



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Update from the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities

School of Education, Trinity College Dublin

Summer 2021



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Dear Partners,

I hope that you are all well and that you are looking forward to taking a well-deserved break over the Summer. This has been such a challenging year for everyone and we are incredibly grateful for your ongoing support. Thanks to you, our students have continued to benefit from positive and valuable engagement with you, through virtual work placements, virtual internships and virtual workshops. While this has been different for everyone, it has been hugely successful.

Our students have completed last year entirely online and are so hopefully of a return to campus learning in September. We interviewed our 1st year students about their first year in Trinity College. One of the questions we asked them was about what they are most looking forward to when they eventually get to come on campus. Here are a couple of standout quotes:

“Having lunch in the Buttery. Learning how to use the bus. Exploring the buildings. Meeting everyone. Feeling like being like a proper student.”

“I can't wait to meet my classmates in person and hang out with them. I'm also excited to attend my class in a building instead of doing it online.”

We are so happy to welcome 3 new TCPID Business Partners to our network over the past few months. A huge thank you to Applegreen, Go Ahead Ireland and RSA Insurance / 123.ie for joining us as partners. We are really looking forward to working with you all.

I look forward to meeting you all again in person as soon as we possibly can. In the words of one of our students, I am looking forward to eventually “saying farewell to Zoom!”

Thank you as always for your support,

TCPID Pathways Coordinator - Email: devittma@tcd.ie / Tel: 087-6664548

Please follow all our latest news on our website at www.tcd.ie/tcpid as well as on Facebook [@InclusionTCD](https://www.facebook.com/InclusionTCD), Twitter [@IDTCD](https://twitter.com/IDTCD) Instagram [inclusiontcd](https://www.instagram.com/inclusiontcd) as well as on LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/school/inclusiontcd



1st Year Students

Our 1st year students completed their entire academic year online. We are all hopeful that we will be able to return to campus in September but in the meantime, we asked the students to tell us about their experience of Trinity College life so far.

Your first year in Trinity College Dublin

1) Why did you decide to apply to study in Trinity College?

I applied to study in Trinity College because it was a dream as child to go there and I found the course interesting.

I decided to study in Trinity College to challenge myself, to experience what college is like, meet new people and to get a job.

The reason why I decided to apply, because it'll help me learn more subjects that I haven't learnt before. It'll also make me become busier and smarter. I also like to meet some new people such as staff or classmates.

To make new friends and try out something new.

I decided to apply to study in Trinity College because I wanted to meet new people, make new friends and I wanted to do the Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice course so I put a lot

of effort into my interview and application and I'm very happy and grateful for getting accepted into Trinity College.

I decided to study at Trinity College for a better future.

I decided to apply because it is at a level that I would understand and the classes looked very interesting.

It is a very famous college and my dad went there. I love learning new things so I thought that College might be good for me.

To learn new things/ expand my knowledge. Make friends. Be part of Trinity. To get further qualification. To get work placement and an opportunity for permanent employment.





2) What have you enjoyed the most about your first year as a student in Trinity?

I enjoyed meeting new people and learning new things.

Doing different modules and learning new things. E.g., Sign Language, Poetry.

I did enjoy talking to the classmates. I liked talking to them in the breakout rooms. We had great chats talking about our personal lives at home during the lockdown.

I enjoyed all my modules I had. I love them all. Especially for Poetry and Expressive Arts. Most of all I really enjoyed learning and listening to my lecturers on Zoom. They were terrific. I miss them. I love being part of the Musical Theatre Society TMT I meant to say. I enjoyed my first year as a first-year student.

What I've enjoyed the most about my 1st year as a student in Trinity was getting to know my classmates and becoming friends with them because I enjoy meeting new people, getting to know more about them and meeting up with them.

What I enjoyed was the teaching. It has made an impact in my life and given me a better understanding of things.

What I enjoyed the most was meeting everyone for the first time and doing the OT classes, Poetry, Art and Human Rights.

I love doing projects and presenting them. My favourite was Roger Sperry and split-brain theory.

I enjoyed meeting new people, learning new things and expanding my knowledge on specific topics. The structure of the course, e. g timetables/deadlines which allowed me to establish a routine. I enjoyed feeling special due to the support from the college, i e getting a laptop, printer and headset. I liked looking at things differently, e. g paintings and poetry – meaning behind a painting and a poem. I enjoyed developing my technical skills on PowerPoint. I also liked the opportunity to learn from the different business partners.





3) How was your experience of doing all your classes online?

My experience online doing classes was good.

Doing online classes was ok, sometimes got tired staring at a screen all day.

I found it okay at the beginning, but then as time went on, it became a bit annoying. But I was glad I got to do something for the year, instead of doing nothing at home. I also learnt some fascinating things I haven't discovered before.

I enjoyed my classes online but it's hard because of the internet connection.

It was a good experience because it's a new way of learning and you are at home as opposed to being on campus and I learned how to attend meetings via Zoom and Microsoft Teams and how to do college work on Word, PowerPoint, Google Docs and Jamboard.

Wow some days felt like hell, but some days were good.

My experience was that I found all the classes to be interesting, but I think the classes would have been better if they were on campus because that way, I could see everyone face to face.

It was a bit hard because it was very tiring on a computer all day in my room. It was hard to concentrate. I haven't met anyone in person yet so it's hard to know people. One good thing was not travelling home late and having big breakfasts.

The supports provided, e. g laptop, printer, headset and handbook all helped my learning experience. Utilising Zoom capabilities to support my learning, e. g breakout rooms and chat box. I very much missed the experience of on campus life and the benefits of casual conversation with other students/college staff. I found it lonely at times but was lucky to have family in the house.





4) What was your favourite subject this year and why?

My favourite subject was Expressive Arts because I love drama and did it for 2 years.

My favourite Subject was Expressive Arts. It was my favourite subject because it was challenging for me, it got me out of my comfort zone, and it improve my confidence.

I liked the Irish Sign Language subject. It was something that I haven't done before at my old schools. I also liked discussing the Emergency and Disaster Management.

My favourite subject is Poetry because I write poems and I have no idea how many I wrote. I also love Expressive Arts because I love drama and acting.

