



DKIT STUDENT SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

2017-2018



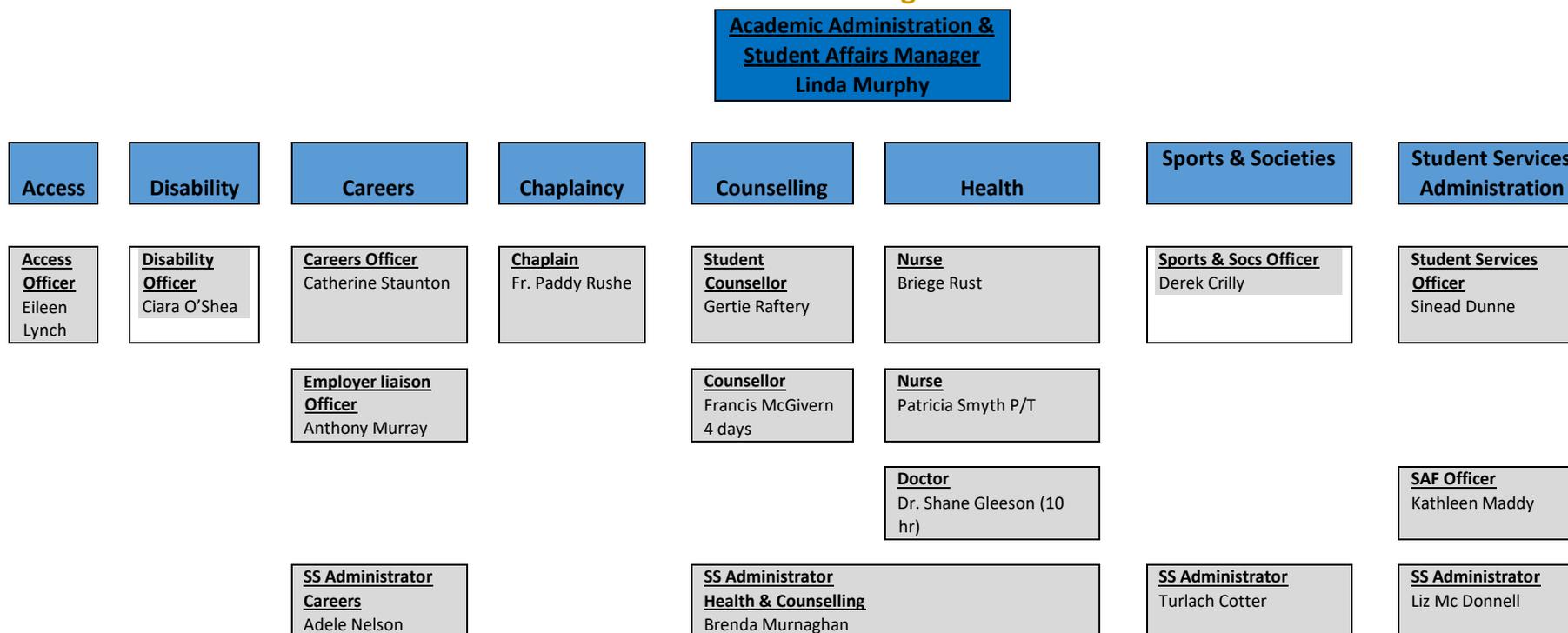
1.1 Background

Student Services which operates under the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar are a team of professional service providers who support students in actively engaging in their third level experience. The Services are currently aimed at full-time undergraduate, postgraduate, Springboard and Apprentice Students. The Institute Faulkner Building brings together all of the Services (with the exception of the Access & Disability Offices which are located in the Carroll's Building). These Services are detailed as follows:

- Access
 - Careers & Employability
- Disability Health Chaplaincy
 Student Counselling Sports & Societies Student Services Centre

