began practicing mindfulness and cognitive behavioural techniques, aiming to gain control over his anxiety and compulsive patterns.

David's journey is a testament to the often unseen battles many students face. While academic challenges are expected, the personal hurdles, like David's struggle with OCD and anxiety, are less visible but equally significant. Through perseverance, seeking help, and an unyielding dedication to his passion for business and accountancy, David continues to carve out his path in the BESS program, one step at a time.

His story serves as a powerful reminder: success is not solely defined by academic achievements but by the relentless spirit to rise above personal challenges and to continue moving forward.



# Grainne's Fidget Journey: Embracing Differences in the World of Medicine

## Grainne's Fidget Journey Embracing Differences in the World of Medicine

Grainne had always been captivated by the world of medicine. As a child, she would pretend to treat her stuffed animals' imaginary injuries and loved learning about the human body. As she grew older, this fascination only deepened. Academically, she was top-notch. She absorbed knowledge like a sponge, and her love for the subject showed in her grades. But socially, things weren't as smooth.

Interactions with peers made Grainne anxious, and she often felt out of place. Her autism made certain social norms and cues elusive, and while her intellect was sharp, reading people was a constant puzzle.

The Health Professions Admissions Test (HPAT), a hurdle for many aspiring medics, was another challenge. Designed for neurotypical individuals, Grainne found herself working twice as hard to decode the "typical" questions and answers. But she was tenacious. She studied, practiced, and eventually, found a way to beat the odds. Grainne was elated when she received her acceptance letter from Trinity's medical school.

However, starting at Trinity was overwhelming. With 180 students bustling about, the cacophony of voices, clanging medical instruments, and sharp chemical scents made it a sensory minefield. To help manage her anxiety and sensory overload, Grainne took to using discreet fidgets. The rubbery armbands she wore could be pulled and stretched, providing a soothing sensation. She also carried a small metal roller that she would glide between her fingers, finding its coolness calming.

Despite her efforts to be discreet, her peers noticed. "Why do you always play with that?" one would ask, or "Are those bands some new fashion trend?" another would tease. Explaining the intricacies of her condition and the purpose of her fidgets was exhausting, and at times, disheartening.

One day, Grainne decided to try a different approach. She quietly observed her classmates over several days, making a mental note of their habits. The pen clickers, the hair twirlers, the nail biters—she spotted them all.

A few days later, Grainne stood up before her class. With a nervous yet determined glint in her eye, she began, "I've noticed some things about all of us," she started, projecting a slide showing examples of various images of what her classmates do and their 'fidgets' – a hand twirling hair, another incessantly clicking a pen, and yet another drumming on the table.

“We all have our ways of dealing with stress, anxiety, or just focusing. For some of us, it's more obvious than for others. These,” she gestured to her armbands and metal roller, “help me. Just as that pen click or hair twirl might help you. We're all here to become the best doctors we can be. Let's support and understand one another.”

Her words were met with a heavy silence, which was soon replaced by a ripple of acknowledgment. Some classmates approached her afterward, expressing their admiration for her courage and even sharing their own quirks and coping mechanisms.



From that day on, Grainne's fidgets were no longer a topic of mockery or confusion. Instead, they became a symbol of the understanding that every individual is unique, and everyone has their own ways of coping. As the years passed, Grainne not only excelled academically but also became a beacon of empathy and understanding, reminding everyone that being different is not a flaw, but a strength.



# Resilience in the Face of Adversity: Aisling's Journey through Biomedical Engineering

## **Resilience in the Face of Adversity Aisling's Journey through Biomedical Engineering**

From a young age, Aisling knew she had a unique way of learning and processing information. But it wasn't until later in her academic journey that she received a late diagnosis of dyslexia and dyspraxia. Armed with this newfound understanding of her learning differences, Aisling entered Trinity College with the hope of thriving in the world of biomedical engineering.

Aisling was no stranger to hard work. She poured her heart and soul into her studies, dedicating long hours to mastering complex subjects and conducting ground-breaking research.

Yet, the challenges of in-person assessments posed a significant obstacle for her. While many believed that extra time accommodations were a blessing, Aisling knew they came with a price.

The additional time she was granted often led to exhaustion and fatigue. Aisling's performance would start strong, but as the hours passed, her concentration waned, and her once-keen mind would falter. It was a frustrating paradox – the very accommodations meant to help her succeed could sometimes hinder her progress.

Aisling had developed numerous strategies to overcome her challenges. She diligently utilised assistive technology, worked with tutors, and practiced time management techniques. But she couldn't escape the feeling of frustration when she encountered barriers outside of her control.

One of her most significant frustrations lay in the apparent lack of understanding within the academic community. Aisling had submitted her LENS report, which detailed her learning differences and recommended accommodations, to her professors and the department. However, it often felt as though her pleas fell on deaf ears.

She would repeatedly ask for her rights to be acknowledged and implemented, a process that took an emotional toll on her.

The constant struggle to advocate for her accommodations and the anxiety that came with it weighed heavily on Aisling. She wished that her professors and the university would recognise the importance of accommodating students like her, allowing them to thrive and contribute their unique perspectives to the academic world.

Despite these challenges, Aisling pressed on. She found solace in the support of a few compassionate professors who understood her struggles and went the extra mile to ensure her success. With their guidance, she continued her journey through Trinity College, determined to make a mark in the field of biomedical engineering.

Aisling's story serves as a reminder of the resilience and strength that individuals with dyslexia and dyspraxia possess. While the path may be filled with obstacles, their determination and unwavering commitment to their goals can lead to remarkable achievements. Aisling was not just a student; she was a trailblazer, paving the way for a more inclusive and understanding educational system where students of all abilities could thrive.



# Resilience Reflected: The Journey of Alex

## Resilience Reflected The Journey of Alex

Once upon a time in a bustling university town, there lived a resilient and determined engineering student named Alex. Alex was in their third year of engineering studies, and they were unlike any other student on campus. They were transgender and autistic, which meant they faced unique challenges during their academic journey.

The first two years of college had been a rollercoaster for Alex, especially during the tumultuous era of online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The mere thought of being called upon to present online sent waves of anxiety crashing over them.

Their sensory sensitivities made virtual presentations an overwhelming experience, and the fear of being exposed to judgment and criticism felt paralyzing.

But Alex was not one to be defeated by challenges. They understood that to succeed, they needed to advocate for themselves. They approached their professors and support staff, explaining their situation. The university, recognising the importance of inclusivity and support, updated its policies to ensure that Alex would not be required to present online. This small but significant victory brought some relief.

However, there was another hurdle to overcome. In one of their classes, a lecturer accidentally deadnamed Alex a few times. Each instance felt like a dagger to their heart, causing significant distress. Alex knew that it was essential to educate their instructors and classmates about their identity. They bravely initiated conversations about their preferred name and pronouns, creating a more inclusive environment where they could be themselves without fear of misidentification.

As the summer break approached, Alex faced a decision that would change the course of their academic journey.

They had always dreamt of experiencing a different culture, meeting new people, and embarking on an adventure. They decided to sign up for the Erasmus program, which offered the opportunity to study abroad for a year. It was a chance for Alex to step out of their comfort zone, learn about different engineering practices, and embrace a world of new experiences.

The year abroad was supposed to be an exciting adventure, but it didn't take long for unknown challenges to present themselves. The coursework was rigorous, and the language barrier posed its own set of difficulties. However, Alex was determined to make the most of this opportunity. They sought support from the local community, made friends who helped them navigate the cultural differences, and began to excel in their studies.

As the year progressed, unexpected personal emergencies struck close to the semester 1 exams. The weight of these crises took a toll on Alex, causing them to struggle academically. With their dreams of a perfect adventure slipping away, they considered returning home.

But when they approached the course Erasmus officer, they received news that shattered their hopes.

Returning wasn't an option. The rules were clear, and Alex was faced with the possibility of failing the year. An appeal to go off-books with the assessment was rejected, leaving them with only one choice – to repeat the year.

Returning to their home university, Alex found themselves in a challenging situation. They were now part of a new group of students, and the process of reintegration was difficult. Their autism made adapting to change and new social dynamics challenging, but they refused to give up.

With each passing day, Alex worked tirelessly to rebuild their academic path. They sought support, honed their study skills, and gradually found their footing in the new group. They learned that resilience and determination could conquer even the most daunting obstacles.

And so, the story of Alex continued, a story of a transgender, autistic engineering student who faced adversity with courage and grace. They showed the world that one's identity, though unique, should never be a barrier to their dreams and aspirations.



Their journey was a testament to the power of self-advocacy, resilience, and the pursuit of knowledge, reminding us of all that no challenge is insurmountable when faced with unwavering determination and a heart full of hope.



# Joanna's Sensory Symphony: Crafting Calm Through Crochet

## Joanna's Sensory Symphony Crafting Calm Through Crochet

In a cosy corner of her sunlit room, surrounded by skeins of vibrant yarn, sat Joanna, deeply engrossed in the rhythmic dance of her crochet hook. Each movement was a meditative mantra, weaving together not just threads, but also moments of peace and reflection.

Joanna had always felt the world a bit more intensely than others. Sounds were louder, lights brighter, and emotions more profound. This heightened sensitivity often left her overwhelmed, especially during the tumultuous years of college. While others found solace in music, art, or sports, Joanna stumbled upon her refuge in an unexpected place – crochet.

It began simply enough. On a particularly challenging day, Joanna came across a crochet kit in a thrift store. Something about the idea of crafting, of taking control of each stitch and creating something beautiful from a simple thread, resonated deeply with her. She decided to give it a go.

The act of crocheting became an immersive experience for Joanna. The repetitive motion of the hook, the soft caress of the yarn against her fingers, and the gradual emergence of patterns provided a sensory balance she had long sought. With each project, she not only honed her skills but also discovered a unique way to regulate her heightened sensory experiences.

But Joanna's love for crochet took on a special significance when she started crafting stuffed animals. These weren't just any toys; they were designed with sensory needs in mind. Filled with different textures, from the silkiest yarns to the grainiest stuffing, these animals were a tactile delight. Some had patches of soft velvet or rough jute, while others contained beads that created a gentle, soothing sound when squeezed.

Realising how beneficial these sensory toys were for her, Joanna decided to share them. She started a small stall at the local farmer's market. To her surprise, the toys were a hit not only among children but also adults. Many individuals, like Joanna, sought comfort in the varying textures and sensations the toys offered.

News of Joanna's unique creations spread, catching the attention of therapists and educators who recognized their potential therapeutic value. Schools started incorporating them into their special education programmes, and therapists used them as tools in sensory integration therapy.

