



# **DKIT STUDENT SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT**

**2019-2020**



## Executive Summary

Student Services which operates under the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar are a team of professional service providers who provide support for students to actively engage in their third level experience. The Services are currently aimed at full-time undergraduate, postgraduate, Springboard and Apprentice Students.

<b>Access</b>	The Access service works to increase access to third level from under-represented groups identified as key target groups by the National Access Office of the HEA. The Service supports the increased participation of these students with a view to successful completion of their programme of studies. The Access Officer is a member of NEFEA Working Group, the THEA Access Officers Group, Mature Students Ireland (MSI), PATH 2 and PATH 3 committees of the MEND Cluster, DkIT representative on the board of Dundalk Community Training Centre, the Board of Louth Leader Partnership and the alternative DARE representative for DkIT. In cooperation with the School of Business and Humanities, the Service works with the Pathways outreach programme.
<b>Disability</b>	DkIT Disability Service provides support to students with a disability or a significant ongoing illness or mental health condition who disclose to the service and request support. The DS is funded by the Fund for Students with Disabilities (ESF/HEA), this fund supports students who meet the criteria for funding, however DkIT also offers a general level of support to any student who presents for support through examination accommodations and the range of services provided by other support services including the Centre for Learning and Teaching. The Disability Officer is now on an advisory board for Multi-disability DARE applicants
<b>Health Unit</b>	The overall aim of the service is to provide a holistic approach to student wellbeing. The service comprises a general medical, psychological and health educational service to all students. The health service is an integral part of the student services team, where cooperation between services plays a vital role in assisting each other to enhance the wellbeing of students.
<b>Student Counselling</b>	The Student Counselling Service provides accessible, confidential, non-judgemental support to all registered students. The Head of Student Counselling is currently the Chairperson of the Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education in Ireland (PCHEI) and was a member of the National Advisory Council of the Eshte project and on two of their sub groups looking at data and at policy implementation. She was also a member of the steering group of the Innovation & transformation Project and was invited to be part of the Connecting for Life group of the HEA, the Rapid Response Drugs Taskforce by Minister Mitchell O'Connor and participated in meetings with the Minister and HSE and Department of Education personnel to look at continuity of mental health care for students

<b>Careers &amp; Employability Centre (CEC)</b>	DkIT's Careers & Employability Centre works to ensure that Graduates of DkIT are self-aware, self-resourceful and work ready. To do this, we work with students from first year through to graduation in the area of Career Development support and Student Work Placement. DkIT Careers Officer nominated to be member of AHECS Executive from July 2020. The Placement Development Co-Ordinate is a member of AHECS Work Placement Task Group
<b>Sports &amp; Societies</b>	The Sports and Societies Office supports, funds and resources all sports and societies to encourage students to be active and involved and make their mark on student life. The Sports and Societies Officer is a member of the Student Sport Ireland 'Physical Activity and Health' Committee.
<b>Student Assistance Fund (SAF)</b>	The is administered by the Student Service Centre on a strictly confidential basis and provides limited support for full-time students who are in severe financial difficulties due to unforeseen circumstances, or who are disadvantaged and require additional financial support to enable them in so far as possible to participate fully in their studies while at the Institute.  Additional funding was made available for students who are lone parents and part-time students from other target groups in the National Access Plan. As part of the conditions of co-financing under the ESF PEIL 2014-2020, detailed data is required on each student who benefits directly from the SAF fund.

## 1.2 Services and Staffing

<b>Service</b>	<b>Professional Service Staff</b>
Access	Eileen Lynch, full-time Access Officer
Disability	Geraldine Kneel, full-time Disability Officer Two part-time Learning Support Tutors who cover a full week One part-time (2.5 days per week) Assistive Technology Technical Assistant commencing April 2020
Careers & Placement	Catherine Staunton, full-time Careers Service Anthony Murray, full-time Careers Service Joyce O'Hara, full-time, Placement Co-ordinator Angela Foley, full-time, Placement Officer Janet Coogan, full-time, Placement Officer Danielle Kerins, full-time Placement Officer Elaine Cunniffe, part-time Placement Officer Sandra Reilly, full-time administrator
Student Counselling Service	Gertie Raftery, Full time Student Counsellor Francis Mc Givern – 4 days per week term time Sarah Traynor – 3 days per week term time Aine Ward – 1 days per week term time Lorna Marie Browne – trainee 1 day per week from October – March Ciara Hanrathy, part-time, Health & Counselling Administrator
Health Unit	Briege Rust, full-time Nurse Patricia Smith, part-time Nurse Dr Shane Gleeson, 7 hours per week