1.2 Staffing

Student Services – Organisation Chart



1.3 Developments

- All Services work closely with the Student Learning and Development Centre to provide centralised induction for all incoming students.
- The Access Service was successful in their funding application with their counterparts in the MEND Region for the College Connect project. Funding was also received for 1916 Bursaries with 10 bursaries allocated to DkIT students each year for the next two years.
- The Disability Service Developed a Supplementary Access Route for Students with a Disability for entry 2011 to increase access for students registering with a disability. In 2018 the Institute applied and were successful in joining the national Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) for applicants to enter the Institute in 2019.
- The Student Counselling Service has continued to develop their use of the CoreNet case management system. The system provides good quality data that tracks the impact of counselling on retention, academic performance as well as improvement in the mental health of students.
- The Health Unit is now in the process of introducing a practice management system.
- 94% of DkIT Graduates were in employment/further study nine months after graduation.
- 753 students attended placement, across 19 academic departments
- 296 Companies registered on the Careers Connect System with 499 job opportunities advertised to students and graduates.
- The continued development of our Sports Scholarships have resulted in significant success with our sporting teams competing at the top grades.
- The Development of DkIT Sport has provided much needed sports and recreation facilities for students.
- The Students Union have introduced a third sabbatical officer with responsibility for student engagement, dedicating a role solely for Student Welfare

Community Collaborations

- The Counselling Service have conducted two focus groups on campus as part of their contribution to the National Advisory Committee of the EHSTE EU funded “It Stops Now” Initiative
- The Service have also collaborated with Toastmasters (Dundalk) on workshops for students on public speaking skills
- The Disability Service contributed to the DisAbility Louth meetings.
- The Access Service facilitated a number of visits on campus in cooperation with Junior Achievement Ireland, BITE and Lout Leader Partnership for the “Pathways” Access initiative.
- Sports and Societies have worked in partnership with local and national sporting organisations to host a number of community based events on campus

2. STUDENT SERVICES IMPACT

This report looks at the impact of Student Services and will support the future development of the Services.

2.1 Methodology

The Impact and Value Framework developed by the UK Student Services Association AMOSSHE (2011) provided a framework for the evaluation of services. The first step was to identify the service objectives and associated outputs. This allowed us to identify outcomes and impact indicators for each Service. These steps are outlined below:

Access	Widening Access & Participation by Increasing the number of applications from target groups to the Institute and provides ongoing supports to mature students, students in receipt of bursaries and scholarships, FET and Traveller entry students
Careers & Employability	Ensuring that graduates are self-aware, self-resourceful and work ready by supporting students from first year through to graduation in the area of student placement, employability awareness and career skills development
Counselling	To support retention by providing psychological supports to students
Disability	Provides supports and advocates on behalf of any student with a physical, sensory or learning difficulty, or has a mental health condition that interferes with the learning process
Health	To support retention by meeting the medical needs of students including the provision of health promotion
Sports & Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides opportunities for students to engage in activities/hobbies that they are interested in.• Enable students to socialise with people outside of class time.• Encourage students to take part in activities that are good for their health and fitness.• Provide a platform for students to run their own clubs & Societies. Student involvement in Sports & Societies helps them settle in to College and as a consequence improves retention. Students also gain great experience from being involved which may assist them in future employment. Those in committee roles will particularly benefit.
Student Service Administration	Student Services endeavour to assist students with all queries. The office also supports students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds through the Student Assistance and Hardship Funds.

Service Outputs	<p>Induction Programme One-to-one consultations Links with other services (internal/external) Communication – email, website, posters, booklets, leaflets, social media, campaigns, sign up days Student work placement Career Clinics/Careers Fairs Industry Partnerships Annual Graduate outcomes Survey</p>
Intended Outcomes	<p>Students are aware of supports available and how to access them when/if required. Ensure the Services meet the needs of students. Students and Graduates are aware of their strengths, skills and abilities and are able to identify and manage opportunities that support their career development.</p>
Impact Indicators	<p>Service Usage Students report feeling supported Students enjoy representing the Institute Counselling clients are assessed before and after therapy using the CORE outcome measure which reliably measures the impact of the therapy. Numbers of students supported on Placement % of graduates in employment/further study nine months after graduation</p>
Sources of Evidence	<p>Induction Feedback Service Usage Data Feedback from Service users Survey of all students Survey of Staff Counselling Impact on Academic Outcome Scores for clients before and after therapy – where they can indicate the impact of the therapy Graduate Destination Survey</p>

