



Student Counselling, Learning Development & Student-2-Student

Annual Report 2024-25



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Director's Foreword

This year, **SCS, SLD and S2S** — three core services powered by a remarkable Admin Team — continued to deliver on our shared purpose: providing excellent emotional, academic, and social support to every student at Trinity College Dublin.

We've made strong progress in **making support easier to access**. Through close collaboration with College Health, the disAbility Service, the Tutor System, Assistant Junior Deans, and Wardens of Halls, we've built clearer pathways for students to find the right help at the right time. Our **group work programme** has also expanded, co-facilitated with colleagues across the University, and will soon include **trained student facilitators** and **external partners** who bring fresh ideas and expertise.

Students are navigating an increasingly complex world — one shaped by global conflict, climate anxiety, housing and financial pressures, and the constant noise of social media. These stressors can erode confidence and coping. Now more than ever, our community needs **compassionate, accessible, evidence-based supports** that help students stay healthy and achieve academically.

We are proud that SCS has earned **international recognition for quality and innovation**. Our commitment to excellence is sustained through annual appraisal and a seven-year quality

review cycle, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

Across all areas, this has been a year of growth and collaboration. The **Counselling Service** reduced waiting times for ongoing therapy while continuing to offer **on-the-day crisis appointments** for students in urgent need. **S2S** further strengthened its reputation as a model of peer support, with volunteers providing high-quality, student-led connection across the college community. Meanwhile, **SLD** supported nearly **5,500 students** through workshops, one-to-one sessions, and the **Academic Writing Centre**, and launched new **GenAI application workshops** in partnership with the Library and Academic Practice.

The **Student Advisory Board (SAB)** was also re-established this year and now is an integral part of the Service, ensuring that student voices actively shape our communications and service development.

Behind all of this is an extraordinary team — operating in the supportive ecosystem of the wider Trinity community — who are deeply skilled, compassionate, and committed to ensuring that no student is left behind on their Trinity journey.

Trish Murphy, Director



Mission

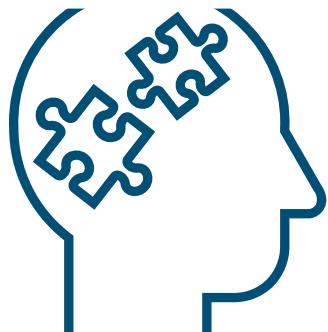
**Support through collaboration,
connection and compassion.**



Vision

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

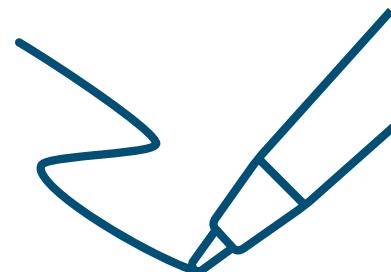
In 2024-25:



12,603 appointments
were provided by the
Counselling Team



3,767 first-year and visiting
students received **S2S**
mentoring



5,467 attendances were
recorded at **SLD** services

Student 2 Student (S2S)

S2S operates Trinity's largest volunteer programme, providing **Peer Mentoring**, social and transitional support for all incoming first-year students, while also offering one-to-one listening and support on request to any Trinity student through the **Peer Support Programme**.

Service Delivery 2024–25

- Nearly **3,800 first-year students** engaged with S2S orientation activities, including campus and library tours delivered throughout Freshers' Week. Due to the continued staggered start, sessions were held after class hours.
- The **S2S Peer Support debrief and supervision model** was redesigned in line with feedback from volunteers and the disAbility service. The new model was presented at the CCT Mental Health in Higher Education Conference.
- S2S adopted the new Volunteer Ireland **Volunteer Charter** and was re-accredited with the **Investment in Volunteers Award**, the highest possible quality standard for good practice in volunteer management.
- S2S staffing increased to 3.0 FTE with the addition of a dedicated Executive Officer.

 *Quality enhancement and quality assurance focused on volunteer experience and global best practice standards.*



Training & Volunteer Development

- Mentor trainers completed group interviews that doubled as focus groups for redesigning training, closing the feedback loop and giving student facilitators shared ownership of the materials..
- The Peer Support programme expanded further, with **15 new volunteers trained** alongside the SU and JCR sabbatical officers in May, bringing the total number of **active Peer Supporters to 27** for 2025–26.
- Volunteer **training materials and handbooks were redesigned for accessibility** and hosted under creative commons licenses on the S2S website to share best practice nationally.
- Students and staff co-presented on the **influence the S2S programme has over student belonging and student success** at the Evasys Student Engagement Forum.

- ❖ *Student partnership and student leadership were at the heart of fostering belonging and inclusion in the S2S programme.*

🏠 House 47 Development

- Thanks to the **Trinity Trust**, an interactive screen was installed in House 47 for presentation practice, movie screenings and hybrid meetings.
- The student space was further enhanced by donations of bean bags, a sofa and crockery. A dishwasher was installed to ensure hygiene standards and reduce waste.

📋 Monitoring & Evaluation

- S2S transitioned its web pages to T4 and adopted Blackboard Ultra for the Mentor Refresher Training module.
- The National Best Practice Guidelines for Peer-Led Transition were finalised and presented at the Student Affairs Ireland and AMOSSHE conferences.

🤝 Strategic Collaboration

- In partnership with the **SCS Strategic Development Manager**, S2S further redeveloped the **Student Advisory Board** joint **student-staff training model**, including resources from Brené Brown's leadership training and Elise Ahenkorah's Accountable Space Model.

- S2S had its first ever presence at TCD Open Day, to acknowledge the recruitment potential of the Mentoring and Peer Support services.