My favourite subjects this year were Human Rights and Self Managing Services because I love learning about the difference in rights between white and black people and disabled and non-disabled people and learning about what services are available e.g. health service, advocacy and employment.

Emergency and Disaster Management. I like this subject because it taught me a lot of things that I didn't know happen.

My favourite subjects were Expressive Arts and that's because I really enjoy acting and poetry and that is because I really enjoyed learning about all the different poets, and I really enjoyed all the different poems as well.

Emergency and Disaster Management because it was fun and it is Interesting.

Application of numbers was my favourite because the information was presented in a clear format and was easy to understand. We also practiced the theory in multiple ways and a very helpful support process was put in place for our final presentation.





5) Is there anything that you found particularly difficult?

I found nothing difficult.

I found sign language difficult because of the coordination and because it was online.

I found it difficult to find the homework on my email. I also found it difficult to listen to what the lecture is saying due the screen fuzzing.

I didn't find anything difficult in my first year.

The assignments but had to do them to get good results and to work harder and to do well in the future.

Yeah, I found the Irish sign language to be very difficult.

Answering questions about my presentations because I always forget what I had to say.

Learning and making friends through Zoom. The technical side of Zoom, e. g where signal drops and call disconnected. On occasion, incorrect Zoom links sent causing delayed starts. It can be distracting when students are on other devices during a lecture.





6) What are you most looking forward to doing when you get to be back on campus in Trinity?

When I go on campus I'm looking forward to meeting everyone in person and doing new classes and learning new things.

I am looking forward to going for lunch with my classmates, experience what college campus is like.

I can't wait to meet my classmates in person and hang out with them. I'm also excited to attend my class in a building instead of doing it online.

Seeing my friends in person and having fun with them. I am looking forward to being on campus in Trinity but I haven't been there and I am really excited.

Meeting my new lecturers and classmates in person as opposed to online, doing work on campus and knowing my way around campus.

Getting back to the class setting and enjoying being in Trinity.

I really looking forward to seeing everything and learning where everything is on campus and seeing everyone on campus.

Having lunch in the Buttery. Learning how to use the bus. Exploring the buildings. Meeting everyone. Feeling like being like a proper student.

Having the 'casual conversation' with staff/students. Campus tour. Being in lecture room. Using the facilities of Trinity. Having my lunch on campus. Being a member of the societies. Enjoying college life. Seeing lecturers and staff face to face. Saying farewell to Zoom!





2nd Year Students

Our 2nd year students were lucky enough to be able to complete their work placements in an online format this year. We are incredibly grateful to the 7 business partners who generously offered to accommodate a placement. It was a different experience for everyone but a hugely positive one. All of our students developed their communication skills, their technical skills and their confidence over the 8 Fridays! A huge thank you to all the wonderful mentors who were so supportive.

Here are some messages for you from the students



Dear Rod, thank you for letting me work with such a great team in Bank of Ireland. I learnt a lot of new skills. I enjoyed doing the research work and having the social chats with you, Brian and Colm.



Dear Emer, thank you for taking me on in FBD I really appreciate everything you and the team did for me. I really enjoyed doing the type of work I did every Friday and I was excited to be in FBD every Friday. Cian

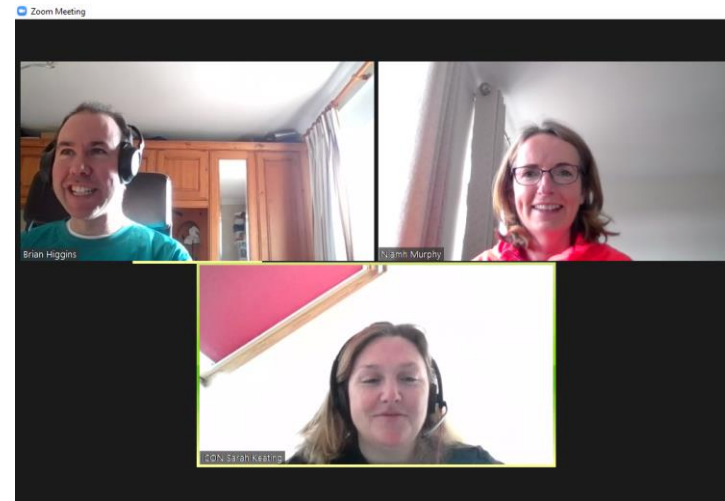


GECAS

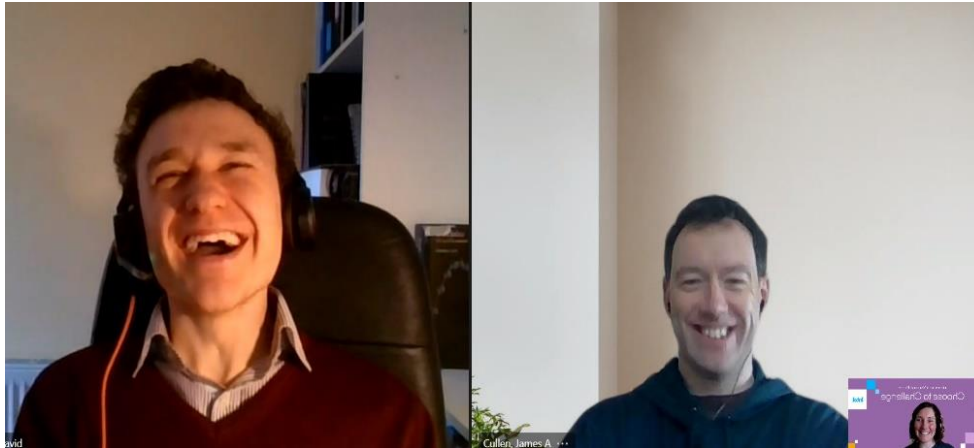
Hi Rebecca, thank you for all your hard work. You were very kind to me. I enjoyed all our sessions and I learnt a lot from you. I hope I get to meet you at the office someday. I will wear a nice outfit! Ciara



Dear Niamh and Sarah, I would like to thank you both for all your help and support while on my work placement. You gave me the opportunity to learn about the laboratory work and research. Brian