Joanna's simple act of self-soothing had blossomed into a movement that was helping countless others. And as she sat in her cosy corner, surrounded by a rainbow of yarns, she realised that in weaving these threads, she wasn't just crafting toys; she was stitching together a community of understanding, acceptance, and sensory harmony.



# Harmonies of Change: Seamus's Melody of Resilience

## Harmonies of Change Seamus's Melody of Resilience

Seamus, a promising student of Physical Sciences at Dublin University, faced a myriad of challenges in his academic journey. In 2021, he decided to "go off books" due to pressing mental health concerns. Though he returned in 2022 with newfound hope, the academic challenges persisted, leading to setbacks in two subjects: Semiconductor Physics and Astrophysical Techniques. These academic trials, however, weren't his only battles. The university's teaching methods, tailored to neurotypical students, often clashed with his neurodiverse way of processing, causing additional strain.

Amidst these adversities, Seamus found solace in music, often drifting to a local park with his guitar. It was during one of these musical escapades that he met Ciara, a psychology student with an affinity for astronomy. The duo connected over shared academic interests and personal challenges, with Ciara providing the empathetic understanding that Seamus often sought.

Their deepening friendship illuminated an essential truth for Seamus: the challenges he faced weren't just personal, but systemic. Fuelled by his own experiences and the insights shared by Ciara, Seamus began to wonder if the educational system was truly meeting the needs of its neurodiverse students. Determined to seek answers, he initiated an informal support group to gather feedback from other neurodiverse students. The testimonials revealed a shared sentiment of alienation and inadequacy. Armed with this collective feedback, Seamus, with Ciara's support, approached the Trinity Neurodiversity Society, advocating for teaching and assessment reforms that catered to all students.

While Seamus's drive to create change gained momentum, the emotional toll of his academic journey was undeniable. Having been off the books twice, he grappled with feelings of isolation.

The campus life, with its vibrant student interactions, seemed distant. The vibrant chatter of student gatherings, the shared moments of academic success and failure – all seemed out of reach. Though Ciara's presence offered a semblance of connection, the weight of his isolation bore heavily on him.

However, adversity often sparks resilience. Drawing strength from his personal battles, and the dulcet melodies of his guitar, Seamus channelled his energies into championing change at Dublin University. The seeds of reform were sown, and as time progressed, Seamus's efforts, with Ciara's unwavering support, began to make a difference. Not only did he find his place in the academic realm once more, but he also emerged as a beacon of hope for many students who, like him, yearned for an educational system that understood and catered to their unique needs.



# Peter's Journey: Embracing Challenges Through Language and Support

## **Peter's Journey Embracing Challenges Through Language and Support**

In the heart of a renowned university, there was an ardently passionate languages student named Peter. His love for languages was undeniable. Every new word he learned, every syntax he mastered, and every phonetic nuance he grasped, made him feel alive and connected to the world in a unique way. Peter believed that through language, he could connect with people from different cultures, unlocking stories and histories that were previously inaccessible.

However, behind this passion was a set of challenges that only a few knew about. Peter was diagnosed with dyspraxia and ASD.



While these diagnoses came with their unique hurdles, they also shaped the way he approached his studies, forging a path of resilience and determination.

Dyspraxia primarily affected his ability to write quickly and legibly. This impairment often came to the forefront during examinations, where time was of the essence. While his classmates scribbled away, attempting to articulate their thoughts on paper, Peter often found himself lagging, not because of a lack of knowledge, but due to the sheer challenge of transferring his ideas onto paper.

Similarly, ASD posed its set of challenges, especially when it came to organising his tasks. The intricacies of learning multiple languages often came with a vast array of time-bound assignments and projects, and Peter sometimes found himself overwhelmed.

However, Peter was no stranger to seeking help. Recognising the importance of self-advocacy, he reached out to the university's support services. Here, he detailed his requirements: the need for assistive technology (especially during exams), potential exploration for extra time during exams, and the hope for occupational therapy sessions.

The university, acknowledging Peter's unique needs, worked closely with him. They provided him with a computer for examinations, ensuring that he was on a level playing field with his peers.

Recognising his organisational challenges, they also offered him the assistance of a mentor who helped him streamline his study patterns and manage his assignments more efficiently.

Occupational therapy, which was a new venture for Peter in an academic context, proved to be a game-changer. The sessions not only provided him with strategies to cope with his challenges but also gave him a space to express his anxieties and concerns.

With time, Peter's performance in exams improved significantly. His grades reflected his true potential, and he felt a newfound sense of confidence. The smaller exam venues ensured that he was free from the usual distractions, allowing him to focus better.

In class, his peers began to recognise his vast knowledge of languages. They marvelled at his ability to draw connections between languages, delving deep into their etymology and history. His professors, acknowledging his unique perspective, often sought his opinion during discussions.

As Peter's academic journey unfolded, his story became an inspiration for many. It was a testament to the fact that with the right support, every challenge could be turned into an opportunity. Peter's journey was not just about mastering languages but about finding his voice amidst the cacophony, echoing the importance of resilience, self-belief, and the undying spirit of learning.



# **Eimear's Melody:** A Symphony of Resilience & Adaptation

## **Eimear's Melody** **A Symphony of Resilience & Adaption**

Amid the hallowed halls of a prestigious university's music department, there existed a burgeoning star, Eimear. She walked with a sense of purpose, her every step echoing her profound love for music. Every note she played, every song she sang, was a testament to her commitment and passion for the art.

However, behind the captivating rhythms and melodies that Eimear produced lay a challenge that was invisible to most. Eimear was hard of hearing, an irony not lost on her given her chosen field of study. Loud environments often blurred the lines between various sounds for her, making it hard to discern speech and specific musical notes.

Secondary school had been a slightly more straightforward affair. The teachers, aware of her hearing impairment, ensured she was always seated at the front, providing her with an optimal learning environment. Examinations, especially the aural ones, saw her in individual centres, ensuring her conditions were tailored to her needs.

But university life presented a whole new set of challenges. Lectures were more extensive, often conducted in large, echoey auditoriums. The subtleties of musical notes, vital for a music student, were sometimes lost to her in such settings. She could often miss out on the nuances, the delicate transitions, the minor shifts that were often crucial in her field of study.

Recognising the challenges, Eimear decided to advocate for herself. She approached the university's support services, outlining the accommodations that would facilitate her full participation. She spoke of her need to sit at the front during lectures, the importance of subtitles in videos, and her desire to explore assistive technology tailored to her specific needs.

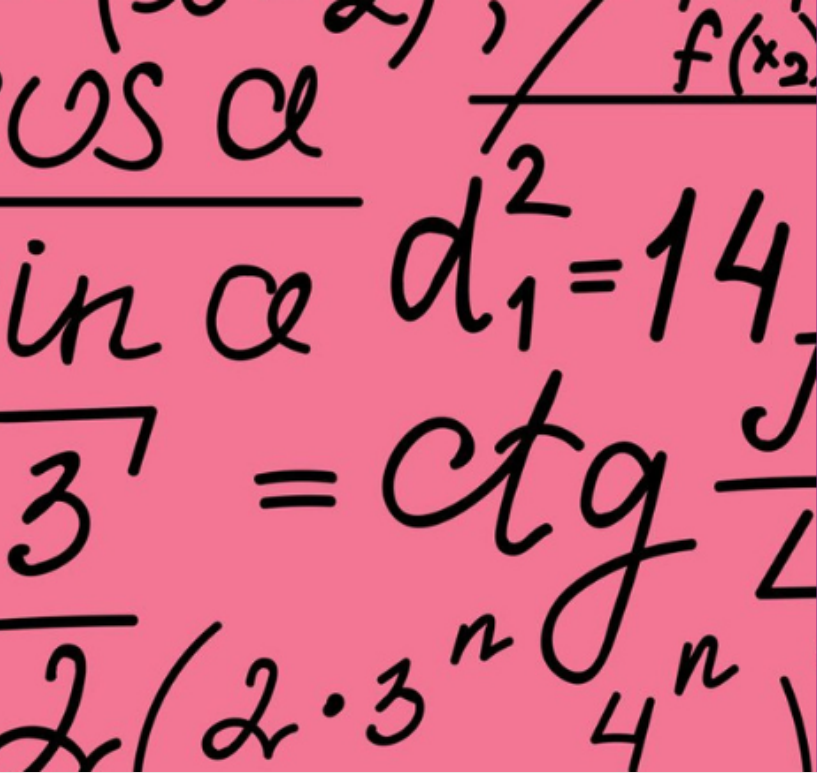
The university, realising the potential in Eimear, was quick to respond.

They ensured that Eimear always had a front-row seat in lectures and seminars. In exams, they provided her with an individual centre, and when that wasn't feasible, a front-row seat was reserved just for her. Videos shown during lectures soon had subtitles, and Eimear was introduced to a range of assistive technologies, designed to enhance her learning experience.

But it wasn't just the practical adjustments that made a difference. The empathy and understanding she received from her peers and faculty played a crucial role in her academic journey. Professors made sure instructions were repeated when needed, classmates shared notes, and there was always someone ready to assist.

As semesters went by, Eimear's prowess in music only grew. Her compositions resonated with her unique perspective, a fusion of her challenges and triumphs. Her peers and professors soon realised that while she might hear differently, she listened more profoundly than most.

Eimear's story at the university became legendary. It wasn't just about a hard-of-hearing student excelling in music; it was about the spirit of adaptability, the power of self-advocacy, and the symphony of support that can make dreams come true. Eimear's journey was a song of hope and determination, proving that with the right accommodations and a little understanding, every note, no matter how challenging, can be played in perfect harmony.



## Cian's Calculations: A Tale of Perseverance & Adaptation

### **Cian's Calculations** **A Tale of Perseverance & Adaption**

The corridors of the university's Economics and Maths department echoed with discussions of algorithms, equations, and economic theories. Among the brightest of these future economists and mathematicians was Cian, a diligent and determined student with a passion for numbers and their real-world implications.

Cian wasn't just known for his incredible analytical skills or his ability to dive deep into complex economic models. His story of resilience in the face of adversity was well-known among his peers and professors. In 2016, just as his journey in higher education began, Cian was diagnosed with Graves' Disease.



This autoimmune condition didn't just affect his thyroid; it had a profound impact on his hands, causing trembles that made his handwriting slow and heavy.

This new challenge posed a significant barrier to Cian, especially in a field where examinations often meant writing complex equations and long analytical essays under time constraints. His handwriting became almost painful to maintain and, over time, nearly illegible.