- ❖ *S2S is gaining recognition for its reach, impact, student partnership and quality assurance.*

👤 Volunteer Engagement

S2S Volunteer Activity, 2020–2025

Year	Freshers Mentored	Volunteer Mentors	Peer Supporters	Total Volunteers	Peer Support Meetings Attended
2020–21	4,126	619	12	631	N/A
2021–22	4,750	546	0	546	N/A
2022–23	3,950	567	12	579	N/A
2023–24	3,765	567	23	582	123
2024–25	3,767	581	19	606	67

- ❖ *S2S maintained a strong volunteer base, with steady growth in Peer Supporters since 2022–23. First-year mentee numbers dipped after 2021–22 but have since stabilised, and volunteer applications for 2025–26 point to significant growth ahead.*

❖ S2S Highlights 2024–25

S2S achieved several significant milestones during the year, including re-accreditation and several global conference presentations to highlight areas of best practice within the programme:

- S2S was re-accredited with the **Investing in Volunteers award**.
- The **S2S Peer Support debrief and supervision model** was presented at the CCT Mental Health in Higher Education conference.
- The **National Guidelines for Best Practice in Peer-Led Transition** were presented at the SAI/EucA/NASPA Collaborate Conference in Cork and the AMOSSHE annual conference in Birmingham, UK.
- Students and staff co-presented on the **S2S programme's impact on student belonging and student success** at the Evasys Student Experience forum, Dublin.
- **Mentor training was further redesigned** by student focus groups, consisting of future Mentor Trainers.
- **Training Materials and Handbooks were redesigned for accessibility** and hosted on the S2S website under a creative commons license.

- S2S joined the promotional teams at **Trinity Open Day** for the first time.

 *These highlights demonstrate S2S's commitment to Best Practice, and to positioning Trinity College Dublin services as experts in the fields of peer-led transition, peer support, student belonging and student success.*

☒ S2S Plans for 2025–26

Area	Planned Action
Facilities	Develop a business case for student swipe access to House 47.
Volunteer Resources	Develop and embed Mentor activity check-ins using the custom Odyssey system and Power BI integrations.
Training	Develop Accountable Space training for use across the university, including in clubs and societies' committees.
Staffing	Embed the S2S Executive Officer role with a permanent contract.
	Embed the S2S summer internship with the disability service.
	Pilot an S2S internship with TCPID.

Area	Planned Action	The Annual S2S Awards Ceremony, with Provost Prof. Linda Doyle presenting
Engagement & Outreach	Develop and embed a social media strategy between S2S, the Student Advisory Board and SCS Headspace.	
Strategic Development	Develop the S2S Action Plan 2026–2031 in consultation with volunteers and the SCS Student Advisory Board.	
	<p>These priorities aim to enhance quality assurance for both first year and volunteer experience in the S2S Mentor programme, and to integrate S2S expertise further within the wider SCS service and the broader university community.</p>	
		

◆ S2S Qualitative Feedback Comments

“College was a huge change for me and it took me time to settle in and become adjusted and the help of my mentors and their encouragement really supported me through it.”

“...for me, [S2S] was the all the difference between adapting into college life and struggling.”

“...the S2S mentors I had in first year were so kind and helpful that they made a huge difference to how I was feeling.”

“Before starting college I was very nervous for the transition from school to college. The S2S mentor meet up in freshers week was the first time I felt reassured that I was able to handle it. Since then, my S2S mentor has been a constant support.”

“I had a really unique experience starting off at Trinity because, due to visa issues, I actually arrived a month later than everyone. I felt like I was at a major disadvantage not just academically but socially. But my S2S mentors genuinely helped me progress in life at Trinity and come into my own at this university.”

“My S2S mentor meet-up was the first opportunity to interact with my course mates who have now become some of my closest friends. This was largely thanks to the advice and guidance of our mentors in our course orientation. It was also comforting to see the familiar faces of my mentors in the sometimes overwhelming crowds across campus, knowing there was someone I could approach if I ever had an issue or simply needed someone to talk to.”

“After attending numerous induction lectures in large halls it, it was comforting to have a more personal experience when meeting my mentors... Especially as a joint honours student, one can often feel trapped in a limbo between two faculties, but the s2s mentors help to bridge that gap. ”

“When I came to trinity for the first time in September, the process of getting my footing was quite overwhelming. I found that the S2S mentor programme not only greatly relieved my stress, but helped me to thrive in Trinity.”

Volunteer Feedback

"There are so many facets of support. The support you get back is three-fold. I know that I can step through the door for support."

"I really enjoyed the awards event interacting with the other volunteers. It was a moment of pure joy."

"It has made me a better person. It has changed my perspective and positively shaped my life."

"The in-person training helped me out of my comfort zone, hearing other perspectives and learning useful techniques and different strategies."

"I always enjoy going into House 47. There's always coffee, snacks and a friendly face."

"You are not overwhelmed to take on any more than you can and you are enabled to step away if needed. I can schedule it in accordance with my availability."

"Working with other people has enhanced my college experience and widened my horizons."

"I can't imagine being at college without being a member of S2S."

"The support that I got from S2S made me feel part of my community."

"The skills I've learned have helped me be the person I want to be."

Student Learning Development (SLD)

SLD supports Trinity students in achieving their full academic potential through a blend of workshops, drop-in clinics, and individual consultations. Key areas of focus include academic writing, presentations, examinations and viva preparation, motivation, time management, and constructive approaches to managing stress.



Service Utilisation & Activity

SLD Service Levels, 2020–2025

Year	SLD Workshop Attendances	Academic Writing Centre Appts	SLD 1:1 Appts	Facilitated Writing/Study Groups
2020–21	5,966	375	494	425
2021–22	4,184	525	527	498
2022–23	4,501	473	411	141
2023–24	3,786	381	420	79
2024–25	4,340	517	401	180

In 2024–25, SLD recorded **5,467 student attendances** across all activities. This included 4,340 workshop attendees, 420 1:1 appointments, 180 facilitated group attendances, 517 Academic

Writing Centre consultations, and 17 PhD students engaged in four peer-research support groups.

- 160 workshops were run, including 71 workshops requested by departments & groups in the University.
- A total of 597 students enrolled on the Blackboard module.

Highlights & Challenges

SLD continues to face **staffing challenges**, with core staff comprising just **1.9 FTE**. Temporary funding enabled a **0.6 FTE fixed-term contract** from Sept 2024. Still, volunteers and tutors facilitate 82% of all appointments offered per week by SLD.

- SLD welcomed **one new volunteer**, retired academic and former Senior Tutor, Gerry Whyte.
- The **SLD Website** was redeveloped in Semester 1 in-line with University websites.