TCPID student Brian Higgins with Niamh Murphy and Sarah Keating from ICON



TCPID student David Banfield with James Cullen and Ann-Marie Brooks from Intel



Gníomhaireacht Bainistíochta an Chisteáin Náisiúnta
National Treasury Management Agency

I would like to thank my mentor Laura very much for being so helpful during my placement. Laura was very friendly and made me very welcome. If I had a question, I would ask Laura. Anytime I have a question for Laura I would text Laura on WhatsApp and Laura would reply to me this is called contacting or communicating. I hope to meet up with some of the people I met on zoom in person to go out to have tea or food after covid is gone. Dúalta



Hi Ann-Marie, thank you so much for helping me with my work-placement. I thought that it was really good. I learned new things like Ergonomics, data analysis and Excel. I enjoyed meeting all the other staff. It was a great experience. You were a very good mentor. David



Hi Aisling, how are you thank you for all your help and support. I learnt a lot about strawberries and I am getting used to bees thank you everyone at Keelings for the thank you gift of a keyring and pen and chocolates. Noelle



TCPID student Dúalta Callan with Laura Finnegan and David O'Doherty from the NTMA

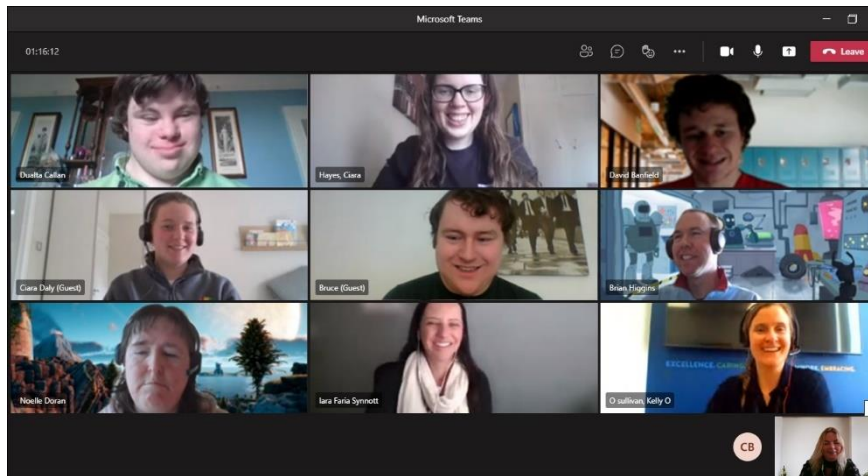


Business Partner Workshops

As most of you know, we run a series of business partner workshops in May each year. Due to the COVID restrictions this year the workshops were held online. Over a 3 week period, we ran a total of 20 workshops, some as part of a series over the 3 weeks and some individual workshop sessions.

We are incredibly grateful to all the business partners who took the time to design and deliver some fabulous workshops for us. Thank you to everyone in Abbott Ireland, EY, GECAS, Novartis, Optum Ireland, Smurfit Kappa, Squarespace and UDG Healthcare for all the fun, learning and laughter over those amazing 3 weeks!

Abbott Ireland



Abbott Ireland workshop

“I really enjoyed learning about health, food and meditating.”

“Ciara, thanks for the workshop I have learned a lot for three weeks and it will help me for my future and thank you for all your help.”

“Thanks for the great workshops. I learned so much about how to stay healthy.”

EY



EY workshop

“Thanks Brenda, Colin and Seán! I have learnt a lot about your company and how to set up bank accounts and manage my money and what to do in a job. Thanks for all you time you gave us.”

“I would like to thank you for all your help. I enjoyed learning about how to budget.”

“I really enjoyed learning about tax and budgeting in EY for the three weeks and how to be professional in the workplace.”



GECAS



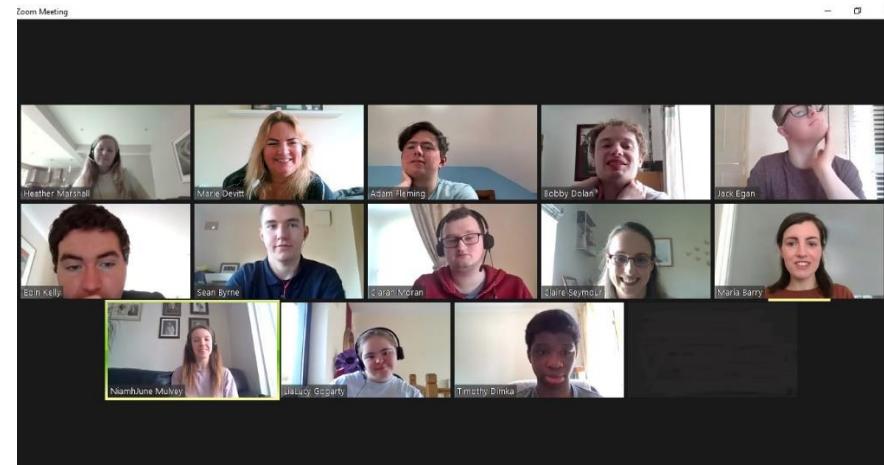
GECAS workshop

“Dear Rebecca, thank you for three amazing workshops. I really enjoyed learning about GECAS.”

“Thank you very much for 3 weeks of working in workshops. I learned a lot of things that will help me when I get a job. My favourite thing was a survey that we made into Excel and then a graph. It is fun to meet you all.”

Dear Rebecca, I want to say a big thank you to you for taking your time to teach us. It meant a lot. Thank you so much.”