Sports & Societies	Derek Crilly, full-time Sports and Societies Officer Turlach Cotter, full-time administrator 17 part-time coaches
Administration	Adele Nelson, full-time Administrator Shared with Access, Disability, Pastoral Care Mary Reilly, full-time Senior Administration Supervisor with responsibility for the Student Assistance Fund

## 1. Progress Report

### 1.1 Access

- DkIT joined the HEAR scheme for intake September 2020. As HEAR representative for DkIT, the Access Officer assisted with the promotion of the HEAR/DARE Open Day in TUD. It is anticipated that membership of HEAR will lead to increased access rates to DKIT from those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The decision to join the HEAR scheme was in part in response to feedback from guidance counsellors in the region.
- PATH 2: The Access Officer identified a number of changes that would make better use of DkIT's resources in terms of the administration of the 1916 Bursary Scheme and also sought to remedy alterations to the operation at cluster-level that had seen the MEND cluster move from a ring-fenced number of bursaries per HEI. These changes were proposed to the cluster and agreement was reached – DkIT has again ten bursaries ring-fenced for DkIT students and operation of the scheme has been returned to HEI-level to the greatest extent possible. This allows a better use of DkIT staff time and resources (even more so following COVID 19) and more importantly ensures that the Institute will be able to award ten bursaries to our students this year. In response to the COVID 19 situation, much work has been done over the past number of months to develop an internal application system that will incorporate an online application form. A detailed Application Guide (including a Data Policy) has been developed and put on the DkIT website – flyers referring to where this information may be found have been developed for first year registration packs.
- **DkIT Sanctuary Scholarship:** This is a new initiative developed by the Access Officer, taking into account the experiences and schemes in operation in other Institutes of Technology. The scheme is now operational for academic year 2020/21 intake and applications are being accepted over the summer months, with a deadline of the end of August. As well as information being available on the DkIT website, the engagement of various staff members in DkIT and the Irish Refugee Council in promoting this scheme has been sought and has been forthcoming.

### 1.2 Disability

The table below shows the numbers of students and the breakdown per disability that were supported for 19-20 Academic Year. This includes, Undergrad, Postgrad, Part-Time, Full-Time and Apprentices. This figure includes students who require support and are not funded through the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD).

Disability	Numbers
Apprentices	28

Mental Health Condition	2
Neurological Condition	2
Specific Learning Difficulty	24
<b>Full Time</b>	<b>261</b>
ADD/ADHD	6
ASD-PDD_NOS	1
Autism Spectrum Disorder (Including Asperger's Syndrome)	23
Blind/Visual Imp	3
Deaf/Hearing	4
Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)	
Dyspraxia	26
Mental Health Condition	24
Neurological Condition	11
Physical Disability	16
Significant On-going Illness	33
Specific Learning Difficulty	109
Specific Learning Difficulty: Dyscalculia	2
Speech and Language Difficulty	3
<b>Full Time PG</b>	<b>3</b>
Neurological Condition	1
Physical Disability	1
Significant On-going Illness	1
<b>Part Time</b>	<b>5</b>
Specific Learning Difficulty	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>297</b>

### 2.3 Health Unit

- This academic year saw the completion of the digitalisation recording system and the removal of the manual recording system within the Health Unit resulting in a more efficient and time saving operation. The new system is more secure and more GDPR compliant and has enhanced efficiency in relation to connectivity with the GP service and outside medical and psychological services – hospitals, medical laboratories etc.
- This academic year saw the continuity of the “Healthy Campus” week, organised by the Health Unit, where a very successful collaboration between a wide variety of outside agencies who attended the campus. These organisations dealt with many aspects of health and wellbeing including mental health issues, sexual health wellbeing, physical fitness and wellbeing, support for substance misuse and personal safety etc. The success of the week was greatly enhanced by the assistance of DkIT staff including personnel from the Department of Hospitality Studies, the School of Nursing and student services colleagues particularly the sports and society’s officer and the student counselling team. The feedback from the student body regarding the “Healthy Campus” week was very positive with many students actively participating in the various activities and availing of advice from the volunteers.