- New **Gen AI workshops** were delivered in collaboration with the Library at the HITS programme. These were also run for students within the School of Social Work & Social Policy.
- **'Responsible use of GenAI in Research'** delivered as part of a 5 ECT module for biomedical PhD students called 'Key Skills in Biomedical Research Module'
- **PG Writing Retreat** – 16 students attended a day long retreat in July 2025 and a follow-up retreat in August.
- The **SLD Blackboard module** requires revision in 2025-26 to remain fit for purpose. Funding has been requested for a post to address this challenge.
- **Plan for retirement** of senior team member in Sept 2025.

Academic Writing Centre

The Writing Centre facilitated **517 individual appointments**, offering advice on academic writing and referencing. This is an increase of 63% on last year's attendances.

 *Writing support remains the most frequently requested service across both undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts.*

Postgraduate Services

Postgraduate engagement continues to grow, with demand for tailored supports:

- **407 postgraduate appointments** (43% of all 1:1 sessions), with 43% attended by non-EU students.
- **Planning and Managing your Research Process (PMRP)**: 57 PhD participants completed this 5 ECTS module, delivered online and in person – an increase of 24% from last year.
- **Postgraduate Academic Skills Summer School**: 146 registered; 176 attendances across 8 sessions.
- **PhD Tutors**: 6 PhD candidates facilitated the Academic Writing Centre as tutors, representing faculties across the university, offering 30 appointments per week.
- **Peer Research Groups**: SLD provided frameworks for postgraduate students to form self-directed support groups, promoting motivation, productivity, independent learning, and community.

 *Postgraduate demand highlights the importance of discipline-specific and culturally responsive support, particularly for non-EU students.*

Team Composition

SLD benefits from a **multi-disciplinary staff and volunteer team**:

Team	Disciplinary Backgrounds
Core Team	STEM/Engineering, Arts & Humanities/Education, Psychology/Education, Health Sciences/Education
Volunteers	Mathematics & Statistics, Zoology, Law
Academic Writing Centre Tutors	Biochemistry & Immunology, English, Economics, Environmental Humanities & Creative Arts.

 *This breadth of expertise enhances SLD's capacity to support diverse academic needs across Trinity's student body.*

Student Feedback

Feedback shows that SLD staff and service are recognised as a supportive and approachable multi-disciplinary team of SLD advisors, volunteers and tutors.

Individual Appointment Feedback

- Students sought help with academic issues such as dissertation/thesis writing (24%) academic

integrity/plagiarism (18%), critical thinking (18%) and motivation (10%)

- 83% of the students (67) who completed the feedback survey agreed that their concerns had improved after attending an SLD appointment.

Feedback from academic staff partners

"I am very happy with the service provided, and the students' feedback has been very positive."

- All TCD staff and collaborators who responded to the feedback survey stated that they would recommend SLD services to a colleague.
- The main routes for accessing SLD services were via the SLD website and email.
- Of those who completed feedback surveys, 57% of staff and 36% of students heard about SLD from a TCD colleague or peer.

PMRP (5 ECTS Module) Feedback

- Students found the module overall to be very helpful (4.6 out of 5) and were extremely likely to recommend the module to fellow PhD students (9.4 out of 10).

Student feedback quotes

“I was strengthened in believing in the value of my work.”

“I received more context on receiving a distinction - what that means and that really helped my confidence. In addition, it helped me understand what critical writing entails.”

“This was a very informative, warm and inclusive session. It has been helpful and will aid in my PhD Journey.”

“I used the tips in sourcing and writing my assignments and the assurance helped me complete them with a lot less angst.”

“My advisor gave me affirmation for how I am handling things already and encouraged me to make incremental changes to my ways instead of beating myself up over not changing completely overnight. We decided on the next steps for the upcoming assignment and agreed to check back in at a later point.”

Plans for 2025–26

Looking ahead, SLD has identified key priorities to strengthen and expand its service delivery:

- **Staffing:** Consolidate service capacity by embedding the current **0.6 FTE role** into a permanent contract.
- **Curriculum & University Integration:** Further embed academic skills supports into departmental teaching and assessment structures. Increased collaboration with Academic Practice.
- **Promotion & Engagement:** Increase visibility of SLD across campus and within academic departments, targeting outreach to **postgraduates, non-EU students**, and discipline-specific supports at both UG and PG levels.
- **Learning Resources:** Revise and update the **SLD Blackboard module** to ensure it remains current and effective.

 *These plans emphasise sustainability, accessibility, and integration — ensuring SLD continues to meet the evolving needs of Trinity students.*

Counselling

The Student Counselling Service (SCS) offers free, confidential, and professional therapeutic support to all TCD students. In addition to counselling, the service supports the wider Trinity community by providing expertise in student mental health, contributing to a more informed, compassionate, and resilient campus environment.

Utilisation Trend, 2020–2025

Year	Unique Clients	Total Sessions	TCD Enrolment	% of Students Served
2020–21	2,160	11,068	18,871	11.4%
2021–22	2,998	15,313	20,566	14.6%
2022–23	2,657	14,114	21,488	12.3%
2023–24	2,640	14,756	22,120	11.9%
2024–25	2,361	12,603	22,851	10.3%

Students whose university experience coincided with the pandemic used the Service in record numbers during 2021–22. Since then, demand from this cohort has gradually declined as many have now graduated. This tapering has brought utilisation down to just above 10% of the student body — in-line with pre-pandemic levels. While lower than in recent years, this figure still places the Service among the busiest in the Irish



HEI sector, remaining well above the national average and closely aligned with international norms:

Context	% of Student Body Using Services
Irish HEI average (PCHEI)	5.4%
Trinity	10.3%
International norm for 4-year universities (AUCCCD)	~11%

This utilisation rate is a positive development, enabling more timely and appropriate delivery of support to students.



⌚ Wait Times & Accessibility

Year	Avg. Wait (Assessment)	Avg. Wait (After assessment)
2020-21	9.6 days	41.8 days
2021-22	10.3 days	27.9 days
2022-23	9.6 days	24.0 days
2023-24	8.6 days	28.8 days
2024-25	4.9 days	8.5 days

Assessment wait times reduced by nearly half and follow-up counselling by 70% compared to the previous year. The average student was seen for an initial assessment **within five working days**, and — if appropriate for individual counselling — began therapy **within 8.5 working days** of assessment.