Novartis



Novartis workshop

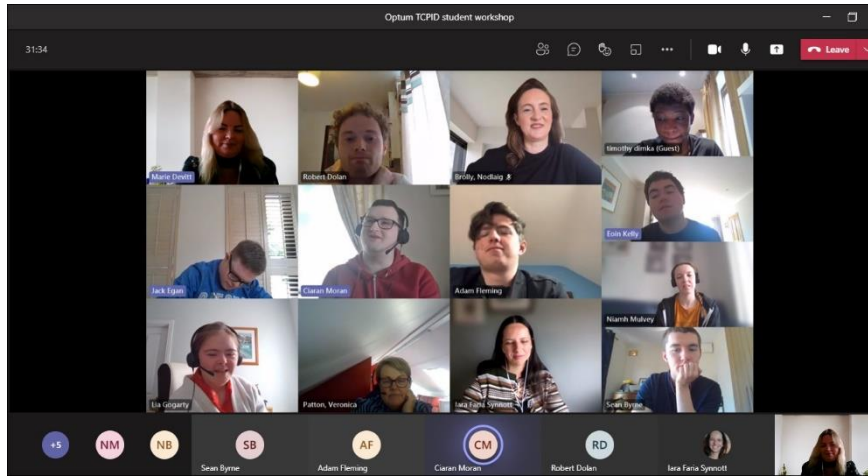
“Dear Claire and Maria, I really enjoyed learning about Novartis and about all the work that you do. I liked learning that sometimes medicine can cure more than one disease.”

“I loved learning about how much it costs to develop medicines and how long it takes for them to get to be approved.”

“I learnt so much from this workshop. I really enjoyed it!”



Optum Ireland



Optum Ireland workshop

“Dear Nodlaig, thank you for three amazing workshops. I really enjoyed learning about Optum Ireland. Thank you so much for the gift.”

“Thanks so much, Nodlaig for the past three weeks, and thanks for the goodies I loved learning about Optum Ireland.”

“Thank you very much for teaching me all about your company I loved hearing about Integrity and compassion. I think that Optum are a fun company to work for. Thank you very much for my lovely goody bag. I will use my notebook and my teacup for college next year.”

Smurfit Kappa



Smurfit Kappa workshop

“Hi Elaine and Stefano thank you for the gift of the rocket you gave to me. I built it all by myself. Thanks for the workshop. I have learned a lot for three weeks and for my future and thank you for all of your help.”

“Thank you so much Elaine and Stefano. I really enjoyed your workshops. You helped me to understand my skills. I will remember all the great information.”

“Dear Elaine and Stefano, I really enjoyed learning about how to prepare for an interview and to be careful on social media. I also enjoyed learning about skills because it is very important.”



Squarespace



Squarespace workshop

“It was great to learn all about designing websites. It was all new to me. I wanted to say Thank you very much for everything to all of you. I had a great 3 weeks.”

“I want to thank you Squarespace for all your hard work in these 3 weeks of online learning. We appreciate you and thank you for the wonderful hoodie. It's the best gift I have received since Covid. A big thank you.”

“Squarespace, what an amazing 3 weeks – the workshops were the highlight of my week. Thank you so much for the gifts which I will treasure.”

UDG Healthcare



UDG Healthcare workshop

“To the staff of the UDG Healthcare I would like to thank you for the wonderful fleece top you gave me is was a lovely gift and I would like to thank you for the treasure hunt I had a lovely time spending my time with you.”

“I am very grateful for the fleece top that you sent to me. I really enjoyed doing the treasure hunt it was good fun working in teams. I really enjoyed listening to Lucy’s talk about preparing for interviews, it was really interesting and I learned a lot.”

“Dear Paula, I would like to thank you for organising the treasure hunt. It was very enjoyable, and it was great to be part of a team. I would also like to thank you for the fleece top.”



Thank you to the Rory McDonagh Trust

At the beginning of the new academic year in September 2020, the Rory McDonagh Trust generously donated new Dell laptops for every student in the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities. These laptops allowed each student to be able to participate fully online during a time when all students were forced to attend their lectures remotely. Having their own individual laptop had a hugely positive impact on the students and on their families. It has allowed the students to stay connected to their classmates and to Trinity College.

We recorded a video with our students who wanted to personally thank the Rory McDonagh Trust for this incredibly generous and impactful gift:

You can watch the video on our website at the following link: <https://www.tcd.ie/tcpid/news/thank-you-rory-mcdonagh-trust.php>

A huge thank you once again to **Sam Whelan-Curtin** who put this video together for us. Sam has worked with us many times and his videos are always incredibly special. For more information about Sam's work, go to www.samwhelancurtin.com/

Here are some of the messages from the students describing how the laptops helped them with their studies:



The laptop helped me to participate in class and doing assignments.
Ciarán, 1st year student

It helped me get to do my homework from my email, it helped me know when the zoom meeting is happening and how to use it. It also helped get me through the pandemic with accessing work.
Eoin, 1st year student



*I was able to go on zoom. I could change my bedroom into an office. I had my privacy. I could organise my assignments and keep my notes and slides. I didn't have to share with my brother. **Jack, 1st year student***

*It did help me with my studies because it was handy to save documents. It was easy to find files in file explorer. It's great to do my modules on zoom and working on my assignments. **Lia, 1st year student***

*It helped with my studies because I didn't have to attend classes or do college work on my phone or my sister's laptop and myself and my classmates weren't and still aren't allowed on campus so I'm very grateful that myself and my classmates were given a laptop and that we were/areable to attend online classes and do college work from home. **Sean, 1st year student***

*Getting the laptop encouraged me to do well in college, **Timothy, 1st year student***

**“Now I can be independent
which is a great feeling”**

Setting up the laptop was very efficient.

Getting the laptop allowed access to great software:

- Google – Search, Gmail, Calendar, Drive
- Office – Word, PowerPoint
- Zoom/Microsoft Teams

Allowed me to organise course materials, for example class slides, presentations & timetables.

Without the laptop, I would not have been able to produce the course material to the standard required.

*It helped me improve my technical skills. **Sophie, 1st year student***



*I have learned so much after getting the laptop due to the fact that it made everything so much easier since my last laptop is old and it takes some time to load, update and turn on but this one does not. **Bobby, 1st year student***

*Getting a new laptop in September really help me be organized for college I have somewhere that I could have all my assignments and somewhere I could do my zoom's from. **Niamh, 1st year student***

*It was a nice surprise and my Dad got my old laptop. **Dúalta, 2nd year student***

*It really helped me with all my college work as my old laptop wasn't working and it was lighter than my old laptop and I am thankful. **Noelle, 2nd year student***

*I never had my own laptop before and now I don't have to share a laptop with anybody else. I could organise my assignments and keep all my notes and slides. It's easy to carry everywhere. **David, 2nd year student***

I was so happy and grateful to receive this nice laptop back in September. It definitely helped me to work hard on all my assignments and achieve good grades in my exams. It was brilliant

*to be able to use Zoom and do all my University lectures online. It was lovely to see everyone every day and keep in contact. **Cian, 2nd year student***

*When doing my college work the laptops helped me with my assessments and the classes when using Zoom. **Brian, 2nd year student***

*I was able to work on my own computer. I did not have to share with my brother. **Ciara, 2nd year student***

**“I could not have done
without it”**



Here is a compilation of messages from the students:



Thank you so much for your generous gift. This gift has helped me to participate in college, and to be able to do my college classes. I don't know what I would have done without this generous gift.

