Towards Inclusion - Impacts, Responses and Resources: The Experiences of Students with Disabilities on Learning from Home during Covid-19 – Trinity College Dublin

HEA - Sharing of Good Practice in Higher Education Access and Participation during COVID-19
Declan Treanor & Declan Reilly, Trinity Disability Service, March 11th 2021
Main points:

- March & April 2020 – initial impacts of COVID-19 on students
- Summer 2020: Trinity Ability Co-op launched. Out of crises comes opportunity
- Disability Service Tech Kit Online Learning Survey
- Online learning resources developed by the Trinity Disability Service
- Impact of COVID-19 on professional courses
- Conclusion
Immediate responses

- Digital transformation - Printing House Square
- Needs assessment moved online via MS Teams
- Developed online meeting guidelines for students
- Online drop-in sessions 11-3 daily book by scanning a QR code
- Asked students what they wanted via surveys and focus groups
- Students via Ability co_op produced a video on issues with online learning – over 2000 views
- Disability Director sat on the Trinity online teaching & assessment working group
- Developed online assessment exam changes for April 2020
March & April 2020 – initial impacts of COVID-19 on students

- Undergraduate Students with disabilities feedback on online learning in COVID-19–SU Disability Officer and Disability Service Trinity College Dublin
Student feedback

- The responses from 141 students in Trinity during late March and early April 2020 indicated that 49.5% said that their online learning experience was positive, 29% said it was negative, 18% had a mixed experience.

- The key findings of the Ahead survey were that more than half of the respondents either disagreed (35%) or strongly disagreed (17%) with the statement 'I am coping well with learning from home'.

Out of crises comes opportunity

Launched in the summer of 2020, the Trinity Ability Co-op is a collaborative initiative between students, staff.

Mission:

- To make Trinity an inclusive environment for students with disabilities
- To raise awareness of the challenges that students with disabilities face on a day-to-day basis
- To provide an opportunity for students to develop graduate attribute skills

www.abilitycoop.com
Trinity Ability co-op achievements

- Developed online social media on multiple issues impacting students
- Met Vice Provost Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Gave immediate feedback to Disability Service on arising online needs and service requirements
- Awarded funding from Equality Fund and Trinity Trust to make Trinity more inclusive and produce expert by experience resources
- Summer intern and graduate interns employed for summer 21
- Printing House Square – got own space in new building
Disability Service Tech Kit
Online Learning Survey

August 2020 – preparation for 20/21 & COVID-19 impacts

• Do you have access to your own computer at home? 88% 93 of 106 students responded ‘yes’

• Do you have a quiet place where you can study? 78% 83 of 106 students responded ‘yes’.

• Do you have any AT needs to support your online learning? 82% 87 of 106 students responded ‘no’
Online learning resources
developed by the Trinity Disability Service

• Adaptation to remote Disability Service delivery
• Learning to Learn Online' module for Trinity students.
• Adapting our Teaching for Learning Online’ module for academic staff
• Online Assessment – supporting students and staff
• Disability Service worked with IT Services in developing Blackboard Ally and Closed Captioning in Panopto
Academic year 2020/21 – online reboot

- Online orientation happened for students and parents
- Blackboard module – asks disability supports
- The Disability Service has also worked with the Centre for Academic Practice in the development of a VLE module ‘Learning to Learn Online’
- Reviewed online exam offering and updated
- Weekly online webinars on topical subjects – working remotely etc
- Week Ability co_op café meet up and Autism drop in group
- Trinity agreed online capturing and captioning of all recorded lectures
- 600 students applied for disability supports so far...
Disability Service surveyed students with disabilities on professional courses in March 2021

- Survey sent to all students from 2nd year onwards
- Survey had 8 questions and took on average 5 minutes to complete
- 39 participants across 9 professional disciplines
- Questions addressed the impact of COVID-19 on placements, placement experience, communications and supports
2. Since March 2020, have placements on your course being missed or incomplete due to Covid-19?

- Yes, 28
- No, 8
- Other, 3
Q3. Can you briefly describe how COVID-19 has impacted your participation on placements?

- Couldn't meet clients. Social aspect gone.
- Some placements have been delayed or moved to telehealth.
- Second year placement was cancelled with an assignment in its place.
- We have been unable to see as many patients and unable to do many hands-on techniques with patients.
- My placement in the community settings was cancelled in May 2020. However, in September, our third year placement went ahead.
- I did not get to complete the rest of my supernumerary placements in 3rd year which made me less prepared for my internship.
4. On a scale of 1 - 5 (with 1 indicating little or no impact and 5 indicating the maximum impact) how would you rate how COVID-19 has impacted on your placement experience?
Conclusions:

• One benefit of Covid-19, (while acknowledging that it should have all happened decades ago) is that universities have been forced to modernise by implementing technological solutions that students with disabilities have always needed and asked for.

• Students have been forced to be over-reliant on technology while fundamental opportunities for academic, social, and personal development have been severely limited and hollowed out.

• As a return to on-campus teaching emerges, we have an opportunity to strike a better balance between on and off-line teaching and learning. Disability Services in universities are innovators and change agents.