While the 1.6% drop in student body utilisation helped, this reduction is also partly attributable to the **introduction of**

same-day Drop-in ‘SNAP’ appointments, a flexible, non-crisis option available every weekday morning. Drop-in SNAPS allowed students to speak briefly with a clinician, receive initial support, and be directed toward the most appropriate resources —**with zero waiting time**.

 **126 students** accessed Drop-in SNAP appointments this year — closely mirroring the decline in demand for emergency/crisis sessions (see next section). This suggests that these drop-ins may help prevent crisis escalation by providing students with an earlier, low-barrier route into the Service, thus helping triage concerns that may otherwise develop into emergencies. This keeps crisis appointments available for those with immediate, high-risk needs.

Students suitable for ongoing counselling after a SNAP appointment were scheduled using a triage model that prioritises clinical need over first-come, first-served. Students placed on the waitlist received proactive support with minimal or no wait times, including:

- **Check-in calls** to monitor changing needs
- **Coping skills sessions** delivered by the Assistant Psychologist team
- **Drop-in group supports**
- **Computerised CBT (cCBT)** with support weekly support messages from the Clinical Team

Additionally, “**Surge Capacity**” online counselling — introduced in Semester 2 — enabled **75 students** to access up to three sessions with an external provider, further improving access during periods of high demand.

📅 Appointment Trends

⚠️ Emergency Appointments & Crisis Support

The **Emergency Appointment Clinic** is vital in supporting students experiencing crises. The clinic operates **Monday to Friday, 09:00–17:00**, offering **same-day access** to students with urgent needs. It also serves as a consultation hub for Trinity staff, family members, and peers who are concerned about a student’s wellbeing.

Emergency Appointments – 5-Year Overview

Year	Appts Attended	Individual Clients	Avg. Appts per Client
2020–21	595	413	1.4
2021–22	1,109	698	1.6
2022–23	919	605	1.5
2023–24	960	598	1.6
2024–25	836	541	1.5

Emergency appointments remained high this year but as noted above, reduced proportionate to the number of drop-in SNAPS attended. **Crisis appointments dropped by 124**, (drop-in SNAPS increased by 126 clients).

30% of emergencies were attended by students from outside the E.U. (NEU) – a disproportionate use seen across previous years. The reasons for this are complex. While many international students experience mental health issues that require urgent support, others may experience cultural barriers to seeking help before a crisis develops. The SCS intends to increase its stigma-reduction efforts with this group to improve early intervention.

👤 Individual Counselling

Year	Clients Seen	% of TCD Students	Appts	Avg. Appts per Client
2020–21	2,038	10.8%	8,528	4.2
2021–22	2,879	14.0%	11,419	4.0
2022–23	2,572	12.0%	11,201	4.4
2023–24	2,570	11.5%	11,608	4.5
2024–25	2,296	10.0%	10,614	4.6



While still operating a brief counselling service, the average number of sessions per client has shifted since 2021 towards slightly longer engagement, as clients present more complex issues that require more support.

This aligns with clients' high CCAPS-34 symptom scores (see page 22) and suggests a continued shift toward **depth over breadth** in care delivery.

❖ *Fewer students, but more intensive support: clinical needs remain high even as utilisation moves towards pre-pandemic levels.*

Group Counselling Services

Group therapy supports connection, resilience, and skill-building—offering high value for moderate- to high-need students. Groups are a core part of the service model, delivering both preventative and therapeutic benefits. The SCS portfolio includes drop-in support groups, closed therapy groups, and structured skill-building sessions. Group work is clinically effective, scalable, and reduces feelings of isolation.

Year	Clients	Group Appts	Sessions	Avg. Appts per Client
2020–21	225	1,248	282	5.5
2021–22	255	1,354	323	5.3
2022–23	279	1,502	337	5.4
2023–24	301	1,406	330	4.7
2024–25	274	1,196	271	4.3

Group counselling continues to be a valuable therapeutic option, particularly for students dealing with shared issues such as anxiety, self-criticism, or perfectionism. The modality remains an **efficient and impactful intervention**. A publicity campaign encouraging students to try group counselling is planned for 2025–26.

Two Postgraduate Support Groups were delivered, one per term, each running for eight weeks. Participation included 8 students in Term 1 and 7 students in Term 2, with strong



participation from international students in both terms. Core themes included imposter syndrome, work–life balance, loneliness, self-criticism, compassion, connection, self-care, and emotional regulation.

Students consistently valued the sense of connection and permission to 'do their best rather than be perfect.'

Forest Bathing Group

Forest Bathing (shinrin-yoku) is an open group introduced in 2023, originally for postgraduate students. The practice—rooted in Japanese preventive medicine—encourages sensory immersion in nature to reduce stress and enhance wellbeing.

Owing to its success in 2023, the group ran again in 2024–25, with weekly sessions **consistently oversubscribed**. Held in the

TCD Botanic Gardens, Dartry, students reported strong benefits in calmness, mood, and connection to nature, supported by highly positive post-session survey results.

Given its popularity and impact, the group will be extended to undergraduate students in 2025-26.

Year	cCBT Users	cCBT Sessions
2020-21	685	2,099
2021-22	506	2,540
2022-23	259	1,411
2023-24	349	1,742
2024-25	390	959

Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (cCBT)

Trinity students have access to a suite of **online CBT-based programmes** targeting low-to-moderate concerns such as depression, anxiety, stress, body image, and sleep. Each programme is supported by SCS staff who provide **weekly feedback and motivational support**.



cCBT support is an important part of the SCS stepped-care model. Although uptake has not returned to pandemic era levels, 2024-25 saw a slight increase in participation, with cCBT continuing to serve students who prefer flexible, self-paced tools, or are on waiting lists for other services.

Several factors may explain the drop in cCBT sessions attended since 2020-21: (1) the return of available in-person supports; (2) the saturation of the online mental health space with alternative supports and sources of information; and (3) a growing preference among students for shorter, more interactive sources of digital support. The SCS will continue to work with the Student Advisory Board to ensure that our digital mental health offerings are relevant for current students.

Community Consultations, Crises, and Complex Cases

In addition to direct emergency support, the SCS provided **124 hours of crisis consultations** to **254 individuals** across the Trinity community, including staff, families, and peers.