### Adaptation to Services in the context of Covid-19

As and from early 2020 we all became aware of outbreaks of COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) disease from the Coronavirus. The Health Unit in DkIT made contact with the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) Ireland. We were advised on a regular basis by them of health and safety protocols to use in a third level educational setting. This resulted in the need to adapt our current service to meet health and safety criteria.

Amongst the changes we made were the following:

- Communication with students. Students were regularly notified of health and safety best practice e.g. Hand hygiene, cough etiquette, social distancing, education regarding symptoms of Covid-19 etc. The Health Unit was provided with educational posters by the HPSC. These were displayed throughout the Institute.
- Students were notified by the Health Unit of changes within the unit regarding a new appointment and triage system, new Emergency/ walk in service and the availability and adaptation of a temporary isolation room.

## 2.4 Student Counselling Service

The main feature of this academic year was the impact of Covid which resulted in the complete closure of the institute on the 12<sup>th</sup> March. At the time of the closure we had just begun contingency planning for such an event and were therefore ready to immediately pivot to online provision of services. Sessions were offered securely through the institute's Microsoft TEAMS platform. This allowed us to offer sessions via video, telephone or live text. At the beginning a significant proportion of clients asked to wait for sessions until they could do face to face, but despite this considerable reduction in the second semester we still had 425 clients registered with the service an increase of 17 on last year.

The Head of Counselling Service's role as chair of PCHEI resulted in a number of initiatives and collaborations at a number of levels the most significant of which was our lead on a successful application for funding for an anonymous reporting tool for sexual harassment & violence at third level. We will be collecting data for the next academic year.

Other initiatives from the Service throughout the year include:

- Arranged for Consent play for all incoming first years.
- Completed Consent training and arranged a number of workshops with class groups. This programme was significantly disrupted by the Covid shut down
- Contributed to a number of student care Team meetings.
- Requested to do a number small group presentation to final year nursing students on self-care, stress and burnout
- Training session with Heads of Sports and Societies on recognizing and responding to student distress
- Preparation of proposal around Social Prescription with an aim of accessing Strategic Initiative funding

### Impact of COVID

Practical arrangements: We used the institute's Microsoft Teams to provide a secure platform to continue to provide sessions. This allowed us to offer clients

sessions via video, phone or live text. Most of our clients who chose to continue chose the video option. Some were impacted by poor connectivity and lack of privacy to engage

All our therapists were able to use their own laptops and because we have a paperless service with all data held on the cloud we were all able to immediately access our case files and keep them securely updated

Mental health information: From the early days of the lockdown we tried to keep a line of communication open with students by sending them regular updates with mental health information particularly in relation to managing their mental health in a pandemic

Together with USI we recorded a short video about service availability and keeping well

Were also asked to prepare a funding submission on the short, medium and long term needs of our services given the expected impact on mental health of students

Safety assessment: We completed an assessment of our facilities in terms of a return to work. Given that we have three spacious well ventilated offices there is nothing to stop us returning. We have completed an assessment of the changes that need to be made and this will be written up in a return to work policy.