But, for every problem, there's a solution — especially in the world of mathematics. Upon the recommendation of educational psychologists, Cian began to type his exams. This adaptation not only compensated for his hand trembles but also brought out the best of his analytical and mathematical skills, allowing him to focus on content rather than the act of writing itself.

In 2018, Cian took a significant step to address his Graves' Disease by getting his thyroid removed. While this procedure curtailed the progression of the disease, the years of trembles had left their mark on his handwriting style. Typing had become his new normal.

Back in the department, Cian was not only making strides in his studies but was also an inspiration to many.

His story was a testament to the fact that obstacles, no matter how insurmountable they seem, can be overcome with the right adaptations and perseverance.

The professors, having seen Cian's unwavering dedication, were more than accommodating. They recognised that while Cian's method of taking exams might differ, his intellect and capability were second to none. They ensured he had the necessary tools to type his assessments, making certain that his true potential was reflected in his academic performance.

Beyond the walls of the examination hall, Cian's determination resonated with many of his peers. They saw in him the embodiment of resilience, a living example that challenges, whether physical or mental, can be surpassed with determination and the right support.

As the years went by, Cian's proficiency in Economics and Maths only grew stronger. He became a beacon of hope for many, teaching them the most valuable lesson of all — that in the face of adversity, with adaptation and determination, one can always find a way to excel.

Cian's journey in the world of Economics and Maths wasn't just about numbers. It was a narrative of hope, adaptability, and the undeniable strength of the human spirit.



# Jamie's Journey: Beyond the Curves of the Mind

## **Jamie's Journey Beyond the Curves of the Mind**

In the sprawling campus of the university, students could always be found engrossed in their books, running between lectures, or engrossed in heated debates. Amidst the hustle and bustle, Jamie stood out not just for their academic prowess in psychology but for their indomitable spirit.

Jamie had a 60-degree progressive scoliosis, a curvature of the spine that not only influenced their posture but also their everyday life in ways most students could never comprehend. The very act of sitting, something many took for granted, was a test of endurance for Jamie. Long hours bent over textbooks studying the intricacies of the human mind took a toll on their physical health.

Yet, Jamie's challenges weren't limited to the classroom. The university campus was vast, and moving from one lecture hall to the next with a hefty backpack was more than just tiring for them—it was agonising. Jamie's commute to the university was another ordeal. The journey by bus, followed by navigating the vast corridors and pathways of the campus, left Jamie exhausted and in pain, even before their day truly began.

However, Jamie's spirit was not one to be easily subdued. They had a passion for understanding human behaviour, for delving into the complexities of the mind, and nothing, not even the pain of scoliosis, could deter them from this pursuit.

Recognising the challenges they faced, Jamie sought the necessary support. A respite room became their sanctuary, a space where they could rest and recuperate from the strain of the day. This room wasn't just a place to rest—it was a symbol of Jamie's resilience and determination to not let their physical condition dictate their academic journey. In the examination hall, while others scribbled away, Jamie often paused, stretching to alleviate the strain on their back. Their need for extra time wasn't an advantage; it was a necessity, allowing them a fair ground to showcase their understanding of psychology.

It was during one of their psychology lectures on resilience that Jamie's story became an inspiration for many. While discussing the mental and emotional aspects of resilience, their personal journey became a testament to physical resilience. It was a real-life case study, demonstrating that challenges, both of the body and the mind, can be overcome with determination, adaptation, and the right support.

Jamie's journey through university wasn't just about securing a degree in psychology; it was a lesson for every student and professor. It was a narrative of hope, perseverance, and the sheer power of the human spirit to rise above challenges. In their pursuit to understand the human mind, Jamie inadvertently became a beacon of inspiration, teaching many about the strength and resilience of the human spirit.



# Gerry's Triumph: Through Time and Trials

## **Gerry's Triumph Through Time and Trials**

Amidst the endless shelves of the university library, with its collections of tales from bygone eras, Gerry found solace. Here, in this quiet space, he delved into the chronicles of history, uncovering stories of valour, resilience, and change. Little did the world know, his personal story was one of equal valour and resilience.

Born prematurely, Gerry's early life was a timeline marked by challenges that many could not fathom. Cerebral Palsy was a name he became familiar with at an age most children are just starting to learn their ABCs. His daily routines were interspersed with hospital visits, therapy sessions, and constant battles against pain.

Where most saw adversity, Gerry saw a challenge. And just as he'd started finding his stride, another diagnosis came into play – Autism, right at a pivotal point in his academic life, the Mocks.

Yet, for Gerry, history was more than just a subject; it was an escape. He related to the struggles of past civilisations, seeing in their stories a reflection of his own battles. From the relentless determination of ancient warriors to the meticulous strategies of past generals, Gerry drew strength and inspiration.

Recognising his unique needs, the university's disability support unit was his first stop. Here, he was introduced to assistive technology, designed to streamline his academic tasks. An occupational therapist helped him devise strategies to navigate the physical challenges of university life.

When it came to exams, Gerry's challenges were multifaceted. The large, echoing exam halls were overwhelming, and his physical condition meant he needed frequent breaks. But, with the support of the university, a smaller venue was arranged, and rest breaks were incorporated into his exam schedule. Assistive technology ensured that his knowledge, not his physical challenges, was the focal point of his assessments.



Yet, beyond academics, Gerry had another battle to face – social interaction. The diagnosis of Autism had shed light on his struggles with social communication. While advocating for himself was a herculean task, the university's counselling and support services stepped in, providing him with tools and techniques to navigate social situations. Weekly group sessions allowed him to meet fellow students, gradually building his confidence in interacting and advocating for his needs.

But perhaps the most surprising and touching part of Gerry's journey was the history study group he founded. Recognising that everyone has a unique story and challenges of their own, he brought together a diverse group of history enthusiasts. Here, students from all walks of life exchanged ideas, discussed historical events, and shared personal tales of triumph and trials.

In Gerry, the world saw more than just a student of history. They saw a beacon of resilience, a young man whose story transcended the confines of textbooks, serving as a living testament to the strength of the human spirit. Through his trials and determination, Gerry rewrote his history, proving that with the right support and an indomitable spirit, one can craft a story for the ages.



# In the Heart of the Lab: Dolores's Strands of Strength

## **In the Heart of the Lab Dolores's Strands of Strength**

Dolores always found solace in the structured world of biochemistry. The lab was her haven, a place where molecules and reactions adhered to the predictable laws of science. Unlike the intricacies of human emotions, here, things made sense.

However, amid the rows of test tubes and stacks of research papers, Dolores harboured a secret. A secret she hid behind colourful scarves and frequent haircuts.

Whenever a particularly challenging experiment failed or when an upcoming presentation loomed large, she'd find her fingers entangled in her hair, pulling out strand after strand.

This was trichotillomania, a hair-pulling disorder she had been battling since her teens. For her, each strand pulled was a way to momentarily alleviate the overwhelming stress that academia brought. But the relief was fleeting, often replaced by a pang of regret and self-consciousness.

Despite the formidable challenges that biochemistry threw her way, Dolores was determined not to let her disorder overshadow her passion. She found an unlikely ally in Leo, a fellow biochemistry student. Leo, with his unmissable habit of tapping his pen incessantly during lectures, recognised the signs of a fellow 'fidgeter'.

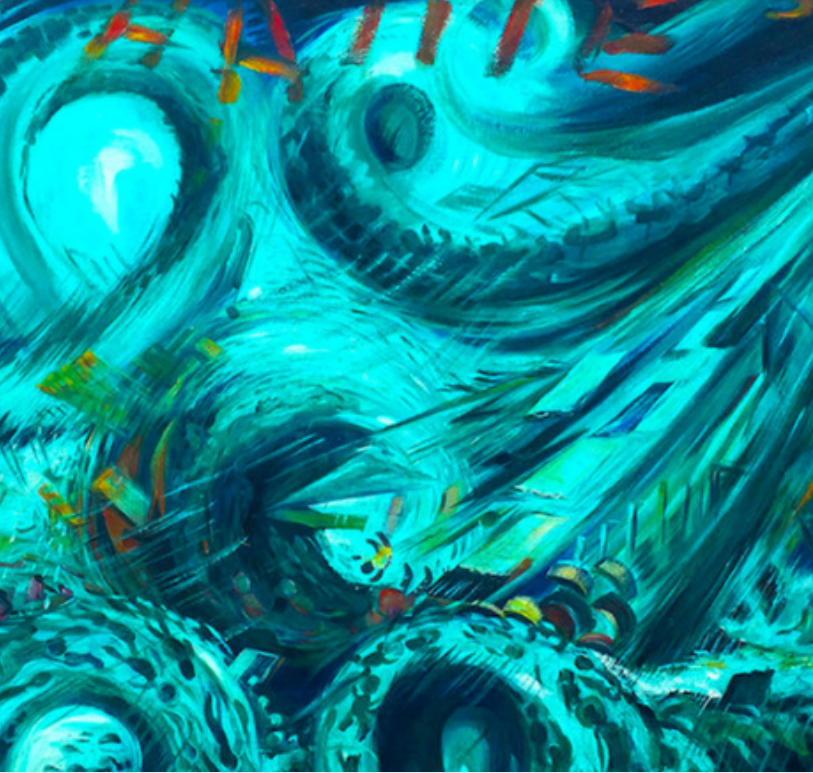
One evening, after a particularly intense lab session, Leo handed Dolores a stress ball. "I've been there," he said softly, sharing his struggle with anxiety. The two bonded over their shared experiences, finding strength in understanding and compassion. Leo introduced her to a campus support group, where students with similar challenges came together, shared their stories, and found solace in collective strength.

As the semesters passed, Dolores's hair slowly began to grow back, mirroring her newfound resilience. She discovered alternative coping mechanisms, like meditation and tactile tools designed for those with trichotillomania.

Her passion for biochemistry remained unwavering, but now it was accompanied by a fervour to raise awareness about her condition.

Dolores's final project, brilliantly marrying biochemistry and psychology explored the neurobiological triggers of trichotillomania. Her research shone light on the complex interplay of emotions, neurobiology, and genetics that culminated in the condition.

Dolores graduated top of her class, but her real triumph was the community she built, her outreach efforts, and the many lives she touched. Her story wasn't just of a biochemistry student who loved the dance of molecules; it was of a fierce young woman who turned her vulnerabilities into strengths, reminding everyone that beneath the external challenges we all face, lies a core of unwavering strength and resilience.



# Joe's Journey: Navigating Engineering with Diabetes

## **Joe's Journey** **Navigating Engineering with Diabetes**

Engineering has always been Joe's passion. From a young age, he would tinker with gadgets, intrigued by the science of making things work. He knew that pursuing a degree in engineering was his path. However, life threw a curveball in Joe's direction – he was diagnosed with diabetes.