As with emergency counselling, **disproportionate number of crisis cases involve NEU students**. Although NEU students represent just over **22% of the total student population**, they accounted for **over 40% of all crisis cases** in 2024-25. This disparity raises important considerations around:

- **Transition stress and cultural adjustment**

- **Access barriers to external services**
- **Immigration and housing pressures**
- **The need for tailored outreach and case management**, in collaboration with TCD Global and other student support units



👤 Client Demographics & Equity of Access

Understanding who uses the Student Counselling Service (SCS) helps ensure services remain accessible, equitable, and responsive to the needs of a diverse student body. The following breakdowns offer insights into service use across academic levels, faculties, geographical regions, and disability registration.

🎓 Undergraduate and Postgraduate Clients

Status	No. of Clients	% of SCS Clients	% of Trinity Student Body
Undergraduate	1,729	73.2%	67.8%
Postgraduate Research	232	9.8%	9.3%
Postgraduate Taught	354	15.0%	18.3%
Other / Missing	46	2.0%	–

Undergraduate service users were proportionately slightly over-represented. Postgraduate students accessed the service at rates consistent with enrolment.

Efforts to improve **PG engagement** included staff conference presentations and the reintroduction of **in-person supervisor training** — the first such session in several years. More targeted outreach to PGT students is being explored.

🌐 Regional Demographics: EU and Non-EU Students

Status	No. of Clients	% of SCS Clients	% of Trinity Student Body
EU	1,775	75.0%	77.3%
NEU	576	25.0%	22.7%
Missing data	10	–	–

NEU students were slightly over-represented among SCS clients — a continuation of a trend seen in recent years.

These patterns underscore the **complexity of international student support needs** and highlight opportunities for **collaboration with TCD Global** and other stakeholders to enhance early intervention and holistic care.

Faculty Representation

Faculty	No. of Clients	% of SCS Clients	% of Trinity Student Body
Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	984	41.6%	40.2%
Health Sciences	380	16.1%	21.4%
STEM	608	25.7%	25.8%
Multi-Faculty	372	15.7%	12.4%
Missing data	17	–	–

Client representation across faculties largely mirrors university enrolment patterns. However, **students from Health Sciences remain under-represented**, while **multi-faculty students** are slightly over-represented. The unique scheduling and travel commitments of Health Sciences students may account for some of this. For multi-faculty students, research is required to understand their higher utilisation rates.

Disability Disclosure at Intake

Registered Disability	No. of Clients	% of SCS Clients
Mental Health	237	10.0%

Registered Disability	No. of Clients	% of SCS Clients
Specific Learning Difficulty	136	5.7%
Physical Disability	68	2.8%
Other Disabilities	86	3.6%

Students are invited to indicate their registration status with the **Trinity disAbility Service** before their first SCS appointment. Over 20% of SCS clients reported a registered condition, mostly related to mental health or specific learning difficulties. This figure excludes students whose needs were identified during counselling or those who chose not to disclose their registration status. While registrations for mental health-related conditions continue to rise, many students experiencing difficulties first present to the SCS before considering registration with the disAbility Service. SCS acts as both an initial access point and a key part of Trinity's wider wellbeing network, often identifying these needs and, where appropriate, facilitating referral to supports such as College Health and disAbility.

Clinical Load Index (CLI)

The **Clinical Load Index (CLI)** is a globally standardised metric used to understand the *effective caseload per counsellor* at a university counselling service. Developed by the Centre for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) and adopted internationally, CLI shifts the question from: "How many staff should we have?" to "What kind of experience do we want students to have?"

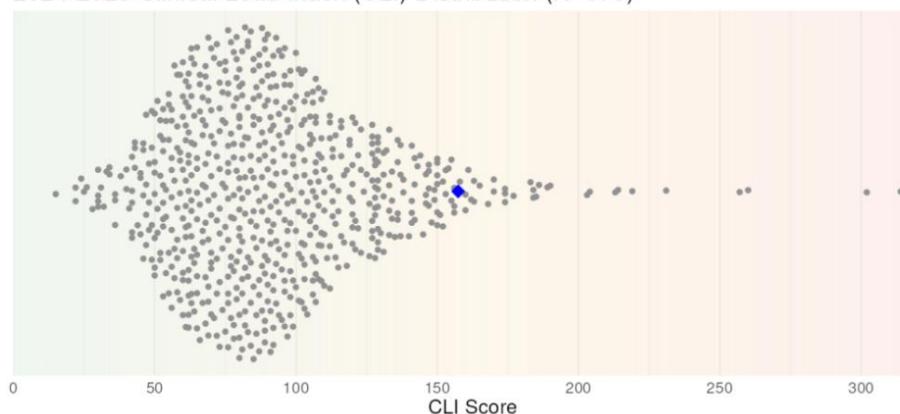
Three inputs generate the CLI score:

 Enrolled Students:	22,851
 Students Served:	2,361
 Weekly Clinical Hours:	360

 **2024-25 CLI Score: 157, ↓ Improved 29 points from 2023-24**

How We Compare Globally

2024-2025 Clinical Load Index (CLI) Distribution (N=676)



The blue dot above shows the CLI compared to 675 other HEI services. Trinity's CLI remains higher than 95% of HEIs internationally.

Why CLI Matters

- A **high CLI**, like Trinity's current score can signal an overburdened service: longer wait times, staff burnout, and lower student satisfaction.

- A *lower CLI score* typically reflects an improved balance between service demand and staff capacity, allowing for more timely and effective care, sustainable clinical practice, and manageable caseloads.

Clinical Severity: CCAPS-34 Symptom Trends

All students attending their first consultation with the Student Counselling Service (SCS) are asked to complete the **Counselling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms – 34 (CCAPS-34)**. This tool, widely used across hundreds of university counselling centres worldwide, helps assess a student's **presenting concerns and symptom severity**.

The CCAPS-34 measures a broad range of domains:

- Depression
- Generalised Anxiety
- Social Anxiety
- Academic Distress
- Eating Concerns
- Hostility
- Alcohol Use
- Distress Index (overall symptom burden)

Students rate symptoms on a **0–4 scale**, with higher scores indicating more severe difficulties.