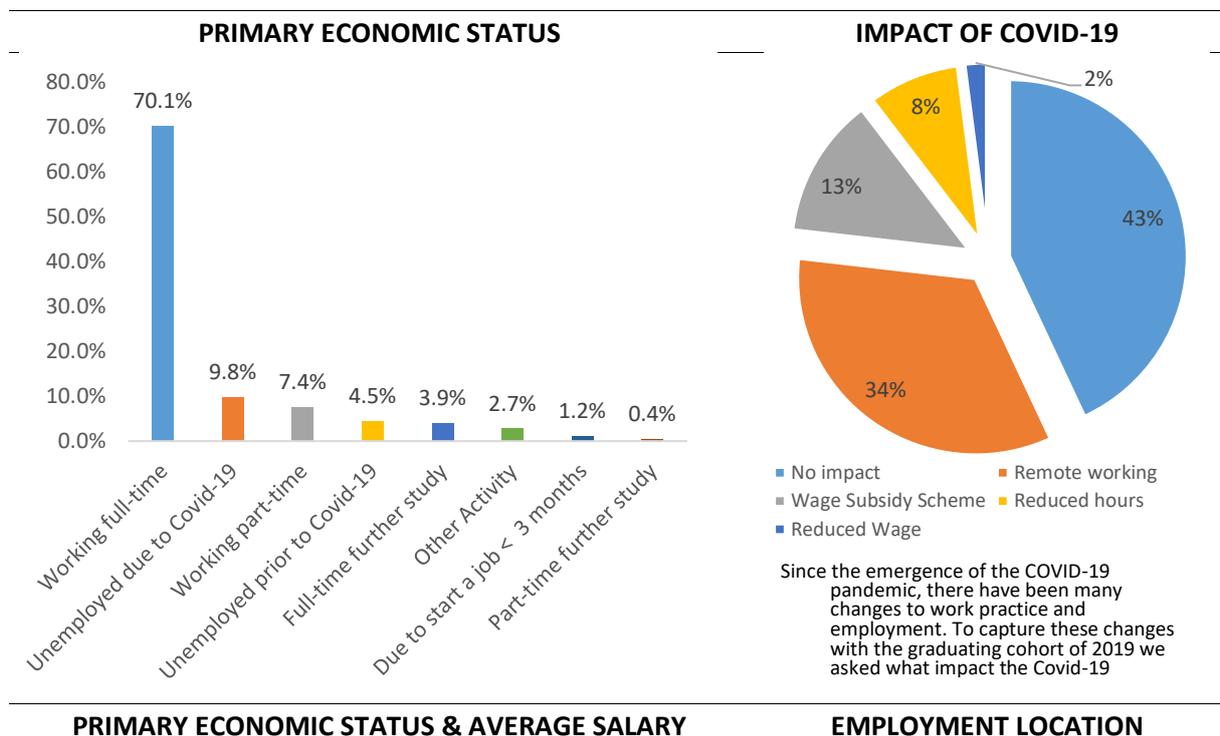
Service offering on return: In line with the best public health advice we will offer a blended service with face to face and remote sessions being offered. Face to face will be prioritised for those with mental health issues in line with the recommendations of the AHEAD and USI report. We are also hoping to facilitate a number of formal and informal sessions with students to help them stay connected

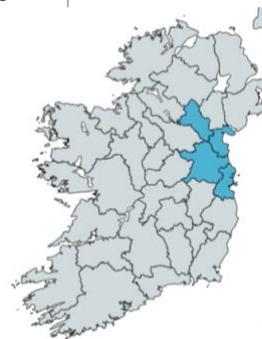
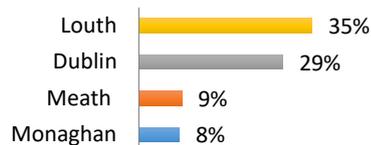
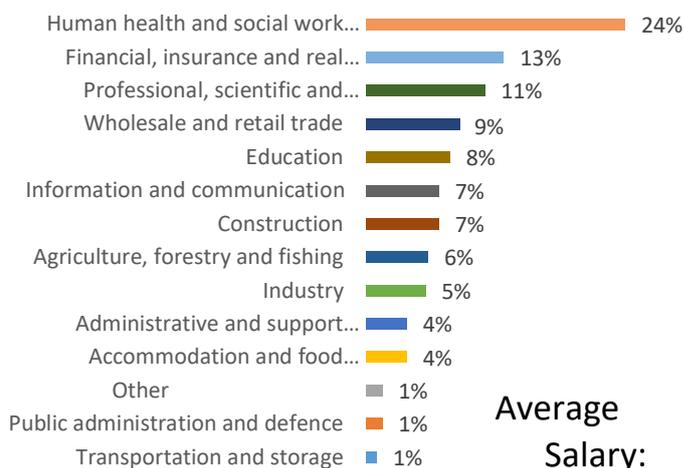
We are also going to offer Consent and Bystander inputs online as another way to keep the connection with students.