Every day, Joe faces the meticulous task of managing his blood sugar levels. Like any engineering challenge, it requires precision, attention to detail, and constant monitoring. But the stakes are personal. High blood sugar levels mean frequent disruptions, with trips to the bathroom during lectures and even in the middle of exams.

The lows, or hypoglycaemic episodes, sap his energy and concentration, occasionally demanding medical intervention.

Beyond the physical challenges, the impact on Joe's academic life is significant. There have been days when he's had to miss class due to unexpected blood sugar drops. Assignments sometimes take a backseat when he's battling extreme fatigue or insomnia caused by his fluctuating glucose levels. But Joe's spirit remains undeterred.

Recognising the unique challenges Joe faces, his university offers specific supports. Professors are understanding, granting him flexibility with class attendance and assignment deadlines when needed. During exams, Joe has access to extended time, compensating for moments he needs to address his condition. The ability to have a glucose drink or his diabetes checking system on hand provides further reassurance.

These accommodations have been invaluable. Joe recalls one instance during a crucial midterm when his blood sugar spiked. Thanks to the understanding of the invigilator and the provisions in place, he was allowed to take a short break, check his levels, and rehydrate without penalty.

The world of engineering is all about finding solutions to complex problems, and Joe's personal journey embodies this spirit. His daily life is a testament to resilience, determination, and innovation.

Today, Joe is not just an engineering student. He's an advocate, a problem-solver, and a shining example that with the right support and understanding, challenges can be transformed into triumphs.



## **Peter's Unconventional Path to Inclusion**

### **Peter's Unconventional Path to Inclusion**

Peter, a diligent fourth-year business student at Trinity, often found himself at the outskirts of group discussions and interactions. His autistic condition, though only a part of who he was, significantly affected his social communication. Despite his best efforts to explain his challenges to his peers, empathy and understanding remained elusive.

His attempts at teamwork were met with digital barriers. It wasn't just the casual side comments or the quiet whispers that troubled him; he was often left out of vital group chats on WhatsApp and had been blocked from accessing their shared Google Drive,



where most of the project's resources were stored. This exclusion was not just disheartening but actively affected his academic performance and mental well-being.

Withdrawal seemed like the only logical step to Peter. He took refuge in books, isolated from the unkindness, but the gnawing feeling of exclusion never left.

Realising that he couldn't navigate this situation on his own, Peter sought the counsel of his disability officer. The officer, having seen various cases of exclusion based on differences, was sympathetic to Peter's predicament. The first step, they decided, was to approach Peter's primary academic tutor, hoping to find a solution within the framework of the educational system.

However, the tutor, possibly due to a lack of training in such matters or simple unawareness, felt unable to provide any immediate assistance.

Undeterred, the disability officer proposed several solutions:

1. **Awareness Seminars:** Organising a seminar focusing on understanding autism, especially for business students. By fostering an environment of understanding, they hoped to combat the ignorance that underlined most of Peter's challenges.
2. **Mentoring Program:** Setting up a mentoring program where senior students, trained in inclusivity and understanding the diverse needs of their juniors, would guide students like Peter. They would serve as a bridge, ensuring that everyone got a fair chance at collaboration.
3. **Alternative Communication Channels:** For students who faced challenges with conventional communication methods, the school could introduce official communication channels that are monitored by the academic staff to ensure inclusivity.
4. **Project Partnerships:** Collaborating with empathetic students or those who had shown a keen interest in inclusivity. These alliances would ensure that Peter, and others like him, would always have allies in group assignments.
5. **Feedback System:** Implementing an anonymous feedback system where students could voice their concerns about exclusion, bullying, or any form of mistreatment. This system would provide a safe space for students who might be hesitant to approach authorities directly.

Peter loved the idea of the mentoring program and the alternative communication channels. He knew that such systems, once implemented, would not just benefit him but many others who felt marginalised.

In the subsequent months, with the unwavering support of the disability officer and a few empathetic peers who became close friends, Peter not only caught up with his coursework but also thrived. The feedback system brought to light several other cases of exclusion, making the institution realize the importance of inclusivity.

Peter's journey was not just about overcoming personal challenges but also about igniting a change in an environment that sometimes unwittingly fosters exclusion. Through determination, resilience, and the right support, Peter made sure that no student after him would feel left out because of who they are.



## Lysander's Odyssey: Embracing Identity and Overcoming Challenges

### Lysander's Odyssey Embracing Identity and Overcoming Challenges

Beneath the weight of invisible challenges, Lysander's journey began long before they stepped onto Trinity's historic grounds. Their story is not just of a late-diagnosed individual with Autism and Dyspraxia but of resilience, a passion for languages, and the transformational power of embracing one's true self.

For much of their life, a gnawing sense of inadequacy shadowed Lysander. They grappled with feelings of being "different" and often erroneously concluded that they might be less intelligent than their peers.

This internalised belief was upended with the late diagnosis of high-functioning Autism and Dyspraxia. Suddenly, years of struggle and feeling 'out of place' made poignant sense. But with this revelation came a new set of challenges and self-reckonings.

Social interactions were labyrinthine mazes they couldn't navigate, and the traditional classroom setting, with its demands on note-taking and timed examinations, became arenas of anxiety. Alongside these challenges, Lysander grappled with a deep internal journey of understanding their a-gender and non-binary identity. Living in a world that so often demands binary classifications, they yearned to simply be, free from labels and expectations.

From the confines of their room, Lysander plunged into the world of languages, a solace amidst the confusion and chaos. They found delight in the lilting tones of French, the intricate patterns of Russian, and the mellifluous flow of Italian. By the age of 18, they were fluent in eight languages. The once-lonely teenager found community in online language forums, engaging in vibrant discussions, practicing new phrases, and slowly building friendships that transcended borders.

College was always a dream, though not without its fears. The dream was to delve deeper into the romance of French.

UCD was the initial goal, but destiny had other plans. When the acceptance letter from Trinity arrived, it felt like a balm to old wounds.

At Trinity, Lysander found more than just an academic haven. With reasonable accommodations tailored to their needs, they could navigate their studies without the weight of past challenges holding them back. Recording lectures meant no more struggling with note-taking, and extra exam time eased test-taking anxieties.

Beyond the classroom, Lysander flourished. Embracing their non-binary identity, they became a beacon for many, sharing their journey of self-discovery and shattering traditional notions of gender and intelligence. Their multilingual prowess became a bridge, connecting them to diverse communities and sparking countless conversations.

Lysander's odyssey, from confronting internalised misconceptions to thriving in the nurturing environment of Trinity, stands as a testament to the human spirit's resilience. Their journey offers a beacon of hope for all who feel "different," illuminating the boundless possibilities that arise when one embraces their true self and finds a community that sees their inherent worth.



## Abi's Odyssey: Between Pages of History and Verses of English

### **Abi's Odyssey Between Pages of History and Verses of English**

Abi's world was unlike any other. Each day was a gamble. While her peers would often be concerned about upcoming assignments or which social event to attend, Abi's concerns swayed between pre-syncope episodes and debilitating fatigue. Her multiple health conditions were like the unpredictable Irish weather – you never knew when a storm might hit.

Walking through the hallways of the Arts Block, Abi was an enigma. While she pursued a joint honours program in History and English, her true learning went far beyond lectures and tutorials.

Her body was her constant teacher, her illnesses, the lessons. It taught her resilience, patience, and the art of perseverance.

Classrooms echoed with lectures on historical revolutions and poetic interpretations, but for Abi, every day was a revolution against her own body. The intense nausea made attending early morning lectures an ordeal. The brain fog played tricks with her, often blurring lines between the Elizabethan Era and Shakespeare's sonnets. Mobility issues meant she couldn't dash from one class to another like most students; instead, she took measured steps, ensuring she wouldn't exhaust herself.

Yet, within these challenges lay Abi's extraordinary strength. Whenever her conditions flared, rendering her bedridden, she sought solace in her books. History tales of resilience and determination inspired her, while English literature provided an escape to worlds where pain and fatigue were foreign.

Realising the unique challenges she faced, Abi sought out the university's support. She knew she needed accommodations, not just for her exams but also for her daily university life



The respite room became her haven, a place where she could recharge when fatigue struck. She was given physical access accommodation, ensuring that her journey across the sprawling campus was manageable. The smaller venue for exams, positioned near the bathroom, and the extra time to compose her answers, ensured she was assessed for her knowledge and not her health conditions.

Beyond the university's structural support, Abi's sheer determination became her most significant asset. When flare-ups meant days in bed, she'd engage in online discussions, ensuring she stayed connected with her course and peers. When brain fog clouded her understanding, she'd record lectures, listening to them repeatedly until clarity dawned.

Abi's story spread across the campus, not as a tale of sympathy but as an emblem of indomitable spirit. Professors admired her dedication, and fellow students were inspired by her tenacity. Her conditions might have set her apart, but her passion brought her right back into the fold.

Her journey through the corridors of History and English wasn't just about acquiring degrees but was also about scripting her own story—a narrative of courage, resilience, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge against all odds. Abi wasn't just studying history; she was making it.



# Mairead's Vision: Navigating Engineering with Albinism

## **Mairead's Vision** **Navigating Engineering with Albinism**

Mairead always knew she was different. With oculocutaneous albinism, her pale skin and light-sensitive eyes set her apart. But it was never her appearance that mattered to her, it was her vision—or lack thereof.

Growing up, Mairead had to face challenges that most people never consider. Simple tasks such as reading a menu, identifying bus numbers, or scanning lecture slides in a dimly lit room were arduous. However, her condition also gave her a unique perspective on the world. She saw beauty in nuances, took nothing at face value, and had an insatiable curiosity.

Mairead's passion lay in understanding how things worked. From toys to tech gadgets, she dismantled and reassembled them, much to the chagrin of her parents. Engineering was a natural choice, but she also wanted to understand the business aspect of things. Thus, the Engineering and Management program at the university beckoned.

On her first day at the Lloyd Institute, she felt a whirl of emotions. Eager to absorb all the knowledge her professors had to offer, yet anxious about accessing the materials they provided. The faintly projected slides, the hurriedly scribbled notes on whiteboards, and the intricacies of diagrams were her daily challenges.

But Mairead was undeterred. Advocating for herself, she sought out the university's support systems, asking for a more accessible locker location and researching potential exam accommodations. She soon discovered she was entitled to a word processor, enlarged exam papers, and most importantly, rest breaks to alleviate her visual fatigue.