🔍 Why CCAPS Matters

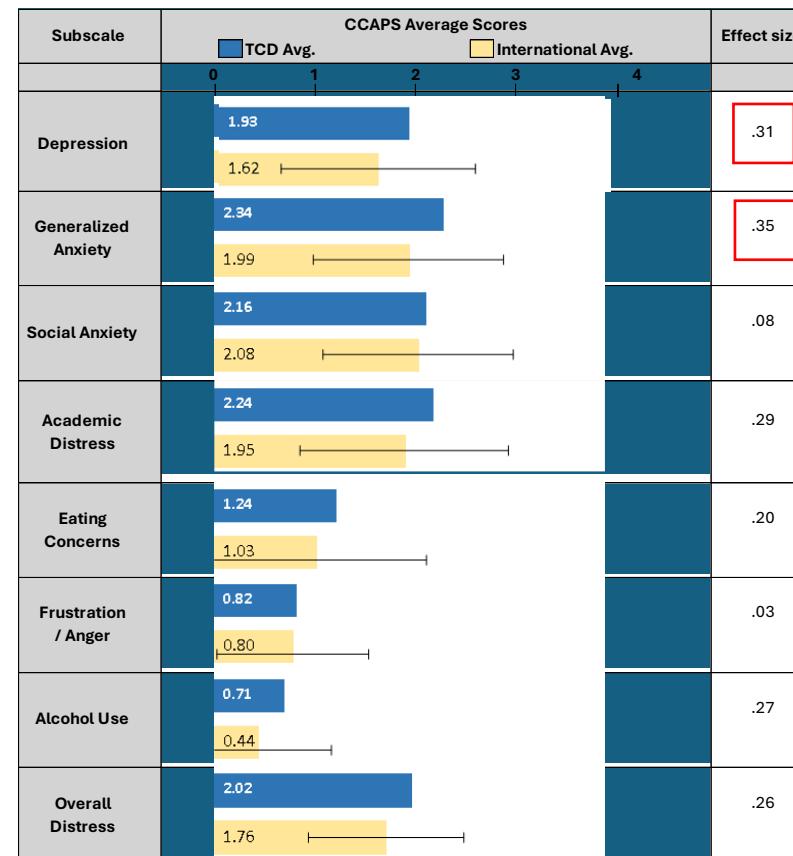
While the total number of students attending SCS has declined slightly, the **clinical complexity and severity of presenting issues remain high** — above international norms across all areas measured (see chart opposite).

For example:

- The SCS clients' Depression scores were **+0.31 of a standard deviation (SD) higher than the international average**, and their **Generalised Anxiety scores were +0.35 SD higher**.

🧠 Implications for Service Delivery:

- while slightly fewer students may be using the service overall, those seeking help need more intensive and often longer-term support.
- Greater complexity also places **increased demands on clinical supervision, risk management, and multidisciplinary collaboration**
- These dynamics reinforce the need for **adequate staffing, early triage tools** (like SNAP and emergency clinic), and a **broad menu of care options** to meet students at varying levels of need.



💬 Student Feedback & Qualitative Insights

Student experience remains a central measure of service effectiveness. All SCS clients are invited to complete an anonymous online feedback survey to monitor satisfaction, capture the impact of recent changes, and use feedback to improve services. **This student feedback loop, combined with input from the Student Advisory Board has directly informed several key changes:**

- Re-introduction of SNAP drop-in appointments
- Expansion of group and brief intervention offerings
- Enhanced triage to prioritise students with the most urgent needs

📊 Survey Response Overview (2024–25)

Metric	Value
Clients Invited	~2,361
Responses Received	285
Response Rate	12.1%
Qualitative Comments	164 respondents submitted 387 “meaning units” (MUs)



Meaning Units (MUs) are individual statements extracted from qualitative feedback, then coded and categorised thematically for analysis.



😊 Overall Sentiment

Meaning Unit Type	Description	No. Of MUs	Percent of all MUs	% Change from 2023-24
Praise	Positive experiences of the SCS, including impact on retention, mental health, and student experience	265	68.5%	+12%
Criticism	Negative feedback for the service, incl. dissatisfaction with wait times	55	15.2%	-6.2%
Service Resources	Negative comments on session limits, spacing of appts, staffing size, etc.	39	10.1%	-2.9%
Suggestion	Ideas for improvement of service processes and interventions	28	7.2%	-1.9%
Total		387	100%	

📌 Negative feedback fell to its lowest recorded level in the past 5 years — a trend that aligns with reduced delays and improved responsiveness in service delivery.

Themes in Student Comments



Common themes in positive feedback:

- Feeling heard and understood
- Professionalism and warmth of staff
- Relief at accessing support quickly
- Improved coping skills and mental wellbeing

Themes in constructive/negative feedback:

- Desire for longer-term support
- Limited session availability during peak times

Praise

"The ethnic minority group has fantastic facilitators and this group helped me out when I was feeling extremely down and alone. ... This group I believe offers a lot of benefit to Trinity."

"I appreciated the holistic nature of the service, how SCS linked in with OT, disAbility, and College Health."

"I liked how my problems were taken seriously. My SNAP appointment made me feel so relieved that I didn't have to over explain to someone why I was affected by certain things. I felt really heard and seen throughout."

“My experience with the service has been so important and meaningful ... my counselling sessions have been crucial to my overall well-being and academic studies. During the sessions I have learned so much about myself and how to cope better ... These are skills for life, and I am so grateful.”

“It is a critical support in my life.”

“I came in for several emergency sessions and then got put in counselling. It truly saved my life as someone who was suicidal. The counsellors were so lovely, and helped get me connected to other things in Trinity...”

"I only wish we could have met more often and for longer. Service is stellar, and should be prioritised at all costs."

"...helped pull me from an extremely dark place. I am forever grateful."

"Knowing that there was somebody there who cared for me, and knowing that there were always going to be people available to talk to me really helped me hang on."

"I also attend the Rainbow Group ... I have learned that I can trust people and that I have a role to play in supporting others. In a time when the political climate has been very intolerant and unsupportive ... the rainbow group has helped me feel affirmed as a worthwhile part of a community and helped me to accept myself and given me a sense of hope for my own future."