Ciarán, 1st year student

I would like to thank you and your trust for sending me one of your computers as it has helped do class and study during the lockdown. I also thank you for helping me and my classmates. During the lockdown we were not able to do the class in person and your computers helped us to do the work and complete the school year, that is a special thanks again for helping me. You are a great trust fund group. **Eoin, 1st year student**

I just want to say thank you so much for being so generous and giving me my very own laptop for doing my work for Trinity College. I could not have done without it. I love my independence and being able to be organised. It is a fantastic laptop. I am feeling lucky and grateful. **Jack, 1st year student**

Thank you to the Rory McDonagh Trust for the laptops. I really enjoyed working on my studies. It's great to attend lecturers on zoom and I love learning new things. I really love my laptop and having a great time learning in my lectures. **Lia, 1st year student**

I would like to thank you for sending me a laptop to do my online classes and college work. The laptop has really helped me because myself and my classmates aren't allowed on campus and having the laptop has made things so much easier for myself and my classmates so thank you. **Sean, 1st year student**

Thank you very much for your generous donation of a laptop. It has made a huge difference to me in my first year. Without the laptop, I would not have been able to produce the course material to the standard required. It was a great help to all students and lecturers/staff to stay connected during challenging Covid times. A BIG thank you for your generosity. **Sophie, 1st year student**

I want to say a big thank you to Rory McDonagh for the laptops. **Timothy, 1st year student**



*I have to say thank you so much for sending me the laptop. It has made everything so much easier and I have to say I have really enjoyed my first year of my course but I'm really hoping that I will be in the college next year. **Bobby, 1st year student***

*Thank you so much for the laptops it really helped me get organized for college and have everything I needed in one place, so I just wanted to say thank you again. **Niamh, 1st year student***

*I just want to say thank you very much for the laptop this year it really helped me with my studies and classwork I was able to put the links into Google Calendar and access the links easier and I was able to type all of my assignments and it was really helpful during the year and it was easy to access zoom, Google Docs, Jamboard and Google Drive so I just want to say thank you again. **Adam, 1st year student***

*Thank you to Rory's family for the laptop. It was a really nice thing to receive and my family were amazed. **Dúalta, 2nd year student***

*I am delighted with the Laptop from the Rory Mc Donagh Trust and feel sad for the family. They must be so sad but are still thinking of others. **Bruce, 2nd year student***

*Thank you very much for your generosity I really appreciate your kindness in this thoughtful gift. **Noelle, 2nd year student***

*I just want to say thank you so much to The Rory McDonagh Trust who have been so generous to provide me with my very own laptop. It has been so good for doing my work for Trinity College. Now I can be independent which is a great feeling. I really love my laptop and I am so lucky that The Rory McDonagh Trust gave this to me. **David, 2nd year student***

*Dear Rory McDonagh Trust, I would like to thank you most sincerely for providing me with this brilliant laptop. It has helped me so much this year and without it I would not have been able to achieve good grades in my exams. My family and I are very grateful to you for your generosity. **Cian, 2nd year student***

*My name is Brian Higgins and I am a student representative. I would like to thank The Rory McDonagh Trust for the gift of the laptops to students on the ASIAP course. **Brian, 2nd year student***

*Thank you for my laptop. It's great to have my own laptop. I got a nice cover for it for my birthday. **Ciara, 2nd year student***



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

Graduate Internships

Thank you to all of our business partners who provided graduate internships over the past few months. Due to the ongoing restrictions, all of the internships had to take place remotely. These internships have been absolutely crucial to helping our graduates to continue to develop their skills and their confidence and to stay connected.

The companies provided a work laptop and all necessary equipment for each graduate. They also provided all necessary training and support on an ongoing basis.

A huge thank you to each of the fantastic teams and mentors in:



A&L Goodbody



Some of the internships are still ongoing, while a few have finished. We will be looking for further internship in September and October, so if you feel that you might be in a position to find a suitable role for one of our amazing graduates, please let us know. We hope to be able to have some onsite internships soon or perhaps a blended format for a while.



TCPID Meeting with Government Ministers

On May 27th 2021, the TCPID met with **Minister Simon Harris** and **Minister Josepha Madigan** in Trinity College Dublin. Both Ministers were keen to learn about our programme with a view to seeing how similar programmes could be replicated around the country.

Two of our graduates, Stephen Ryan and Sadbh Feehan, spoke about their experience as students in Trinity and about their employment journey since leaving college. Stephen is currently employed as an Associate in the Tax team in **EY** and Sadbh is currently working in **A&L Goodbody** as part of the TCPID graduate internship programme.

We look forward to future discussions with Government to hopefully develop this further.



Minister Simon Harris, Stephen Ryan, Minister Josepha Madigan, Sadbh Feehan and the Provost of Trinity College Dublin, Dr. Patrick Prendergast



Minister Simon Harris with TCPID graduate Stephen Ryan



Minister Simon Harris, Minister Josepha Madigan, Dr. Patrick Prendergast, Stephen Ryan and Sadbh Feehan



Permanent Roles

We are very proud to let you know that another of our graduates received a permanent contract in 2021.

Niamh Biddulph – An Post



Niamh Biddulph on her graduation day in Trinity College Dublin in January 2019

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your background?

I am a 24-year-old woman with autism and an intellectual disability. I also suffer from anxiety and depression, which I'm managing well now. I studied the Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice course in Trinity

College from 2016 to 2018 and graduated with the accredited level 5 certificate on 26th January 2019.

