

## Schools of Distinction Award Guidelines

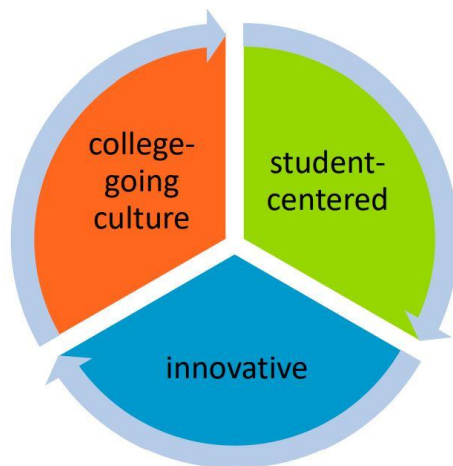
### Information on the School of Distinction Award

This 'Schools of Distinction Award' aims to recognise and showcase the efforts of schools nationwide to transform their school culture and to develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning<sup>1</sup>. The scheme will recognise the often extraordinary work being successfully undertaken by schools in challenging conditions and with limited resources. It encourages participants to draw on their own school and community resources and the resources of the Trinity Access project in Trinity College Dublin to support educational innovation and change.

<sup>1</sup> There will be a strong focus on schools within the Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools scheme (DEIS) and Schools Completion Programme.

### Aims

This award scheme aims to support the development of 'college-going' practices and a student-centred, innovative learning environment across schools nationwide, particularly within schools where there is a low progression rate to post-secondary education.



COMMUNITY >>> INNOVATION >>> TRANSFORMATION

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## Three Award Levels

### **Community Award:**

Our Community Award recognises the achievement of schools who have joined our Community of Practice and engaged in a process of evaluating and identifying the needs of their students and teachers through our School Survey. Community Award winners set relevant targets to address these needs and action student centred programmes, with the aim of embedding a college-going culture in their school. Schools that win this award have begun the process of engaging in our 3 core practices of Pathways to College, Mentoring and Leadership in Learning and have plans to expand these programmes in the future.

### **Innovation Award:**

Our Innovation Award recognises the creative and innovative ways that schools are embedding a college-going culture. They have active, student-centred programmes that support our 3 core practices of Pathways to College, Mentoring and Leadership in Learning in their school. Innovation Award winners support and encourage their teachers to explore innovative teaching methodologies, engage with other excellent teachers through our Community of Practice and establish Community of Practices within their own schools

### **Transformation Award:**

Our Transformation Award recognises schools that have embedded a vibrant college-going culture, transforming school vision, perceptions and expectations. Transformation Award winners have established the 3 core practices of Pathways to College, Mentoring and Leadership in Learning as fundamental to their whole school culture. Innovative and student-centred teaching and learning is a priority with teachers leading and supporting Community of Practice within their own school and the wider Trinity Access community. Transformation Award winners actively engage in a process of reflection, using school data and current research to inform their whole school planning and target setting.

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## About the Prizes

Recipients of the Transformation and Innovation awards will receive

- A 'Trinity Access 21: School of Distinction' banner
- Permission to use a specially developed digital logo to publicise the award
- A 1600 Scholarship to cover the travel and accommodation costs of a number of educators to participate in the annual Trinity Access: Transforming Education International Conference
- Campus Visit for a junior cycle year group in your school to TCD
- School visit by TCD ambassadors
- Access to research instruments and tailored reports for your school from Trinity Access 21 research team
- Access to CPD workshops hosted by Trinity Access 21, creative ideas and resources submitted by all schools on the Trinity Access website

Winners of the Community award

- A 'Trinity Access 21: School of Distinction' banner
- Permission to use a specially developed digital logo to publicise the award
- A smaller stipend to cover travel and accommodation for 1 educator to participate in the annual Trinity Access: Transforming Education International Conference
- Campus visit for junior cycle year group in your school to TCD
- Consultation/Feedback session with Trinity Access 21 staff
- Access to CDP workshops and events hosted by Trinity Access 21, creative ideas and resources submitted by all schools on the Trinity Access website



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## The Application Criteria

The scheme will reward schools showing evidence of progress and innovation in our three core practices. Details and descriptions of each level of award and the core practices are described in our Features of Quality.

## General Timeline:

Welcome Meeting: Autumn

General Support Meeting: Spring

Application submissions: Early June

Shortlisting of applicants: Mid June

Notification to all applicants: End of June

Award Event: Autumn

## Application Completion and Submission

Application for the School of Distinction award is made via our School Survey Document.