"The group sessions were actually incredibly helpful."

"I cannot express how much this experience has changed my life...The service is amazing - they are caring, thoughtful and insightful people that make so much of a difference... My advice to Trinity is to pump more and more money into this service. It is imperative that people get the opportunity to access these facilities - I would not have ever done so had it not been free of charge."

Criticism & Suggestions

"To improve, increase the number of counsellors available. It was quite hard to get appointments when the service got busy. I felt like I needed to talk to someone more than once every three weeks."

"I didn't like the limited number of sessions. I felt like I still needed help and was prematurely forced out."

"I would prefer if a SNAP appointment would not be necessary each year after attending counselling previous year."

"I do understand that it is a resource that needs to be stewarded. However, for students with more complicated needs, there should be more options available. It is hard to tell your story to someone. Building rapport takes a lot of time."

"More information should be available to everyone about how to get access to support services, as many students don't know anything about them."

"I feel the standard model is unfair and does not allow for adequate support in cases where it is needed and puts a timeline on the therapy which can result in stress and either rushing to share in a short period of time or leaving issues unaddressed."

🔗 Outreach Activities

Outreach to both students and staff forms a vital part of SCS strategy, and seeks to improve mental health literacy, reduce stigma, educate on available support pathways, and teach skills for referring students in-need. In addition to routine staff trainings, staff outreach this year included trainings for Health Sciences Practice Educators in hospital placement sites, the TAP team, and TCPID.



One of the Service's outreach table events at TBSI (left), and Watching "Inside Out" on Movie Night (above)

The following table shows the reach of Outreach work since 2020.

👉 Outreach & Training, 2020–2025

Year	Preventative Training Attendances	Embedded Dept. MH Training Attendances	SAB Members	Total Outreach Student Contacts	Trinity Staff Trained
2020–21	1,205	625	20	1,850	275
2021–22	1,197	841	21	2,059	300
2022–23	1,501	701	5	2,207	324
2023–24	1,268	803	7	2,078	384
2024–25	1,639	347	18	2,004	376

SCS provides a range of supports to TCD staff as part of a **whole-campus approach** to student wellbeing. Staff across the university regularly encounter students in difficulty, and SCS equips them with the confidence and skills to respond appropriately.

👉 Supervisor Training

In collaboration with the **Postgraduate Advisory Service (PAS)**, SCS delivered its first **in-person Supervisor Training** session following the success of previous online formats. The session focused on **self-care for supervisors**, practical approaches to **supporting students in distress**, and acknowledging the complexities of the supervisory role. It also strengthened

ongoing collaboration between **SCS and PAS** to provide continued consultation and support.

TCD Staff Trainings, Consultations & De-briefs

In partnership with **HR**, SCS delivered the *Recognising and Responding to Students in Distress* training series throughout the year. Open to all staff, these sessions focus on identifying students who may be struggling, offering initial support, and understanding referral pathways.

SCS also delivered **tailored training** to schools and units across the university, including:

- The Lir
- Trinity Hall (Assistant Wardens & JCR)
- TCD Security
- Senior Tutor's Office
- Trinity Business School
- Careers Service
- TCD Global
- The Library
- Clinical Placement Coordinators

In addition, SCS was invited to deliver this training externally, providing three sessions to the National College of Ireland (NCI).

Staff De-briefs & Reflexive Practice

SCS provides **staff de-briefs** following crisis incidents, delivered either one-to-one or in groups depending on need. This year, we also piloted a **Reflexive Practice Group** with a College department, offering structured space for staff to reflect on challenges, workload pressures, and the changing student environment.

These reflective spaces strengthen staff wellbeing, reduce burnout risk, and enhance the wider capacity of the College community to support students. **22 sessions** were delivered, including de-brief, reflexive practice, and training sessions.

Impact on Student Retention and Net Benefit to Trinity

To measure the role of counselling in helping students stay in college, all clients are asked the feedback question:

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

Response options:

- N/A (not an issue for me)
- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = To a limited extent
- 3 = One of many factors
- 4 = An important factor
- 5 = The most significant factor

After excluding students who withdrew from their course and those in their final year, 285 students provided valid responses. Of these:

- 110 students (39%) rated counselling as either “an important factor” or “the most significant factor” (4 or 5).
- 62 students (22%) rated counselling as “one of many factors” (3).

Using a conservative estimate of €8,000 per student in income to Trinity (student contribution plus HEA funding – though some students generate significantly higher income), clear financial benefits are seen:

Impact Rating	Number of Students	Estimated Value per Student	Potential Net Benefit
4 or 5 (important/significant factor)	110	€8,000	€880,000
3 (one of many factors)	62	€8,000	€496,000
Total potential impact	172	—	€1,376,000

At minimum, counselling helps with a **direct retention benefit of €880,000**. When including students who reported counselling as one of several contributing factors, the potential impact rises to **over €1.3 million** in protected income for the university.

These figures underline that, alongside the broader academic

and wellbeing benefits to the student community, investment in the SCS can also deliver significant financial benefits.

◆ Other Highlights

❑ CPD for SCS Staff

SCS fosters a culture of ongoing learning and reflective practice, supporting staff to expand their expertise through guest speakers, workshops, conferences, and internal or external training aligned with professional accreditation requirements. Over the past year, team members attended multiple national and international conferences — including **PCHEI, IHPCC, AMOSSHE, SAI, and ALDinHE** — with SCS represented on several boards. Staff also participated in external training across psychotherapy, psychology, student learning, leadership, and fundraising.

SCS co-facilitates monthly shared CPD sessions with College Health and the disAbility Service and delivers regular in-house CPD events to ensure broad staff access. Rising conference and membership costs continue to challenge CPD provision, though the value to service quality remains significant.

Plans for 2025–26 include expanding in-house CPD workshops, offering more hybrid sessions, and broadening topics to meet the evolving needs of staff and students.

“Greening the grey”— The Biohaven. Inspired by a vision of reclaiming concrete spaces and transforming them into vibrant, living ecosystems, one of the SCS team initiated the BioHaven project. This transformed space in the parking lot behind 7-9 S. Leinster St. into a shared area for staff and students to relax and enjoy a deeper connection to nature in an urban space. The Biohaven was made possible through partnership with SCS/SLD/S2S, The School of Natural Sciences, Trinity Global, The Trinity Botanic Garden Team, Estates & Facilities, The Biodiversity Office, and the School of Computer Science & Statistics. Funding was generously provided through the Director of Student Services.