I have two brothers who have autism and Asperger Syndrome, one of them graduated from Trinity College with a certificate for the Contemporary Living course before I joined.

I previously studied a level 5 course on Multimedia in Dunboyne for one year after completing and passing my Leaving Certificate in 2015. My parents and brothers have supported me a lot from the beginning when I was studying in Trinity College, to when I started working from home with An Post earlier this year.

How did you enjoy your time studying in Trinity College?

We did interesting workshops and classes with the TCPID staff, they made the work fun and creative. This built our confidence and helped us with teamwork, which overall made studying in Trinity College a good learning experience. I made good friends and lots of happy memories.

What is your favourite memory from your time as a Trinity College student?

If I had a favourite memory, it is from when my friends and I got to meet members of the Vincent de Paul society during our long lunch breaks, because this was time, I had enjoyed for hanging out with my friends to play a game of pool, or to get to know the members of the Vincent de Paul society before we went back to our classes for the afternoon. I really miss meeting with the Vincent de Paul society during lunch times, and I really hope that there are more regular meetings with the Vincent de Paul society during college and after students graduate from college.

Can you tell us what you have done since you finished your studies in Trinity College?

I have completed graduate internships with Bank of Ireland in two different locations, A&L Goodbody and An Post which lasted between 3 to 6 months. I have signed up for membership on the Disability Participation and Consultation Network and became a member, for promoting disability rights in Ireland. I have also spoken at a few conferences relating to disability rights and promoting TCPID and the



Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice course. I have recently spoken at a webinar organised by ASIAM and IrishJobs.ie, which was hosted by Miriam O'Callaghan, promoting autistic talent in the workplace, and explaining my work as an HR Clerk with An Post, as part of this year's Autism Awareness Month.



When did you start working in An Post?

Before the pandemic started, I started working with An Post from the 13th of January, on a 3-month internship contract with the company, but I had to finish my work on the 13th of March as Ireland was preparing for its first lockdown, as part of my health and safety, as well as the health and safety of the An Post staff. I then started talking to the Talents team at An Post about starting work with the company remotely. So, I got my laptop and was set up to start work on the 8th of February for five days a week from 9:30am to 1:30pm for three months. I now have a permanent contract with the HRSU team at An Post since 30th April and I am loving every minute of working from home.

Can you tell us about what it was like to work in the GPO Head Office when you first started?

When I first started working with An Post, I had to travel to the city by bus to get to the GPO, which was exciting, because I was really looking

forward to seeing how the GPO Head Office operates on a regular basis. My colleagues in the HRSU team were very friendly and incredibly supportive to me when I started working with them. They offered me to have my coffee breaks with them before resuming my work, and I really enjoyed working with them.

Can you tell us a little about your role and about your team in An Post?

I am currently working in An Post as an HR Clerk. My work involves processing speculative CV's and applications for recruitment, inviting applicants to do aptitude tests and interviews for specified roles such as Postal Operative, attending regular huddle meetings with the HRSU team to discuss the work for the day, sending Garda vetting invites and processing Garda vetting forms, preparing interview briefs, and sending interview invites to candidates who passed their aptitude tests. I am also responsible for sending regret letters and panel selection letters to candidates after going through interviews, Garda vetting and medicals.

I am part of the recruitment team in the HRSU department in An Post, and we are responsible for processing all job applications from the recruitment inbox, making sure that all applicants are regularly updated regarding their applications. We are also responsible for looking after competitions that are advertised internally so that employees can apply for more internal positions within An Post. If the applicants for these internal competitions are unsuccessful, we advertise these competitions externally to create more job opportunities for as many applicants as possible. We are even responsible for hiring new employees and rehiring people who have worked with An Post in the past, and generating probation reports and contracts for future recruitment within An Post.

We have team huddle meetings every morning so we can talk about what work we can do, so that we can make the workflow for each team member as even as possible. We also have these huddle meetings so we



can discuss any issues that we may have, regarding how competitions are handled, or how managers are moving forward to interviews.

If we have any IT related issues while we are working on recruiting people through the competitions, we contact the GTS Security team or the IT services in An Post to log these issues, so that they are amended before we can go back to our work.

How did you feel about working remotely during the COVID pandemic?

I felt excited about working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, as I could learn a lot of new skills in work using my work from home laptop, which meant that I had to do certain areas of my work differently, such as processing Garda vetting using Excel sheets and the Garda vetting bureau website, as an example of having to adapt my work around remote working.

Working remotely also came with the opportunity to work with colleagues using the Microsoft Teams, for regular meetings and training via video calls. All training relating to my work had to be done online, which meant that I could make time during my workday to complete some online training, such as GDPR training.

I even felt very relaxed about working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, as I didn't feel a rush in getting up every morning before I start my work. I found it was easier working remotely than commuting to work, because I would often feel a bit stressed, or got high anxiety when it came to getting a bus from my nearest bus stop to the city centre.

In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of working remotely?

In my opinion, there are many advantages of working remotely, no matter which company you're working with currently. I didn't have to

commute to the city centre every morning when I have been working remotely this year, in fact I think this has saved a good amount of time for getting ready to start your workday as you don't have to rush to get a bus when you start working remotely.

But I'm also aware that there are some disadvantages of working remotely sometimes. Firstly, there may be days where you're unable to attend Teams meeting or complete training via Zoom, because sometimes the internet connection can be a little bit slow. Whenever this happens, it is important to stay patient as you can still get some work done, even with a slow internet connection.

What do you enjoy the most about working for An Post?

What I enjoy most about working for An Post, is that I can help in hiring people for many positions through competitions, because part of my job as an HR Clerk in the recruitment side of the HRSU team, I am responsible for processing job applications for positions such as Postal Operatives or Clerical work, which then includes aptitude tests, interview preparations and Garda vetting.

I also really enjoy working with my colleagues in the HRSU department, because they help and support me as an employee by training me on Garda vetting etc. to make sure that everyone in the team is being given a fair amount of work to do before the current workday ends.