2.2 Data Gathering

Most of the data is gathered on an ongoing basis by the Service Providers, the majority record, where practical, usage of the Service. Each Service reports annually on activities which forms part of the Student Services Annual Report. Most Services gather feedback from service users and Student Services conduct an annual survey of all students regarding the services. Induction feedback is gathered by the SLDC from first year students who participated on the programme, this is reviewed annually as part of the induction planning process.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Service Usage

Service	Activity	Student No's 2015/16	Student No's 2016/17	Student No's 2017/18
Careers	Appointments	495	363	395
	Employers & Job Vacancy Activity	208	351	499
Health	Visits to Unit	3,430	2,805	2,773
Counselling	No. of clients	315	320	345
Disability	No's registered	254	274	290
Sports & Society	Members	3,096	2,875	3,000
Student Assistance Fund	No of applicants	318	344	377

Numbers of students availing of the Counselling Service has again increased for the 2017/18 academic year by 7%. The Counselling Service has managed to reduce the number of sessions per student to 3.7 mainly due to their in-session measure of emotional wellbeing. The numbers attending the Health Unit remain high. The Service now provides acute medical care to students and refers more long term medical care back to their GP's.

The Disability Service has seen a 6% increase in numbers registered with the Service from the previous year. The biggest issues were students presenting with mental health issues and Dyspraxia.

The numbers of students seeking financial support continues to rise. The SAF committee have reviewed and updated the awarding criteria and amounts payable to students to enable them to provide assistance to more students.

The numbers availing of one to one Career guidance support have increased by almost 9% on the previous year. In addition the numbers of companies registering with the service has increased dramatically with almost 300 companies signing up to the online platform, Careers Connect, and almost 500 job vacancies advertised by the Service on their behalf.

Student Sport Ireland, who are the governing body of third level sport in Ireland have introduced a league table system which rates the performance of colleges. It measures both participation rates and success of colleges in sporting competitions and for 2018/19 we ranked in ninth position and third for Institutes of Technology.

3.2 Feedback from Service Users

Most of the Services conduct surveys with users on an on-going basis. The majority of those surveyed have expressed satisfaction with the impact of the Service.

- Feedback from incoming mature students is very positive in relation to the service provided by the Access Service. As in previous year's mature students have highlighted concerns regarding timetables, more specifically frequent changes to timetables and lectures being cancelled at short notice. This has a negative effect on the students learning experience.
- 85% of students using the Counselling Service said that counselling helped them stay at College; with 89% stating counselling helped them do better at their academic work. 96% of students using the Counselling Service said that counselling had improved their overall college experience.
- 100% of students felt talking to a careers advisor was valuable. 92% felt more prepared to achieve their goals following careers advice with 70% taking action based on their career guidance session.
- 93% of Employers who attended the DkIT Careers Fair rated the event as either excellent or very good. *"Dundalk Institute of Technology has been one of the best experiences I have had from a careers fair point of view... the welcoming reception, engaging students and lecturers and the facilities provided, an all-round great experience"*.
- 84% of respondents registered with the Sports and Societies Office stated the Service was either somewhat important or extremely important in helping them settle in to college life as a first year. 59% of respondents said that their involvement in Sports and Societies was an important factor in them staying in third level education with 21% stating it was the most significant factor while 84% of students feel that Sports and Societies had enhanced their college experience by either a 'great extent' or a 'very great extent'

We survey all students to determine awareness and satisfaction ratings of the Services. 190 students responded to this survey which was sent via the all student email, representing 4.4% of students. While the response rate is low it is typical of online survey responses in the Institute.

Service	%
Counselling	79.37%
Careers & Employability	66.67%
Chaplaincy	68.78%
Disability	49.74%
Health	75.66%
Sports & Societies	85.71%
Student Services Centre	74.07%

Table 1: Awareness of Services

As you can see in Table 1, students have a good awareness of all the Services. Going forward it will be useful to determine how students learn about the Services. According to the Student Services Survey, 85% of students are aware of the Sports and Societies service. Part of this awareness can be attributed to their social media campaigns which have increased their online presence.

Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Number of likes:	Number of followers:	Number of followers:
2013- 170	2013- 190	2015- 120
2019 - 6000	2019 - 2047	2019 - 1256

Table 2 below summarises satisfaction levels with the Services. Open comments give a good insight into student expectations and how some Services may need to manage expectations with clearer communication. Students were asked to rate the Student Services Centre. Table 3 shows the majority of students reporting a positive impact.