The “Grey:” before the Biohaven Project.

The “Green:” the Biohaven launch party.



Review-of-Progress Model

SCS introduced a **‘3 at a time’ model**, assessing client progress after three sessions and extending counselling in further blocks of three based on clinical need. This approach was adopted and publicised to the student body to emphasise **equity of access**, countering misconceptions of a fixed session limit and ensuring support is allocated fairly and responsively.

Counselling Plans for 2025-26

Looking ahead, the Student Counselling Service (SCS) has identified strategic priorities to strengthen student engagement, expand therapeutic options, and align with Trinity’s institutional goals.

Area

Communication & Awareness

Group Skills Development

Planned Action

Launch a targeted information campaign on counselling groups and general help-seeking. This will address feedback and increase participation.

Collaborate with colleagues across Trinity to design and deliver new *Emotion Regulation Skills Group* trainings

Area	Planned Action
Student Belonging	Develop initiatives that foster a stronger sense of belonging and community connection, in alignment with the goals of the Trinity Strategic Plan 2025–2030 .
External Collaboration	Establish formal links with external mental health services through the newly created Case Manager roles in Student Services, ensuring coordinated and responsive care pathways for students requiring multi-agency support.

❖ *These priorities emphasise communication, collaboration, and connection — strengthening the SCS's role in promoting student wellbeing across the university and beyond.*

Administration

The Administration Team is vital to ensuring the efficiency and broad reach of all services, providing central admin support and expertise in the management of human resources, finances, compliance, systems, and facilities for the Services. The team is also responsible for counselling appointment and waitlist management, including cover of the Service's email, phone lines and reception.



Key Admin Metrics

- Scheduled over **836** same-day emergency appointments.
- Filled approx. **1,431** cancelled/rescheduled counselling appointments with other clients to ensure efficient use of counsellor time.
- Sent over **15,299** appointment reminders via the Titanium scheduling system.
- Supported in the scheduling of approx. **12,002** in person, zoom and telephone appointments and processed approx. **2,253** SNAP bookings including approx 126 Drop-in SNAPS.

We continue to explore ways to automate more of these activities.

Key Achievements

Student Feedback Word Cloud



- Extensive review and updating of staff induction.
- Migration of SCS website to Terminal 4 platform.
- Review and updating of SCS email archiving and deletion procedure and policy.
- Management of 7 separate recruitment competitions, as well as subsequent on-boarding and induction. Remote/on-site recruitment and induction of sessional workers, volunteers, and trainees, including a focus on Health & Safety assessment and training for blended working.
- Management of limited space resources to ensure maximum efficiency in service delivery.

- Development of SLAs with external service providers to increase surge capacity at peak times.
- Development and management of all related referral and reporting processes.
- Review and updating of online appointment scheduling within Titanium.
- Worked in partnership with the Data Protection Office and ITS to improve IT security and GDPR compliance.

The Administration Team would like to thank our colleagues in Human Resources, IT Services and Estates & Facilities, who help us to maintain our high level of service to students.

Student Advisory Board

The Student Advisory Board (SAB) is a student/staff partnership, designed to keep the student perspective central to the activities of the Student Counselling Service, Student Learning Development and Student 2 Student (SCS/SLD/S2S). It is a voluntary board, coordinated by the Service's Strategic Development Manager and comprised of student volunteers, representatives from student bodies across the university, and staff from SCS, SLD and S2S.

Following a significant recruitment and training programme, a strengthened SCS Student Advisory Board, reflecting the diversity of the Trinity student body, was established. The SAB met regularly throughout the year, engaging with SCS, SLD, and

S2S to align services with student needs. Several active sub-committees, which may include SAB members and others from across the University community, were formed to address key student needs, including:

- Off-campus and placement students
- Research
- Service Renaming
- Social Media
- Student spaces

SAB members contributed valuable feedback on initiatives such as the SCS group programme, the development of the new Myndgard mental health app, and the development of the new SCS/SLS/S2S strategic plan. Training resources were updated, social-media engagement and renaming projects were initiated, and close collaboration with the Student's Union and other campus partners ensured effective representation of the student voice. The SAB continued its work over the summer break and is looking forward to a productive 2025-26 ahead!

Staffing & Budget

Staffing

Area	FTE
Admin Team	5.09
Assistant Psychologists¹	2.41
Counsellors²	13.73
Director	1.00
S2S³	3.22
Sessional Counsellors⁴	3.04
SLD⁵	2.50
Total	30.99

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

1. One AP post was funded by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative (MHI).
2. Includes 3 x MHI-funded posts totalling 2.04 FTE in the reporting period.
3. Includes 1 x S2S EO (1 FTE) funded by Trinity Development and Alumni (TDA) and 1 x S2S intern (0.23 FTE) funded by MHI funding during the reporting period.
4. Includes sessional counsellors funded in part by the MHI (during January and February 2025 only).

5. Includes 5 posts amounting to 2.5 FTE in the reporting period. One post totalling 0.6 FTE was MHI-funded.

Non-Pay costs

- Includes €11,454 for an interactive screen for the Student 2 Student space in House 47 which was externally funded.

 **Budget 2024-25**

Type	Amount
Income	€437,302
Pay Costs	€ 2,676,079
Non-Pay Costs	€ 202,414

The financial year runs 1st Oct to 30th Sept

Income:

- Includes € 43,576.87 of TDA funding, which financed an S2S EO from Oct 2024-Sep 2025.
- Includes €359,509 from the Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative for AY 2024-25
- Includes €3,000 from Trinity INC and the TCD EDI Office to fund the Ethnic Minorities Support Group, 2024-25.

Pay costs:

- Includes €343,852 in MHI-funded posts as follows: 1 x AP post (0.58 FTE in this reporting period), 3 x Counselling posts totalling 2.04 FTE, 1 x SLD post (0.6 FTE in the reporting period) and 1 x S2S intern for October 2024 and June to September 2025.



Contact Information

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