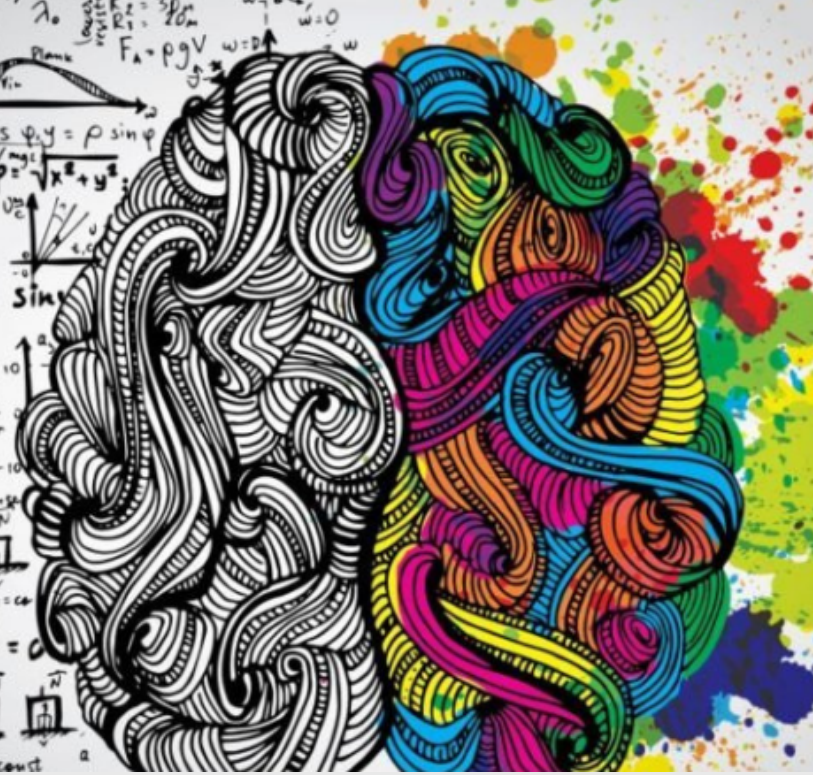
Classes became a fascinating dance of knowledge and adaptability. Professors, intrigued by her unique needs, started delivering clearer and more concise presentations, benefiting not just Mairead but the entire class.

Outside lectures, Mairead was no ordinary engineering student. The constraints imposed by her visual impairment pushed her to think differently, to innovate. She developed unique problem-solving approaches that often impressed her tutors and peers.

Her journey was not without challenges. While her peers might pull an all-nighter before an exam, Mairead had to balance her study time with rest to avoid straining her eyes. But she faced each challenge head-on, armed with determination and the support systems she had put in place.

Over time, Mairead became not just an engineer but an advocate. She started workshops for educators on inclusive teaching. She gave talks about her experiences, highlighting the importance of accessible educational environments.

By the end of her studies, Mairead had not only excelled academically but had also left an indelible mark on the university's approach to inclusivity. Her journey, a blend of resilience and innovation, served as an inspiration to many, reminding everyone that vision isn't just about seeing—it's about how one perceives and navigates the world.



# Cian's Quest: Engineering a Path Through ASD

## Cian's Quest Engineering a Path Through ASD

In the heart of Trinity College Dublin's sprawling campus, Cian found solace within the confines of the engineering department. The intricate designs, precise calculations, and technical challenges spoke to him in a way words often failed. On paper and in projects, he shone bright, often outpacing his peers with his unparalleled grasp of concepts.

But beneath this academic brilliance, Cian harboured a secret struggle. Being on the autism spectrum meant that while he could decode the most complex of engineering problems, decoding the social world was a labyrinth he often found himself lost in.

The bustling corridors, the cacophony in the cafeteria, and the nuances of group projects often left him feeling overwhelmed. The sensory overload and the challenges of navigating social interactions were a stark contrast to the comfort and clarity he found in his textbooks.

The future loomed large for Cian. He harboured no doubts about his technical prowess and his potential contributions to the world of engineering. But the thought of job interviews, networking events, and collaborative projects in a professional setting brought forth a wave of anxiety. How would he explain his unique perspective and needs to potential employers? Would they see past his ASD and recognise the gem of talent that lay beneath?

Realising the importance of addressing these concerns, Cian reached out for support. He secured a counselling appointment, marking the beginning of his journey towards understanding and managing his challenges better. Here, he hoped to find strategies to navigate the social intricacies of the workplace and tools to manage his sensory sensitivities.

Cian's foresight didn't end there. Recognising his challenges with handwriting,



he sought extra time for exams, ensuring that his knowledge was accurately represented without the constraint of time-induced pressure. He also explored various supports within the campus – a respite room for moments when the world became too overwhelming, library supports tailored to his needs, and continued access to counselling.

As the semesters rolled on, the engineering whiz named Cian became known for more than just his academic prowess. He became a beacon of resilience, showcasing that with the right support and understanding, every individual, regardless of their challenges, could chart a path to success.

His journey was a testament to Trinity College Dublin's commitment to inclusivity and understanding, ensuring that every student, with their unique strengths and challenges, felt seen, heard, and supported.



# A Journey of Self-Discovery: Finding My Path in Occupational Therapy

## **A Journey of Self-Discovery Finding My Path in Occupational Therapy**

My academic journey commenced with a clear goal in mind: to become a healthcare professional. However, as I delved deeper into my studies in medicine, I began to sense a growing unease within me. It became evident that my initial choice might not be the right fit for my unique circumstances.

I am Diarmuid, and I have Autism. My journey through academia was marked by challenges beyond the typical academic hurdles. Autism often impacts how individuals process emotional stress and articulate their feelings.

For me, articulating my stress and seeking support was more challenging than it would be for other students. My difficulties in communication, a common trait in many with Autism, meant that I might not always be able to convey the depth of my struggles adequately.

The demanding nature of medical school, combined with the personal challenges I faced, amplified the emotional and mental strain I experienced. Beyond the typical academic pressures, I grappled with significant family challenges that further complicated my journey.

Recognising the importance of mental well-being is crucial. My anxiety about the course and my family situation had the potential to negatively impact my mental health. This could lead to decreased academic performance, burnout, or even more severe mental health challenges. It was clear that a change was needed.

After careful reflection and consultation with mentors and advisors, I made the difficult decision to pivot away from medicine. It was a choice that filled me with uncertainty, but deep down, I knew it was the right one.

With newfound clarity, I decided to explore other healthcare professions that aligned more closely with my interests and values. It was during this exploration that I discovered occupational therapy. The holistic approach to healthcare, the focus on improving patients' daily lives, and the opportunity to work closely with individuals resonated deeply with me.

Transferring to an occupational therapy program felt like a fresh start, a chance to pursue a career that truly ignited my passion. The change in direction was not without its challenges, but I was determined to excel in my new chosen field.

As I immersed myself in the world of occupational therapy, my sense of purpose and fulfilment grew. The coursework, clinical experiences, and interactions with patients reaffirmed my decision. I was on a path that not only aligned with my values but also brought me a profound sense of satisfaction.

During this transformative journey, I learned the importance of seeking support and advocating for my needs. I attended counselling when on placement, and I needed extra time off to prioritise my mental well-being.

This was a crucial aspect of my journey, as it allowed me to recharge and stay focused on my studies and clinical work.

Additionally, I recognised the significance of effective communication. There were times when I felt overwhelmed, and I wanted to ensure that my voice was heard. I communicated my need for feedback and highlighted any issues that arose during my academic and clinical experiences. The support and understanding of my educators and peers played a vital role in my success.

Looking back, I realised that sometimes, the road to finding one's true calling can be winding and filled with unexpected twists. My journey from medicine to occupational therapy was a testament to the importance of listening to one's inner voice and having the courage to make a change when needed. Today, I am thriving in my occupational therapy studies, grateful for the detour that led me to this fulfilling career path. My story serves as a reminder that it's never too late to pursue one's passion and find a path that feels just right. Through my journey, I hope to inspire others to embrace their unique challenges and seek the support they need, fostering a more inclusive and understanding environments for all students.



## **Stride to Solace:** Declan's Journey Beyond Labels

### **Stride to Solace** **Declan's Journey Beyond Labels**

In the serene landscape of a picturesque town, Declan had etched his identity as the local prodigy in statistics. With a penchant for deconstructing complex equations and delving deep into analytical realms, he was the embodiment of academic brilliance. However, beneath the surface of this cerebral prowess, there was an underlying turbulence — a persistent battle with anxiety.

This silent spectre of anxiety cast long, ominous shadows over his achievements, making the most mundane tasks feel insurmountable at times.

Yet, in this whirlwind of mental unrest, a beacon of hope emerged in the form of an athletic pursuit: running.

A whisper about a triathlon club in the town reached Declan's ears. To him, this wasn't just a sport but a metaphorical escape, a rhythmic journey that might help him distance himself from his anxiety.

Upon stepping into the club, Declan was welcomed with genuine smiles and an aura of camaraderie.

However, a secret weighed heavy on his heart: his Autism. While his statistical prowess was the result of his unique neural wiring, it also meant that he perceived the world differently. Declan hesitated to share this aspect of his life, fearing that it might create a chasm between him and the others. He yearned to be recognised for his passion for running, not defined by his Autism.

However, as time unfurled, so did the therapeutic impact of running on Declan. Each step, each breath, became a rhythmic mantra, grounding him in the present and gradually pushing the clouds of anxiety to the periphery.

Though he often ran at his own pace, cherishing the solitude, a silent bond grew between Declan and the other club members. The club evolved into a sanctuary, a space of mental rejuvenation for him.

One evening, as the afterglow of a shared run settled, Declan mustered the courage to unveil his truth — his Autism. The outpour of understanding and warmth from the club members took him by surprise. They embraced his reality, asserting that his Autism was just a facet of his multifaceted personality. His preference to run solo was respected, not as an offshoot of his autism, but as a runner's personal choice.

Declan's journey underscores the transformative power of running, not just as a physical exercise but as a balm for the soul. It's a testament to finding oneself, even when caught in the dichotomies of excelling in one domain and struggling in another. With every mile he covered, Declan not only redefined his boundaries but also discovered a world where acceptance wasn't contingent on labels but was born out of shared passion and humanity.





# Navigating Trinity with Deafness: Ciara's Story

## **Navigating Trinity with Deafness** **Ciara's Story**

Being a student in the Centre of Deaf Studies (CDS), Deafness was never viewed as a disability. Although commencing the course with no knowledge of sign language or Deafness, whilst identifying myself as hearing impaired, I quickly came to the realisation that the phrase “hearing impaired” is strongly emphasising the negatives of Deafness. No positives of Deafness, which I now know are plenty, can be taken from this phrase.