This document should be downloaded as an Excel sheet as it is formatted to work in Excel but not in Google Sheets. There are seven different tabs in the workbook titled:

1. School information
2. Pathways to College
3. School Progression
4. Mentoring
5. Leadership in Learning (Students)
6. Leadership in Learning (Teachers)
7. Reflection.

Full instructions for the completion of this document are included in an “Info Sheet” at the start. The SoD application is designed to be used as an annual planning document for the implementation of the three core practices and as such is a working document. All notes, teachers in charge, time frames, challenges and skills integration sections are included to help your planning but will not be part of our assessment process, although they may help us to develop systems that reduce these challenges and barriers.

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## Assessment of Award

The award will be assessed by a panel of independent experts in the field of educational innovation.

## Contact Us

Contact our team via email at [SoD@ta21.ie](mailto:SoD@ta21.ie) with any programme or application queries or chat with us in our fortnightly staffroom chats, details of upcoming meetings are shared through our staffroom mailer.

## Resources

TheStaffRoom.ie is a space where secondary school teachers can engage in a community of practice, find and share resources and lesson plans, and chat with and ask questions of other teachers and the Trinity Access team.

The site contains information about upcoming events, information booklets for teachers and other useful information for teachers in Trinity Access schools or anyone looking to implement our three core practices; Pathways to College, Leadership in Learning & Mentoring.

Further information on the Trinity Access projects can be found at [www.tcd.ie/trinityaccess](http://www.tcd.ie/trinityaccess)

Further information on College Awareness Week is here: <http://www.collegeaware.ie/>





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## [Link to DES School Self Evaluation Requirements](#)

According to the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Guidelines 2016-2020 Post-Primary, the Department has developed a quality framework for schools, which is available in its publication Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools. This quality framework is intended to inform both school self-evaluation and external evaluation. The TA21 model supports much of the quality framework for schools, with the specific areas highlighted in the table below:

Practice	Relevant SSE Guideline Domains & Standards
Implementation of a 'whole school' approach to Trinity Access	<p>Teachers' collective / collaborative practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teachers value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration</li><li>• Teachers work together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum</li></ul> <p>Leading teaching &amp; learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School leaders promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment</li><li>• School leaders foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each student</li><li>• School leaders foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and students' learning</li></ul> <p>Leading school development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School leaders communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation</li><li>• School leaders lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation</li><li>• School leaders manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and changes in education</li></ul> <p>Developing Leadership Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School leaders empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles</li><li>• School leaders build professional networks with other school leaders</li></ul>

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Pathways to College	<p>Learner Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and expect to achieve as learners</li> </ul> <p>Learner Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning</li> </ul>
Mentoring	<p>Learner Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and expect to achieve as learners</li> </ul> <p>Students have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required to understand themselves and their relationships</p> <p>Learner Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive</li> </ul> <p>Students experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning</p> <p>Leading School Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School leaders build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community</li> </ul> <p>Developing Leadership Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School leaders promote and facilitate the development of student voice, student participation, and student leadership</li> </ul>
Leadership in Learning	<p>Learner Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and expect to achieve as learners</li> <li>Students demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the post-primary curriculum</li> </ul> <p>Learner Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities</li> </ul>

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- Students grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive
- Students reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning
- Students experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning

## Teachers' Individual Practice:

- Selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress students' learning
- Selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning intention and the students' learning needs

## Teacher Collaborative Practice:

- Teachers value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration
- Teachers work together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum
- Teachers contribute to building whole staff capacity by sharing their expertise

## Leading in Learning & Teaching:

- Promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching, and assessment

## Leading School Development:

- School leaders build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community

## Developing Leadership Capacity:

- School leaders promote and facilitate the development of student voice, student participation, and student leadership



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## Links to DEIS Reporting

The DEIS (Delivery Equality of Opportunity in Our Schools) Plan 2017, identifies 8 measures for DEIS schools to consider when assessing their school in relation to overall DEIS targets. Below is a table summarising how the 4 core practices of the TA21 model links in with the DEIS measures and the specific actions that have measurable impacts. References are made to Looking at Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Post-Primary Schools & Inspectorate Evaluation Studies.

### 1. Retention:

These are references to both Looking at Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Post-Primary Schools & Inspectorate Evaluation Studies that have been used to inform these actions and their links to this theme. The theme of retention focuses on the importance of keeping children in school, identifying those at risk of early leaving, and taking action to reduce or eliminate factors that cause students to drop out.