We will to explore the training of online supporter/mentors through the class rep system to provide regular collegial support to those students that are struggling

## 2.5 Careers & Employability Centre

- September 2019 to March 2020 showed a strong engagement in 1-to-1 Appointments for this period with an increase of 28% from the previous period. There was a fall off from March 2020 due to Covid19, however overall there was only a minor decrease of 1% for total 1-to-1 Appointments, with a total of 472 1-to-1 Appointments for 2019-2020.
- Careers & Employability Centre established an outreach office in the Carrolls Building to support engagement from the School of Informatics and Creative Arts, this resulted in a 29% increase from the previous year by students from this ICA School.
- Annual Careers & Industry Fair in October 2019, was a very successful event, sponsored by Prometric.
  - 67 exhibitors attended the Fair.
  - For the first time a dedicated CV clinic manned by the CEC
  - staff was held in conjunction with the Careers Fair with over 70 students attended for a 10 min CV review.
  - 5 Accounting Professional Bodies delivered presentations to Business and Accounting & Finance students.
  - The Placement Office facilitated companies in
  - break-out rooms to present to students and interview for their placement.
- The Service successfully completed the Careers and Placement Centre survey for mobile use using MS Forms to support increased engagement with graduates. The following is a summary of the results:

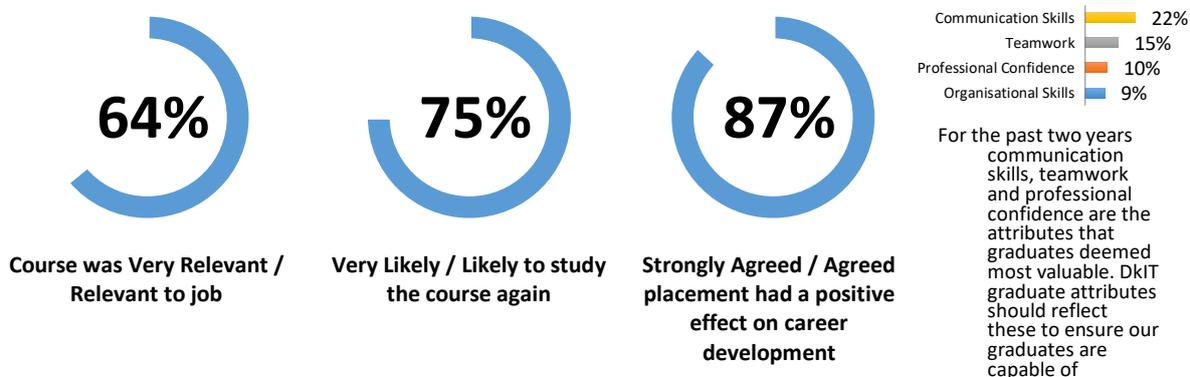




Average Salary:

€30,154

### RELEVANCE OF COURSE, LIKELIHOOD OF CHOOSING THE COURSE AGAIN, PLACEMENT IMPACT AND GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES



### Embedding Employability Initiatives

- The Careers & Employability Centre was one of the lead partners in supporting the DkIT Partners in Employability Elevate Honourary Award initiative, funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning's 2018 Enhancement fund. This project focus was to promote student engagement and partnership, provide a framework for engagement within DkIT, designed in partnership by students and staff, and to support students to recognise, articulate and evidence the employability skills developed in the course of engagement activities.
  - The project employed 7 Student Interns for 8 weeks in June – July 2019, to co-design and co-create this framework, which resulted in the DkIT Elevate Framework for Student Engagement,
  - The DKIT Elevate Award launched in January 2020, and 19 students achieved Award on April 2020.
  - Co designed the **Certificate in Engagement & Employability (10 credit, Level 7 Special Purpose Award)** to accredit the learning and skills developed through engagement. Eligible students will have 100 hours of engagement and complete a portfolio of employability activities. Validated in February 2020, and is planned to will launch in September 2020.
- Secured Strategic Enhancement Funding of €40,000 from Teaching & Learning Forum for Embedding Employability project to deliver an Institute Employability Statement & Policy and Graduate Attributes. Delivery extension until May 2021.