Upon starting college, lip-reading and speech was the only mode of communication viable to me, but Irish Sign Language (ISL) quickly became my preferred communication method.

Being able to participate in lectures by having an ISL interpreter interpret the lesson gave me an equal opportunity to learn in elective and open modules outside of CDS. Of course, societies and clubs still held their barriers in terms of communication, but I was lucky enough to have a supportive class who were eager for me to be included in all aspects of student life.

As COVID lockdowns struck at the end of my first year of college, this brought about its own challenges. Between masks and social distancing, lipreading, and hence, listening, was impossible. But as mentioned, my close-knit college class were always looking for ways to include me in any way possible. Becoming the treasurer of the Sign Language Society was a great way to become closer with people I was acquainted with from my class, and others interested in ISL.

Engaging with both the hearing world and the Deaf community simultaneously can be incredibly draining. As someone who straddles these two realities, the constant effort required to piece together missed fragments of conversations can be exhaustive. Despite being adept at lipreading and utilizing Irish Sign Language (ISL), the truth is that I cannot grasp over 50% of what is being said in everyday interactions.

This is exacerbated in settings where ISL interpreters are not present, and I must rely on my partial hearing and lipreading skills.

In group conversations, the challenge intensifies as the flow of discussion is often fast-paced and sporadic. Many people, perhaps unaware of my deafness, continue their conversations at a natural speed without considering the additional time I need to understand and respond. It's a reality that requires constant vigilance and attention, and this mental toll is something that is not often visible to others.

Moreover, the intersection of being a member of the Deaf community while navigating predominantly hearing spaces brings unique challenges. It is a delicate balance to maintain, participating fully in the Deaf world with its rich culture and language, while also trying to fit into societal norms that are not always accommodating of Deaf individuals.

Trinity's disability service has been a cornerstone of support, advocating for inclusivity and ensuring that communication barriers are minimized. They recognize the diversity within the Deaf community and that each student's experience of deafness is unique. The service works tirelessly to ensure that no aspect of university life is out of reach due to a disability.

However, there is always room for growth and increased awareness.

It is vital for both the university and its students to develop a deeper understanding of the exhaustion that comes with navigating a world that is not fully accessible. To consider the effort required to engage in day-to-day activities that many take for granted. It's not just about providing services, but about fostering a culture of inclusion that is reflected in every interaction and every conversation.

The fatigue that stems from constantly bridging two worlds is a call to action. It's a reminder that inclusivity is not just about physical accessibility but also about the willingness of individuals and communities to adapt their communication and engagement strategies. It's about ensuring that no one is inadvertently left out of the conversation. As I continue my journey at Trinity, I hope to see an environment where the needs of Deaf students are intuitively integrated into every facet of university life, allowing us not just to succeed academically, but to thrive socially without the weight of constant exhaustion.



# Aishling's Journey: Navigating Music Studies with Stargardt's Disease

## Aishling's Journey Navigating Music Studies with Stargardt's Disease

Aishling, a dedicated music student at Trinity College, faces unique challenges due to her genetic disorder, Stargardt's disease. This condition significantly affects her central vision, making it impossible for her to read anything at a distance. To ensure that she can navigate the college experience effectively, Aishling relies on various technological accommodations:

- **Long-Distance Camera System:** Aishling uses a long-distance camera system that allows her to view presentations and materials from a distance, which is essential for her to access course content during lectures.

- **Accessible Laptop:** Her laptop is equipped with accessibility settings that enable her to zoom in on screen content, ensuring that she can read and interact with digital materials effectively.
- **iPad for Music Scores:** Aishling utilizes an iPad to enlarge music scores, making it possible for her to read musical notations and participate in her music studies.
- **Extra Time in Exams:** Recognizing the additional challenges she faces when reading and writing music, Aishling is granted extra time in both written and aural exams, giving her the time she needs to perform to the best of her abilities.
- **Large Monitor for Aural Classes:** A large monitor in her aural classes ensures that Aishling can comfortably access course materials, facilitating her engagement with the subject matter.

While Aishling's commitment to her studies is unwavering, she has had to invest significantly in assistive technology to accommodate her visual impairment. Additionally, the strain caused by her condition, which necessitates crouching and squinting, has taken a toll on her posture.

To address these physical challenges, Aishling regularly visits an osteopath to manage neck and back aches, as well as migraines resulting from extended screen time.

In terms of academic support, Aishling benefits from extra time for assignments, which is especially crucial as she approaches her final year and prepares for her dissertation.

Aishling receives a 50%-time extension, for both aural and written exams, providing her with the additional time needed to complete these assessments. However, she has raised concerns about the effectiveness of this accommodation in the context of certain exams, particularly those involving sight singing and sight clapping. These components of her music degree pose unique challenges for someone with a visual impairment, and Aishling has questioned whether current testing methods adequately account for these challenges. She believes that a more tailored approach may be required to ensure that her skills and knowledge are accurately assessed.

Aishling's story underscores the importance of continually reviewing and refining accommodations to ensure that they effectively support students with disabilities in their academic pursuits.

Her determination and dedication to her studies serve as an inspiration and a reminder of the resilience that many students demonstrate in the face of challenges.





# **Eimear's Melody:** A Symphony of Resilience & Adaptation

## **Eimear's Melody** **A Symphony of Resilience & Adaption**

Amid the hallowed halls of a prestigious university's music department, there existed a burgeoning star, Eimear. She walked with a sense of purpose, her every step echoing her profound love for music. Every note she played, every song she sang, was a testament to her commitment and passion for the art.

However, behind the captivating rhythms and melodies that Eimear produced lay a challenge that was invisible to most. Eimear was hard of hearing, an irony not lost on her given her chosen field of study. Loud environments often blurred the lines between various sounds for her, making it hard to discern speech and specific musical notes.

To address these physical challenges, Aishling regularly visits an osteopath to manage neck and back aches, as well as migraines resulting from extended screen time.

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# Oisin's Journey: Conquering the Shadows of Pica

## **Oisin's Journey Conquering the Shadows of Pica**

Once upon a time, in the bustling halls of Trinity College, there lived a young psychology student named Oisin. Oisin was not your typical student; he was exceptionally bright, incredibly passionate about his field, and carried a unique challenge with him—a condition known as pica.

Pica was a mysterious and often misunderstood condition. It compelled Oisin to consume non-food items, things that held no nutritional value whatsoever. The act of compulsively eating these objects was something he had struggled with for years.

Sometimes, when stress and anxiety tightened their grip, Oisín found himself reaching for unconventional sources of comfort.

He was constantly eating paper, from the pages of borrowed books to his own notes, or chewing on pen tops. Others noticed this unusual behavior, but Oisín couldn't stop.

At times, it felt like an insurmountable hurdle in his academic journey. Oisín knew he wasn't alone in this battle. Many others had experienced pica, yet the shame and embarrassment that often accompanied the condition weighed heavily on his shoulders. He had tried to reach out for help, opening up to a trusted friend and even seeking support from healthcare providers. But, like a tenacious shadow, pica would occasionally return to cast its cloud over his life.

As a psychology student, Oisín was well aware of the complexities of mental health. He understood the importance of seeking help and talking openly about one's struggles. However, when it came to his own condition, he found himself caught in a web of emotions—fear, guilt, and self-doubt.

Despite his challenges, Oisín was determined to confront his pica head-on. He sought therapy to better understand the underlying causes of his condition and develop strategies to manage it. With each session, he gained a bit more insight into the triggers that led to his compulsive behavior.

His journey towards self-discovery was not without its setbacks, though, as there were moments when he succumbed to the urge to consume non-food items.

But Oisín was resilient. He recognized that recovery was a process filled with ups and downs. With unwavering determination, he continued his studies, pushing himself to excel academically while simultaneously working on his mental health.

Trinity College was not just a place of learning for Oisín; it was a community that offered support and understanding. Over time, he discovered that sharing his struggles with trusted friends and faculty members lightened the burden he carried. Oisín's journey towards healing was not a straight path; it twisted and turned, but he was committed to breaking free from the grip of pica.

Through it all, Oisín's story became a testament to resilience, self-acceptance, and the power of seeking help.

He learned that, in the grand tapestry of life, setbacks were merely threads, and he held the brush to paint his own vibrant future, one where pica would occupy a smaller and smaller space until it eventually faded into the background, allowing his true potential to shine.



# Sorcha's Journey: Overcoming Nervous Tics in Social Work

## **Sorcha's Journey** **Overcoming Nervous Tics in Social Work**

Sorcha had always been passionate about making a difference in people's lives. As a social work student, her dream was to provide support and care to those in need. She was determined and driven, but there was something that had been troubling her for as long as she could remember—nervous tics.

Nervous tics were those repetitive, involuntary movements or vocalizations that seemed to have a mind of their own. They often emerged in times of anxiety or stress, and Sorcha's case was no different. She would find herself blinking excessively, twitching her nose, or clearing her throat repeatedly, especially during moments of pressure.



This was more than just a minor inconvenience; it was affecting her daily life and her ability to excel in her studies.

As her social work program progressed, Sorcha's nervous tics became more pronounced. They were especially noticeable during her field placements, where professionalism and composure were essential. She couldn't help but feel self-conscious and worried that her tics would negatively impact her relationships with clients and colleagues. One particularly challenging placement left Sorcha feeling defeated. Her tics had become more severe under the pressure, and she questioned whether social work was the right path for her. She felt like giving up on her dreams, fearing that her condition would hinder her ability to be an effective social worker.