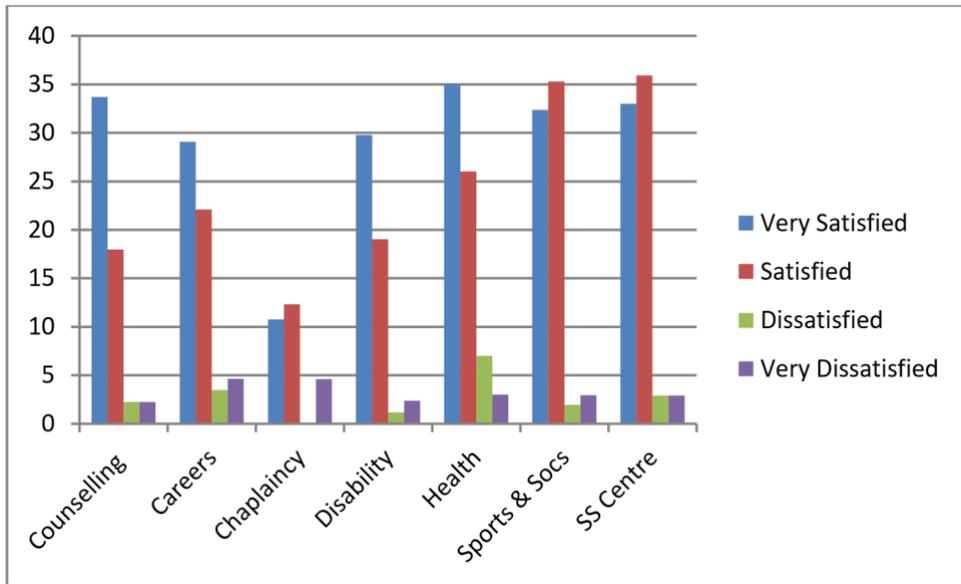


Table 2: Satisfaction Levels

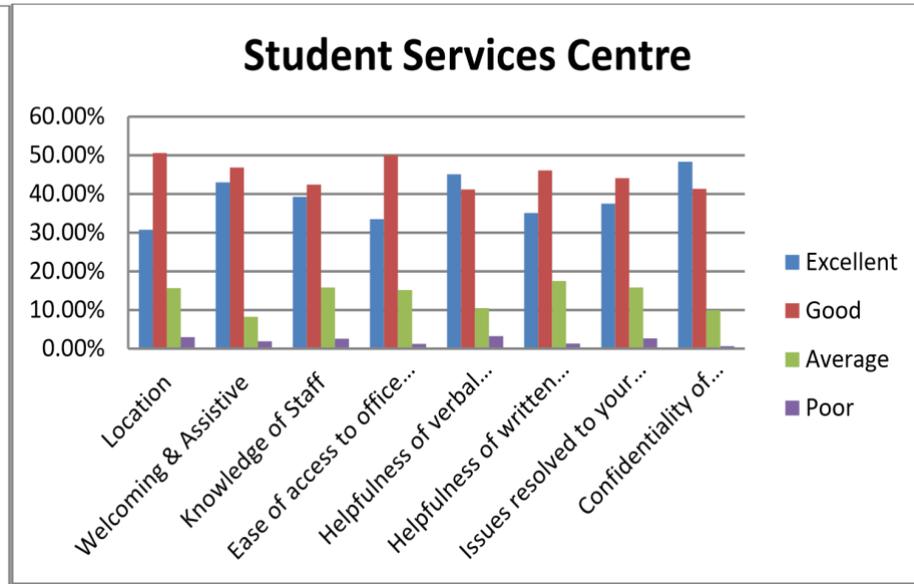


Table 3: Satisfaction rating of Student Services Centre

Students were asked if they would recommend the service to other users with over 91% confirming that they would.