### Employer Engagement Events & Collaborations

- **Tech Masterclass Series** over Semester 1 & 2 in conjunction with School ICA and the Student ACM Chapter focusing on presentations from Tech professionals and their insights on employability. Contributors included, Microsoft, Amazon Web Services,
- **Pitch & Meet Event** in December 2019 with students from Department of Computing and Visual & Human Centred Computing pitching to high profile tech companies participated in the event including; Google, Amazon Web Services, Microsoft, First Derivatives, Prometric, TrustToken, Verizon Connect, SyncIT and Intact.
- **Careers in Education Week** in October 2019 and January 2020 with presentations from the Teaching Council, Primary & Post Primary PME and Adult Education providers DCU, Trinity, Hibernia, ER&M and Engage Partners for Teacher Training in UK
- **WuXi DkIT Partnership** - Graduate Programme and student placement partnership established with WuXi Biologics Dundalk for Science and Engineering students. Summer Placement programme postponed until Summer 2021 due to Covid19.
- **Entekra Site Visit** - CEC facilitated an on-site visit for Build Environment and Engineering students (1<sup>st</sup> year – Final Year) to Entekra on 7<sup>th</sup> February which comprised site guided tour, presentations from Entekra
- **Graduate Programme Presentations with Regional SMEs / MNC**
  - APB Presentations to Agriculture, Mechanical & Electrical and Computing final year students in January / February
  - WuXi Presentations to Science and Engineering final year students in Seapark Consultancy – Video Presentation April 2020
  - Paycheck Plus – Video Presentation May 2020
  - November 2019, with on campus interviews in December 2019
- **AHECS Labour Market Survey 2020**  
The Careers & Employability Centre will conduct the first ever AHECS survey with graduate recruiters in June 2020. The DkIT CEC has responsibility for promoting this survey within our region/partner employers and industries.

### **Online Careers Supports during Covid19 (March 2020 onwards)**

- Move all f2f appointments to virtual appointments, all bookable online via Careers Connect
- Developed and circulated a series of Careers Supports, Insights and Opportunities emails to graduates and students
- Developed a specific Graduate Jobs / Programme Database and circulated
- Updated Moodle Page with online extended online resources for Careers Development
- Careers Skills Webinar Week 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> June Hidden Jobs Market, Creating A Winning CV Preparation, Interview like a STAR, Getting Started with LinkedIn 2020
- Career Discovery Week, GradIreland – 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> June, online fair for all students and graduates across all disciplines. DkIT partner on this event.
- Partnered with IADT, WIT and LIT on Meet the Employers Series from 23<sup>rd</sup> June - 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020 <https://iadt.ie/news/iadt-careers-webinar-schedule/>

### **Placement Office**

- The academic year 2019-2020 saw 726 students across 21 undergraduate programmes of study prepared for work placement. The Placement Office

managed Electronic and Mechanical Engineering for the first time and hopes to support the rest of the Engineering and Built Environment programmes in 2020-21, if Placement Officer resourcing is provided.

- The Placement Office delivered over 78 placement preparation classes in the academic year 2019-2020 as well as individual one to one meetings with work placement students.
- Adaptation to Placements in the context of Covid 19:
  - All Placements were formally cancelled from March 2020 for remainder of the 2019 – 2020 semester.
  - Of the 726 students who were due to complete placement 78% (566) commenced their placement and 22% (160) completed an alternative project.
  - Placement Office managed the communication of this significant and immediate change process to both students and staff. Placement Office support academic teams in exploring and implementing alternatives to placement.
  - Placement Office worked on a strategy to manage placements for new academic year where Remote Placements would be a priority area.

## **2.6 Sports and Societies**

### Participation and performance

The Institute continue to have high levels of participation and all of our sports teams are competitive within their respective grades. A particularly pleasing aspect of participation this year is that we managed to field a ladies soccer team and also increase numbers playing both soccer and rugby.

This may be as a result of the Ladies 20x20 initiative that we hosted in October 2019.

Some notable achievements for 2019/20

- All Ireland Div 2 GAA Senior League Champions
- Fielded four soccer teams including three male teams and one female
- Ladies Rugby team qualified for Student Sport Ireland Div 2 Final
- Ladies GAA team qualified for Lynch Cup weekend for first time since 2014. Unfortunately competition postponed.
- Fielded ladies basketball team who qualified for Div 3 league semi final-competition postponed
- Freshers GAA team lost All Ireland league final to Tralee and had qualified for championship final but this was postponed.

### Ladies Sport 20x20

We ran a ladies sport initiative for the month of October. The structure of sessions was a 20 minute circuit followed by 15 minutes GAA, 15 minutes soccer and 15 minutes rugby. The principle behind it was to give girls an opportunity to try sport for the first time but also for elite players to try a different sport. We also felt that by having girls from a variety of sports training together that they could assist each other (i.e. some of the GAA girls helping out rugby team. We invested significantly in this programme with all participants receiving a ladies sport jersey if they completed 3/4 sessions.