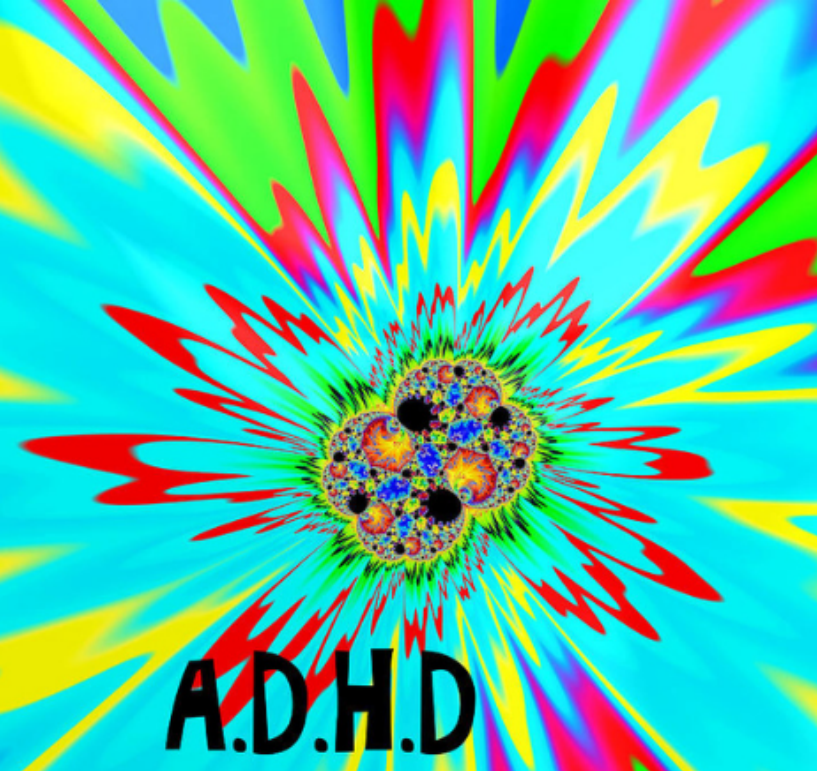
However, life had a way of surprising Sorcha when she needed it most. During a moment of despair, she crossed paths with a psychologist and an occupational therapist who specialized in tic disorders. They listened to her story, offered understanding, and provided a glimmer of hope. With their guidance, Sorcha began to explore strategies to manage her tics effectively.

Over time, Sorcha learned techniques to recognize and reduce the impact of her nervous tics. She practiced relaxation exercises and mindfulness techniques to alleviate stress and anxiety, which often triggered her tics. She also discovered the importance of self-compassion and acceptance, realizing that her tics did not define her abilities as a social worker.

With the support of her psychologist and occupational therapist, Sorcha reached out to her university's disability services. They worked together to create a supportive environment during her field placements. Her supervisors and colleagues were educated about tic disorders and how to accommodate her needs, fostering a more understanding and inclusive atmosphere.

Sorcha's journey was not without its challenges, but she persevered. With dedication, self-compassion, and the support of professionals who believed in her, she was able to complete her social work program successfully. Sorcha's story became a testament to resilience, proving that even when faced with adversity, one could overcome obstacles to pursue their dreams.

Today, Sorcha is a practicing social worker, helping individuals and families navigate life's challenges. She continues to manage her nervous tics with the skills she learned along her journey. Sorcha's experiences have made her a compassionate and empathetic professional, and her determination serves as an inspiration to all who face adversity on their path to making a difference in the world.



# Max's Journey: Balancing the Digital World and Computer Science Dreams

## **Max's Journey Balancing the Digital World and Computer Science Dreams**

Max was not your average computer science student at Trinity College. He possessed a unique combination of talents and challenges that set him apart from his peers. Max was not only exceptionally gifted in the field of computer science, but he also faced the daily hurdles of living with ADHD.

From a young age, Max had exhibited an insatiable curiosity for all things related to technology. Computers were not just tools for him; they were portals to a world of infinite possibilities.

Max's parents had recognized his passion early on and nurtured it, encouraging him to explore programming languages, software development, and the intricacies of computer systems. As Max embarked on his journey through Trinity's computer science program, he was filled with excitement and determination. His dream was to create innovative software solutions that could change the world.

However, he soon encountered an unexpected challenge—excessive screen time.

Max's relentless pursuit of knowledge in the digital realm had led him to spend countless hours in front of computer screens, absorbing information, coding, and honing his skills. While his dedication was admirable, it began to take a toll on his physical and mental well-being.

The excessive screen time had started to affect Max's sleep patterns, leaving him perpetually tired and drained. He struggled to manage the demands of his computer science courses, often finding it difficult to concentrate during lectures or complete assignments on time. Max's academic performance began to suffer, and he felt overwhelmed by the coursework.

Recognizing the need for a change, Max decided to seek support from the university's disability services. He met with an educational psychologist who specialized in ADHD. During their sessions, Max discussed the challenges he faced, including his difficulty in regulating screen time.

With the psychologist's guidance, Max embarked on a journey to find a healthier balance between his passion for computer science and his well-being. Together, they developed strategies to manage his screen time effectively. Max learned to set specific limits on the hours he spent in front of screens, ensuring that he allowed himself breaks to rest and recharge.

Additionally, Max explored techniques to improve his sleep hygiene. He practiced relaxation exercises and created a calming bedtime routine that helped him achieve more restful nights. As his sleep improved, Max found himself more alert and focused during his computer science classes. Another challenge Max faced was the temptation to self-medicate by overindulging on nights out with other students. He would wake up feeling lost and unable to remember anything from the previous night.

This behavior, although less common with ADHD, was a way for Max to cope with the challenges he faced.

Max's story serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of self-awareness, seeking support, and addressing not only the visible challenges but also those that lurk beneath the surface. With determination, guidance, and the right strategies. Max learned to harness his incredible passion for computer science while also prioritizing his well-being and managing the complexities of ADHD.

Today, Max continues his studies at Trinity College with renewed energy and enthusiasm. He is well on his way to achieving his dreams of making a positive impact in the world of technology. Max's journey is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of seeking help when faced with adversity.



# Running to Stand Still

## Running to Stand Still

In a quaint little town, there lived a young man named Declan. He was known as the local statistics genius, a brilliant mind who excelled in his academic pursuits. Complex equations and statistical analyses were his playground, and he conquered them with ease. Yet, there was a hidden facet to Declan's life that most people didn't realize—he was constantly battling anxiety.

Anxiety had been his unwelcome companion for as long as he could remember. It hovered like a dark cloud, casting shadows over his every step. Despite his remarkable academic abilities, managing the many facets of life, including his own mental health, proved to be a formidable challenge.



One day, in his quest to find a way to alleviate his anxiety, Declan stumbled upon the idea of taking up running. The thought of joining a triathlon club in his hometown appealed to him. Running seemed to offer a unique blend of challenge and liberation, a chance to break free from the shackles of his anxiety.

With newfound determination, Declan made his way to the local triathlon club and introduced himself to the members. Warm smiles and a friendly atmosphere greeted him, but he couldn't help but feel anxious about fitting in. He knew he was different, not just due to his anxiety but also because he was autistic.

Declan had always been fiercely independent, a trait that extended to his academic pursuits. He was incredibly proficient in his coursework, but the art of managing all the parts of his life, or seeking help when needed, had been a struggle. When he decided to join the club, he hesitated to disclose his autism, fearing it might lead others to treat him differently. He simply wanted to be one of the runners.

As he attended his first club meeting, Declan decided to keep his autism to himself. He was there to find solace and resilience in the rhythm of his own footsteps. Over time, he found that running became his therapy, a form of meditation that allowed him to escape his worries.

While he didn't easily connect with others in the club due to his faster pace and desire for solitude, he felt a sense of camaraderie with those who shared his passion for the sport. The club became a sanctuary where he could focus on his mental well-being, even though he still struggled with managing the other aspects of his life.

As days turned into weeks and then months, Declan continued to run and participate in club activities on his terms. His anxiety began to subside as the rhythmic pounding of his feet on the pavement provided a soothing cadence to his racing mind.

One day, during a post-run meal with some club members, Declan decided it was time to open up about his autism. To his surprise, they responded with understanding and support.

They assured him that being autistic was just another part of who he was, and it made no difference to them. They were proud to have Declan as a member of the club, even if he often chose to run alone.

Declan's story serves as a powerful reminder that running can offer solace and strength, even for those who excel in one aspect of life but struggle with others. It showed him that he could be himself and still find acceptance, friendship, and a sense of purpose in the company of kind-hearted individuals who shared his passion for the sport. And so, with every stride he took, Declan ran not only toward the finish line but also toward a life filled with newfound confidence and a unique connection to the world around him.



# Sam's Story: Navigating Auditory Processing Difficulties

## **Sam's Story** **Navigating Auditory Processing Difficulties**

When Sam entered Trinity College, his passion for the Arts was evident to everyone who met him. He spoke animatedly about ancient civilisations, languages, philosophical teachings, and the intricacies of historical events. What most people didn't know was the additional effort Sam had to exert to engage in academic discussions and lectures due to his auditory processing disorder.

Sam's disability made it challenging for him to process spoken words in real-time, especially in lecture settings. To cope, he had developed an effective system: he'd rely heavily on lecture slides provided in advance, jotting down the lecturer's commentary directly onto them.

The slides were more than just a visual aid; they acted as his personal "subtitles," allowing him to piece together and process the verbal information delivered during lectures.

While Sam understood the value of developing oral presentation skills, his auditory processing disorder was not something he could "un-learn" or "overcome" with time and effort. Instead, he found ways to adapt, ensuring he could grasp complex academic content. The lecture slides were an integral part of this adaptation.

However, while most of his courses provided lecture slides in advance, Sam faced resistance from the one lecturer. This posed not only academic challenges but also triggered physical health issues. On several occasions, the stress and strain of trying to keep up caused Sam to nearly faint during lectures.

Recognising the significance of the barriers he was facing, Sam reached out to the Disability Service at Trinity College for support. He was met with understanding and advocacy from his dedicated disability officer, who became a pivotal figure in his journey towards educational equity.

Together, they initiated a dialogue with the Department, emphasising the importance of making reasonable accommodations for Sam's auditory processing difficulties. The disability officer provided the department with a detailed explanation of Sam's condition and outlined how the advance provision of lecture slides was a standard reasonable accommodation under Trinity's policy for students with disabilities.

The disability officer also highlighted the benefits that these accommodations would not only bring to Sam but could potentially extend to other students who might similarly benefit from having additional materials to supplement their learning.

The officer's role was to guide the department towards a more inclusive approach, helping the faculty understand that such accommodations were not only about meeting legal obligations but also about nurturing an academic environment where all students could thrive. By providing reasonable accommodations, the department could contribute positively to Sam's academic success and well-being without compromising the integrity of the educational experience.

Sam's proactive approach, coupled with the backing of the Disability Service, led to a constructive conversation about inclusion and accessibility within academic structures. His story became an example of how advocacy and support can lead to tangible changes that resonate with the core values of educational institutions: equity, respect, and the pursuit of knowledge for all.

Despite these challenges, Sam remained determined. He was not seeking special treatment but rather an opportunity to learn on an equal footing with his peers. While the bullet points on lecture slides might seem simple to most, for Sam, they were a lifeline that allowed him to engage, participate, and truly appreciate the guidance of his professors.

Sam's story underscores the critical role that understanding, and accommodations play in higher education. It's a testament to the strength of individuals like him who, despite facing challenges, remain committed to their academic passions. His journey also serves as a reminder that the goal of educational institutions should always be to ensure equal access and opportunity for all students, regardless of their individual challenges.