I even enjoy attending regular huddle meetings with my team, because we get to catch up on any work that we have missed the previous day, and we can offer our assistance to anyone if they need help with getting any work done, if they are busy with meetings etc. I feel like I am part of this team because they always ask me if I'm doing ok and offer to help me with any work that I do when working remotely. I'm really looking forward to the day when I can get to work with my colleagues in the GPO



and have a coffee break with them in the canteen so we can catch up on everything from the last few months.

How did you feel when you found out that you were going to be offered a permanent contract with An Post?

At first, before anyone said anything about my contract being permanent, I was incredibly happy with whatever the outcome was, because I had a really good time with my colleagues, and I felt like everything was looking good in terms of how productive my team and I were every morning. Then, when I was at a Teams meeting, I was in complete shock. I found it hard to believe that I got a permanent contract with An Post, but then when they said I could invite my mum into the meeting, I was so happy with joy and surprised at how good this news was, I started crying, because having a permanent part-time job was something I always dreamed of from when I first started in Trinity College in 2016.

I really felt like I was on cloud nine when Danielle told my mum that An Post was giving me a permanent contract with the company. When I returned to work on Tuesday morning, the CEO of An Post had sent me an email congratulating me on getting a permanent contract with them and said that he is looking forward to meeting with me whenever it is safe to do so in the future. That is when I felt like I belonged in An Post, because all my colleagues in the HRSU team have acknowledged and appreciated my work as an HR Clerk the last three months, and my family were congratulating me on this new chapter that I have already started earlier this month.

What are your goals for the future?

I have a lot of goals that I would like to achieve for my future ahead. To have a permanent part-time job was one of those goals I had successfully achieved, with the support of my family, friends from college, the staff in the TCPID and the HRSU team in An Post. But there are still some goals that I have for the future, which I am hoping will help me to become

more self-confident and independent, as I embark on my journey with a permanent contract with An Post.

One of the first goals I would like to achieve soon is to return to the office, so I can meet with my colleagues for team meetings, conferences, and coffee breaks, as I really love working with the HRSU team and I would like to meet my colleagues in person as soon as it is safe to do so.

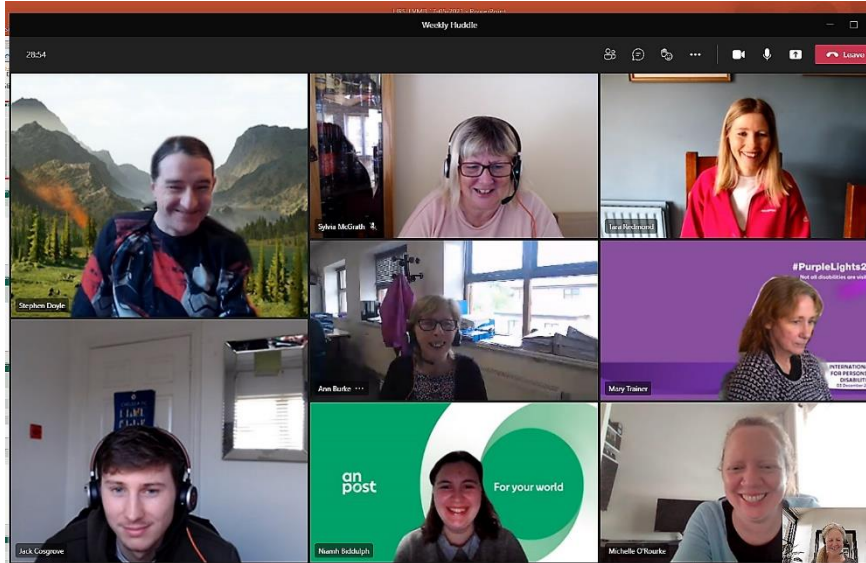
The second goal that I would like to achieve in the future is to meet with all my friends, so we can play a game of ten-pin bowling, or have lunch/dinner in a nice restaurant, or even go to a sports match in the Aviva Stadium. I really cannot wait to meet with my friends so we can celebrate our success stories and to plan any free time we have on enjoying what life has to offer us all. This pandemic has taught me to be grateful for everything I have, and I plan to live my life to the fullest, with my family and friends.

The third goal that I would like to achieve in the near future is to travel abroad for a nice holiday, whenever I'm taking a break, because there are places around the world, even in Europe where I would like to see, so I can learn about the culture of these places, and to practice speaking languages when I'm on holiday there, such as speaking Portuguese when I can book a holiday to go to Portugal.

The final goal that I would like to achieve is that I would like to meet someone special so we can get married, have a place and family of our own, as I feel this will allow me to achieve independent living in the future.



Here are some quotes from some of Niamh's An Post colleagues



Eavan Daly with her proud parents on her graduation day in Trinity College Dublin

David McRedmond : *Niamh's story inspires everyone of us in An Post to appreciate our jobs more, to value our colleagues more and to be proud of our Company. Amazingly, such is remote working, Niamh and I have yet to meet in the GPO, yet not a week goes by that one of her colleagues doesn't mention her contribution. The truth is this: it is us in An Post who are indebted to Niamh. Thank you Niamh, and thanks to TCPID and to Niamh's family for supporting this brave young woman. And I can't wait for that coffee!*

Danielle Bouchier : *Niamh Biddulph is a very brave young woman. She has never said no to opportunities, and it has been a joy to watch her confidence grow. Niamh is a very valued and trusted member of the team, and we are very lucky to have her at An Post.*

Katie Martin : *I honestly believe that our teams at An Post have been wonderfully uplifted and enriched thanks to our partnership with TCPID. The most recent TCPID graduate to join us is a truly excellent ambassador for the programme and I am overjoyed that her excellent work ethic, skillset, high potential and ambition are being recognised and nurtured. It is a pleasure and a privilege to work alongside her and I am excited for her future at An Post.*

Tara Redmond : *I think, since Niamh is having to work remotely over the past few months, she has dealt with this type of change very well. The likely reason not travelling to work and not having to deal with transport and noises on her travels to work. I think Niamh is more comfortable in her own surroundings, and has become more focused, confident and enthusiastic in her daily work.*

Niamh has gone on courses within An Post. To improve her interview skills, and a computer course on excel. Niamh is also learning new systems which have come into our HR Section, and is coping very well.