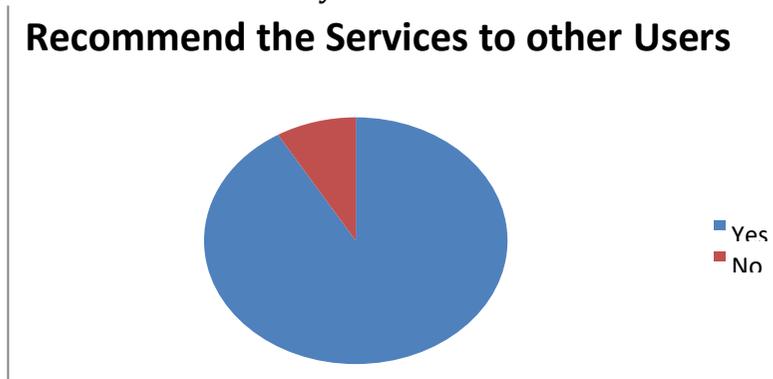


Table 4: Recommend the Services to other Students

Students were asked to rate the impact of communication and marketing by each of the Services which will be useful for Service Providers comparing the impact of marketing initiatives going forward.

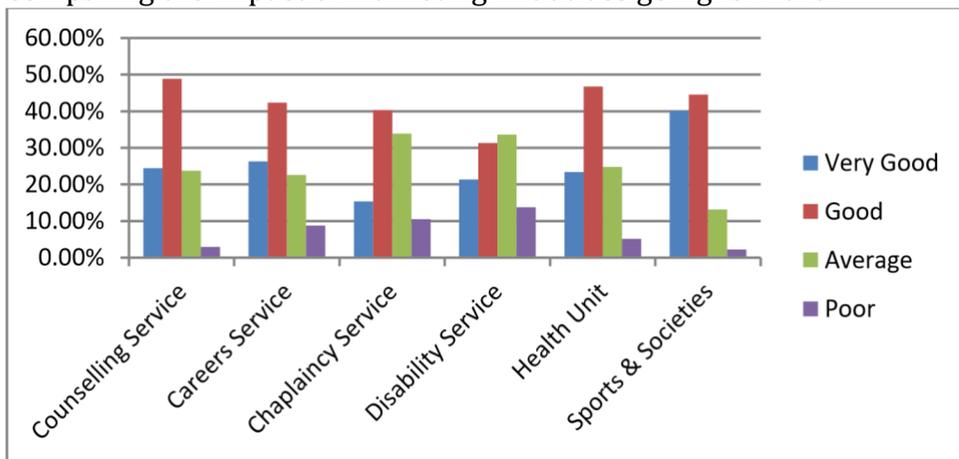


Table 5: Rate the Communication and Marketing of each Service

4. CONCLUSIONS

This review has identified impact indicators and gathered data which demonstrates Services are meeting objectives. Services have high usage with most reporting on increased usage year on year. There is always scope to increase awareness and it can be difficult to determine if students most in need are the ones accessing the Services. An extended induction would benefit all students.

Although usage has increased, particularly in Counselling and Disability Services, resources have remained fairly static which is a concern going forward particularly if the Institute is successful in meeting admissions targets. The Counselling Service have managed to reduce the number of sessions per student which has helped extend capacity and we have managed to secure a number of additional counselling sessional hours but these hours will need to be maintained to support the Service going forward. Due to demand, the Counselling Service plan to expand on the delivery of workshops to staff, specifically “Identifying and responding to distressed and At Risk students”.

In order to ensure that the Institute can assess the prevalence of diagnosed mental health conditions the counselling service will include in a student’s contract that they will be automatically registered with this disability Service. This will ensure the provision of additional supports for these students.

The Disability Service will need to develop assistive technology to support the numbers registering with the Service and to reduce the numbers using separate invigilation. The issue of students looking for a “quiet space” continues to be raised.

As previously stated, the Health Unit, has reduced the level of health service by providing acute medical care only. This has expanded the GP service to more students but has highlighted some issues around expectations which can be addressed by the Service. The Health Unit have observed a greater number of international students presenting with pre-existing medical conditions. The Service will recommend to the International Office that students disclose any long term illnesses in advance of registration to assist in the planning of supports and interventions by the Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to raise awareness of Services to Students and Staff
- Extend Induction to cover the first 6 weeks of term
- Provide Support and Training to the Student Union Welfare Officer
- Measure impact of services for all service users
- Assistive Technology to be developed to support students registered with a disability

References

AMOSSHE (2011) Assessing the Value & Impact of services that support students <http://www.amosshe.org.uk/value-and-impact>

Student Service Provider Annual Reports and user feedback