# Chris's Odyssey: From Crisis to Control in the Quest for Understanding

## **Chris's Odyssey From Crisis to Control in the Quest for Understanding**

In the corridors of Trinity College Dublin O'Reilly, Chris, a senior engineering computer science major, found himself at the heart of a transformative journey. His life had been a quiet one in the countryside before college, where the loudest sounds often came from the rustling leaves rather than bustling crowds. While he navigated his school years with quiet trepidation, Chris's real challenge lay in deciphering the intricate social cues that seemed as foreign to him as the computer codes he would later learn to master.



At Trinity, Chris continued to employ his subtle coping mechanisms, using yawns as a shield in the maze of social interactions. Yet, it was here, amidst the vibrant diversity of student life, that he discovered a sense of belonging with a group of neurodiverse peers who shared a silent understanding of his journey.

As Chris's academic demands intensified, so did the pressure on his mental health. It was in these moments of crisis, when the waters seemed too turbulent, that he reached out for help, albeit sometimes as a last resort. His proactive conversation with the health services at Trinity marked a pivotal moment in his journey, leading to a formal assessment and subsequent diagnosis of Autism.

This revelation shed a profound light on his past and illuminated the path forward. Chris began to lean into his diagnosis, embracing the strengths that came with it—his hyper-focus and acute attention to detail, which shone brightly in his computer science projects.

However, navigating the final year of his degree presented new hurdles. Assignments piled up, and Chris found himself falling behind.

It was a pattern that the disability service at Trinity recognized and addressed. Together, they formulated a plan that allowed Chris the space he needed to thrive academically. The plan involved extending his coursework over the third semester, utilizing the summer months as a period for catching up and ensuring that his journey through academia did not rush past but moved at a pace where he could maintain his stride.

In this way, Chris's narrative is not just a personal account but a beacon for others. It's a story of courage in self-advocacy, the value of seeking timely support, and the importance of personalized academic plans that consider individual circumstances. His experience reinforces the message that reaching out, especially before a crisis, can set the stage for success and that the Trinity community is equipped to support every student in their unique academic pursuits.

Chris's path from the quiet countryside to the bustling Trinity campus, and his navigation through the complexities of neurodiversity, stands as a testament to the power of self-discovery, the strength found in community, and the profound impact of tailored support.

[Chris's and similar stories are available to explore, offering insight and encouragement, at Trinity College Dublin's disability service website, where the journeys of its students are acknowledged and celebrated.]



# **Poppy's Graduation: A Call for Compassionate Change**

## **Poppy's Graduation A Call for Compassionate Change**

In the afterglow of graduation week, there's much to reflect on, not just the cap and gown, but the whirl of emotions that come with such a pivotal moment. My name is Poppy, and this is a snapshot of my experience—a time that should have been purely celebratory but was instead a complex mix of triumph and anxiety.

Living with autism and managing anxiety and depression has been a central part of my journey. Returning to education at Trinity College was a leap towards rebuilding my life, but graduation brought unexpected stress.

When my parents came to stay, the weight of unspoken expectations seemed heavier than before. The challenge wasn't just in the logistics of hosting but also in navigating the personal dynamics that have long shaped my family life. The intensity of the week was amplified by the stark contrast in the paths my brothers and I have taken. Yet, these personal trials are merely the backdrop to the day meant to mark academic achievement.

Graduation itself was a sensory and emotional overload. From the uncomfortable attire to the claustrophobic seating arrangements, every element seemed designed without thought for someone like me. My graduation day was further shadowed by worrying news about my mother's health, which made the idea of celebration feel almost inappropriate.

Amid these personal struggles, the structure of the graduation event itself felt surprisingly unsupportive. The lack of accessibility, from the rigidity of the dress code to the limited understanding of dietary and sensory needs, added unnecessary strain. For those who experience the world with heightened sensitivity, the lack of consideration towards these details can turn a day of pride into an endurance test.

So, what can be done? As someone who has navigated these challenges firsthand, I propose key changes that could transform graduation from a stressful obligation into a truly inclusive celebration:

1. **Sensory-Friendly Attire:** Offer alternatives to the traditional graduation cloak that are comfortable and don't compromise the formal aspect of the ceremony. This could include sensory-friendly fabrics and designs that avoid the feeling of being constricted.
2. **Quiet Spaces:** Designate quiet areas where graduates and guests can retreat from the overwhelming noise and crowds.
3. **Flexible Seating:** Allow graduates to choose their seating arrangements to avoid feelings of being trapped or overwhelmed.
4. **Clear Communication:** Ensure all graduates are well-informed of the day's schedule, including when and where they can take breaks, access refreshments, and find support if needed.
5. **Inclusive Celebrations:** Understand that not everyone may wish to or be able to participate in traditional dining or drinking events. Offering a variety of ways to celebrate can ensure that all graduates can partake in a manner that's comfortable for them.

**6. Supportive Services:** Have trained staff available who are aware of the unique challenges faced by neurodiverse individuals or those with mental health issues.

Trinity College has been a place of growth and learning, and it can also be a leader in embracing the diversity of its student body. By implementing these recommendations, we can ensure that graduation is a time of joy and pride for everyone, regardless of their personal challenges. After all, every graduate deserves to feel celebrated.



# **Navigating Challenges: Debbie's Story at Trinity College Dublin**

## **Navigating Challenges Debbie's Story at Trinity College Dublin**

In the historic halls of Trinity College Dublin, Debbie, a neurodivergent science student, found herself navigating a world that often seemed overwhelming. Diagnosed with autism, she faced unique challenges, particularly in managing the physical and emotional turmoil brought on by her menstrual cycle.

Debbie's journey at Trinity was not just about pursuing her passion for science; it was also about advocating for herself and others like her. The college, known for its rich heritage and academic rigour, had yet to fully adapt to the needs of neurodivergent individuals, especially when it came to providing flexible learning options.



This would not only benefit neurodivergent students but also those who, for various reasons, found it challenging to attend in-person lectures.

Her advocacy took shape through meetings with faculty, petitions, and open discussions with other students. Debbie's efforts slowly started to gain traction. She shared her own experiences, highlighting how the availability of recorded lectures could be a game-changer for students who struggled with regular attendance due to health issues.

The campaign was not just about recorded lectures; it was about shifting the university culture towards greater understanding and accommodation of diverse needs. Debbie's voice became a beacon of hope for many, a reminder that change was possible with persistence and courage.

As the movement grew, Debbie's story resonated with students and staff alike, leading to a broader conversation about inclusivity and diversity in education. Her struggle highlighted the need for universities to adapt and evolve, recognising the diverse experiences of their student body.

Through her advocacy, Debbie not only found a sense of purpose but also connected with others who shared her experiences. She became not just a student of science but also an advocate for change, helping to pave the way for a more inclusive and understanding educational environment at Trinity College Dublin. Continuing Debbie's Story:

As Debbie's campaign gained momentum at Trinity College Dublin, she experienced a profound personal revelation that reshaped her understanding of herself and her struggles. It took her six long years to unearth a crucial piece of her puzzle: the link between her menstrual cycle and her emotional state.

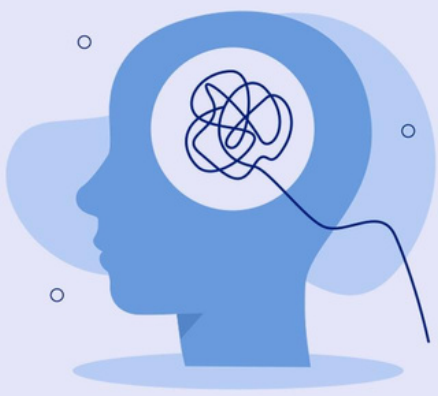
For years, Debbie battled with depression, a fight that often left her exhausted and confused. The cyclical nature of her emotional downturns, always aligning with her menstrual cycle, was a pattern she initially failed to recognise. The week before her period was always the hardest, marked by a spiral into deep sadness, a feeling that she attributed solely to her mental health struggles.

However, a moment of clarity arrived, and with it, a sense of relief and understanding. When Debbie realised that her emotional downturns were not just a manifestation of her depression but also a result of hormonal changes exacerbated by her autism, it was like a weight had been lifted. The days following her meltdowns, when her period would begin, brought a new perspective. It wasn't entirely her fault; it was a natural, albeit challenging, biological process impacting her mental state.

This understanding brought about a significant shift in how Debbie approached her well-being, especially during her menstrual cycle. She learned to be more forgiving of herself during these times, recognising the hormonal influences at play. It was a lesson in self-care that she hadn't expected but desperately needed. Debbie started to incorporate new routines and practices to better manage her symptoms. She found comfort in small acts of self-care, like ensuring she got enough rest, engaging in activities that soothed her, and allowing herself the space to experience her emotions without judgment.

This newfound understanding of her body and mind was a turning point, not just for Debbie but also for her advocacy work. She began to incorporate this personal journey into her discussions, highlighting the importance of recognising and accommodating the varied experiences of neurodivergent individuals. It wasn't just about making lectures more accessible; it was about fostering an environment where students could understand and care for their holistic selves.

Debbie's revelation and her courage to share it openly brought an added depth to her campaign. It resonated with many who had faced similar challenges but hadn't been able to pinpoint the cause. Her story became a beacon of awareness, encouraging others to explore the intersections of their physical and mental health and to advocate for a more supportive and understanding educational environment.

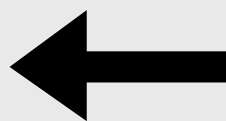


## Student Supports & Services

Your mental health and emotional well-being is important. We want to remind you to take care of yourself. You are not alone as you deal with problems affecting your health and wellness.

Trinity College Dublin has great resources to offer to ensure you are able to meet your needs.

The Trinity disAbility Service is here to help support and direct you to the correct resources. If you don't know where to begin or need to talk to someone familiar, you are always welcome to come talk with a **Trinity Disability Officer** or email **[askds@tcd.ie](mailto:askds@tcd.ie)**



Scan the QR code for  
all Trinity Supports  
& Services.



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



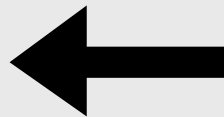
## Prepared by:

Trinity disAbility Service  
Trinity disAbility Hub  
Printing House Square  
Trinity College Dublin  
D02 DP29.

**Email:** [askds@tcd.ie](mailto:askds@tcd.ie)  
**Phone:** +353 1 896 3111  
**[www.tcd.ie/disability](http://www.tcd.ie/disability)**

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Scan to QR code for the  
Trinity disAbility Service  
website.