Michelle O'Rourke : *I have worked with Niamh since she rejoined us this year and find that she is an asset to the team. She is enthusiastic, eager to learn, will ask questions, works well with the team and always complete tasks assigned to her as required. We are delighted to have Niamh on our team.*

Sylvia McGrath : *I have found Niamh very conscientious on our Meetings. If she can help Niamh will put herself forward.*

Geraldine Staunton : *Niamh had to face the challenge of training for her new role from home which she has done with ease. On our daily Huddles Niamh always volunteers to help colleagues who may have urgent tasks to complete. She has recently upskilled on the SHL system which we use for aptitude testing. She has linked in with colleagues to discover new ways of doing things and has learnt how to send emails to a large group via mail merge (something I have yet to master!).*

Niamh has continually impressed me with her professionalism and attention to detail. She completes each task with precision and contributes to group discussions with positivity and a "yes we can" attitude. We recently took part in the An Post Step Challenge and Niamh's enthusiasm really inspired me to get out walking - we had great fun discussing our daily excursions on our Whatsapp group. I am delighted that Niamh is now a Permanent member of the HRSU team and have every confidence she will continue to thrive and excel in all that she does.

Here is a quote from Niamh's very proud Mum

As a parent you always hope, and with support and encouragement from the TCPID course and the Business Partners programme, a time comes when you are overwhelmed with happiness and gratitude that your son or daughter with autism / intellectual disability has their dream come true. In our case this dream was a permanent job with An Post! Many thanks to everyone in the TCPID and An Post for all your support to make this happen.



Stephen Ryan – Award Win in EY

Congratulations to our graduate Stephen Ryan who was nominated for a Going the Extra Mile (GEM) award in EY. Stephen was nominated for, and won the GEM award for Inclusion and Belonging Role Model.



The positive attitude, enthusiasm, and fun personality that Stephen brings to work every day has been both motivational and inspirational to the entire team. He is extremely hard-working and constantly challenges himself by taking on more complex tasks. Stephen has fit seamlessly into the tax team, both as a colleague and a friend. He has encouraged us all to appreciate the importance of supporting an inclusive environment and continues to be an outstanding role model for anyone with or without a disability.

He regularly takes action to remove barriers to inclusion by using his voice and experiences to inspire others to do the same. Stephen has presented at numerous Irish and global conferences promoting TCPID and the work EY does with them, which has helped encourage prospective business partners to take part in the programme and provide other graduates with similar opportunities to Stephen.”

Stephen was nominated for this award by one of his EY colleagues **Erin Lambe**. Here is a section of the wonderful nomination from Erin:

“Stephen joined EY as a graduate from Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities (‘TCPID’) and during his time here, he has consistently proven himself to be an advocate for people with disabilities and a working example of their capabilities.



New Collaborations

We are delighted to announce that three new companies have signed up with us in the past few months as TCPID Business Partners. This support means so much to us, particularly during these current challenging times.

Applegreen

Established in 1992, **Applegreen** is a leading convenience roadside retailer in the Republic of Ireland, the UK and the US in both large-scale Motorway Service Areas and Travel Plazas, as well as smaller petrol stations. The business has grown to over €3BN in annual revenue, operating 559 forecourt sites internationally and employing over 11,000 people. Their products and services include large scale food and beverage operations, convenience stores, roadside refuelling including electric vehicle channels, in addition to a number of other ancillary business lines for example their hotels and gaming business in Welcome Break and our commercial fuel and airline refuelling business. Applegreen partner with a large number of high-quality international brands in each market including Starbucks, Burger King, Subway, Greggs, KFC, 7-Eleven, Chopstix, Freshii etc in addition to their own proprietary Bakewell brand. In 2021 Applegreen moved from a PLC to a private ownership company structure in partnership with Blackstone Infrastructure Partners.

Speaking about the new partnership **Yvonne Browne, Applegreen Group HR Director** said, *“Enablement is a very important area of our Inclusion and Diversity focus at Applegreen. TCPID is providing life-changing opportunities for young people with intellectual disabilities and we are delighted to come onboard as a business partner We aim to offer a supportive and interesting learning opportunity for TCPID students, and also an enriching experience for our employees where we can all learn more and create a better workplace for the future, one that that welcomes all abilities and potential.”*





Go Ahead Ireland

Go-Ahead Ireland provides public transport bus services on behalf of the National Transport Authority (NTA), operating 25 Outer Dublin Metropolitan Area routes, as well as 5 Dublin Commuter routes. With over 600 colleagues, the company operates a fleet of over 200 buses across its service routes and is part of the Go-Ahead international transport group which enables more than a billion journeys each year via bus and rail services. Go-Ahead Ireland puts colleagues and communities at the core of what they do to ensure that transport is inclusive for all who work and use it.

Ciara Gallagher, Head of People, said: *“We are delighted to be partnering with the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. Go-Ahead Ireland are rooted in the community and with our diverse culture and inclusive values we felt that we could offer opportunities to welcome the students from the programme to support in developing their skills and experience for the future.”*





RSA Insurance and 123.ie

As one of the world's leading insurance companies, RSA Group has a long tradition of delivering consistent quality to customers for over 300 years. RSA Insurance Ireland have been working with customers for almost as long and were established here in 1721. With an all-island presence in Belfast, Galway and Dublin, and as parent company to online brand 123.ie, they have built up strong connections with a diverse, wide reaching customer base over many years. As they continue to grow their business, they are adapting and innovating to meet the changing needs of customers. With approximately 600 employees spread countrywide, and over two separate brands, they have prioritised their focus on building a more inclusive culture, one that welcomes and encourages diverse opinions, backgrounds, styles and experiences.

Speaking about the new partnership **Louise Lombard, Head of People and Culture** said, *"We are excited to partner with the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities in the School of Education Trinity College Dublin. Having met some of their superb graduates, we wanted to get involved in creating opportunities in our company to welcome students from this excellent programme. Our aim is to help students to further develop their skills and experience a workplace that welcomes differences in people, seeing the potential in everyone."*

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Thank you as always to all of our Business Patrons, Business Partners and other collaborators for your continued support





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McCANN FITZGERALD



Gníomhaireacht Bainistíochta an Chisteáin Náisiúnta
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