- *Action planning for retention evinced good practice in supporting targeted students at risk of early school-leaving, and in broader initiatives to increase participation in school activities*
- *Inspectors' observations on effective practice included the following 'The excellent pastoral care system and positive staff-student relationships in school, the one-to-one counselling for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties provided by the SCP, and curricular and social support provided for Traveller students are among some of the highly effective [retention] strategies.'* (2011)

Measurable Impact (school survey data)	Action	Core Practice
Student-Teacher Relationship	Talk by Expert/Professional	Pathways to College
	High-Quality Mentor Relationship	Mentoring
	Mentor Type: Staff in School	Mentoring
	Number of Sessions	Mentoring
	21st Century Teaching and Learning Exposure	Leadership in Learning

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## 2. Progression:

These are references to both Looking at Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Post-Primary Schools & Inspectorate Evaluation Studies that have been used to inform these actions and their links to this theme. Progression is very closely linked to attendance and retention. It puts a spotlight on the key moves from one stage of education to the next: from primary to post-primary; from junior cycle to senior cycle; and from post-primary to continuing education and the world of work.

Progression to continuing education is especially important because of the overarching aim of the DEIS action plan: to give all students equal educational opportunities. The tracking of students beyond their post-primary school careers is a crucial aspect of planning for progression.

- *Providing opportunities for students to experience continuing education options and the world of work*
- *Gather and use data on the progression rates and paths of former students, and the dispositions of current students, to inform planning to improve progression*
- *Ensure that high expectations are communicated to students and that students are supported to realise them*

Measurable Impact (school survey data)	Action	Core Practice
Education Aspirations and Goals	College Related Project Work	Pathways to College
	Talk by Expert/Professional	Pathways to College
	High-Quality Mentor Relationship	Mentoring
	21st Century Teaching and Learning Exposure	Leadership in Learning
Confidence in College Success	Career Fairs	Pathways to College
	Talk by Expert/Professional	Pathways to College
	High-Quality Mentor Relationship	Mentoring
	21st Century Teaching and Learning Exposure	Leadership in Learning
	Any Participation in Leadership in Learning Activities	Leadership in Learning
	Active Participation in Leadership in Learning Activities	Leadership in Learning

### 3. Examination Attainment:

These are references to both Looking at Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Post-Primary Schools & Inspectorate Evaluation Studies that have been used to inform these actions and their links to this theme. Examination attainment focuses on attainment in the certificate examinations, and also includes target-setting, strategies and monitoring of progress concerning students' outcomes in school-based assessments and examinations.

- *Inspectors commended teaching approaches that supported active learning and got students thinking about how they were learning.*
- *Selecting and implementing teaching and learning approaches ... that challenge and empower students*
- *Implement practical strategies to raise students' expectations and attainment*

Measurable Impact (school survey data)	Action	Core Practice
Active Engagement in Learning	College Related Project Work	Pathways to College
	Career Fairs	Pathways to College
	Talk by Expert Professional	Pathways to College
	High-Quality Mentor Relationship	Mentoring
	Mentor Type: Staff in School	Mentoring
	Mentor Type: Outside Expert	Mentoring
	21st Century Teaching and Learning Exposure	Leadership in Learning
	Active Participation in Leadership in Learning Activities	Leadership in Learning

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## 4. Partnerships:

These are references to both Looking at Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Post-Primary Schools & Inspectorate Evaluation Studies that have been used to inform these actions and their links to this theme, Partnership with parents and others. The DEIS action plan supports schools to develop partnerships with parents and with the community. Schools are also expected to develop links with other schools and colleges, for example in transfer programmes from post-primary school to third-level colleges.

The theme of partnership includes links with other education providers, especially those offering continuing education. While evaluation reports placed most emphasis on partnership with parents, they also reflect a positive picture of strong links that DEIS schools have forged with their nearest third-level institutions. Access programmes and events that provide students with opportunities to visit these institutions were frequently commended, in particular where schools were taking a 'joined-up' view of planning for progression and this area of partnership.

- *Forging helpful links with other education providers and with external agencies*
- *Ensure systematic co-operation and communication between the school and other agencies working to support students and their families*

## 5. Other Areas:

Measurable Impact (school survey data)	Action	Core Practice
Wellbeing	Workplace visit	Pathways to college
	Talk by college/university rep	Pathways to college
	High-Quality Mentor Relationship	Mentoring
	21st Century Teaching and Learning Exposure	Leadership in Learning

Measurable Impact (school survey data)	Action	Core Practice
Student Voice	High-Quality Mentor Relationship	Mentoring

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	21st Century Teaching and Learning Exposure	Leadership in Learning
	Any Participation in Leadership in Learning Activities	Leadership in Learning
	Active Participation in Leadership in Learning Activities	Leadership in Learning