### Funding

The Sports and Societies Office were successful in in their application for a sports capital grant of €63,000

### Sports Scholarships

For 2019/20 the service moved the sports scholarship application to an online format. This proved to be successful as we received in excess of 130 applications, of which 95 were interviewed via Zoom. This is an increase on a previous maximum of 65. We will continue to offer the online application process for 2020/21.

### Sports and Societies Awards Night

Unfortunately the annual awards night had to move online which meant for the first time since 2007 we did not host an in person event. To create some interest we introduced online voting which proved to be a successful initiative as we had over 300 votes for the various awards. We will keep this system even when we can host the event in person.

### Impact of communication methods for Sports and Societies

<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Instagram</b>
Number of likes:	Number of followers:	Number of followers:
2013- 170	2013- 190	2015- 120
2019 - 6000	2019 - 2047	2019 - 1256
2020- 6210	2020 - 2088	2020- 1494

Sports and Societies continue to maintain an active presence on social media and our numbers of students engaged continues to grow.

## 2.7 Student Assistance Fund

	<u>2017/18</u>	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2019/20</u>
Funding Allocated	€235,584	€221,957	221,957
Lone Parents PT	<u>22,648</u>	<u>22,877</u>	<u>23,151</u>
	258,232	244,834	245,108
Number of Applicants	385	402	571
Successful Applicants gaining financial assistance	335	329	372

<b>Category of Financial Assistance</b>	<u>2017/18</u>	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2019/20</u>
Living Expenses	218,600	211,169	241,200
Rent	34,450	37,500	1,050
Transport		300	
Childcare	685		
Books/Class Materials	2,575		
Medical	-		500
Hardship	1,648	1,501	2358
Un-used	274	€57	

## 3 Community Engagement

- The Dundalk Schools Completion Programme Dundalk brought a group of level 5 students from O’Fiaich College on an Insititute visit. The visit by the group created its own dynamic in terms of presenting DkIT as an option to those who may not have previously considered third level.
- Second level students registered with the Ballymun Initiative for Third Level availed of a structured visit organised by the Access Officer. The feedback from the students and the BITE Coordinator was very positive. These students from Trinity Comprehensive in Ballymun have been identified as both strong candidates for third level study while requiring additional supports in advance of third level entry due to high levels of socio-economic disadvantage.
- The Health Unit continued their association with the Ladywell Psychiatric Centre in Dundalk who have provided great assistance to the Health Unit.
- The Health Unit have also benefitted from the assistance of the local Garda Síochána in relation to road safety, personal safety etc.
- The Head of Student Counselling arranged 3 day online PCHEI conference covering Grief Impact of Covid, Compassion Focussed Therapy and the Standardised data set
- DkIT Placement Office attended several networking events including this event M1 Drogheda Chamber Skillnet event “Grow your Business Expo” in September 2019 where a representative sat on the panel discussion and the “Commuter Job Expo” event held in February 2020

- Careers & Employability Centre delivered two sessions to the Community Education Headstart programme in June 2019 on Career Planning and Decision Making
- DkIT CEC Co-delivered with UL Disability Careers Advisor - presentation on Supporting Students with Disabilities on Placing Students – June 2019
- As part of the Partners in Employability Project, CEC staff presented at 2 Conferences in the UK focusing on Student Partnerships
  - Towards Meaningful Partnership, University of Surrey, September 2019
  - New frontiers in educational and curriculum development SEDA Conference in Leeds in November 2020
- The Careers and Employability Centre is a partner in this National Forum for Teaching & Learning funded student – staff collaboration (Students Union, CELT & Student Services) which aims to recognise the employability skills developed by students involved in active engagement. Project will collaboratively design an special purpose award that recognises such students
- The Sports and Societies Officer presented at a Student Sport Ireland Workshop in May 2020.
- The Sports and Societies Office are working with Leinster Rugby to become one of its five regional centres
- Sports and Societies are working in partnership with colleagues in Louth GAA, Dundalk FC and Dundalk Rugby Club to provide Sports Scholarship Programme.

#### Attendance at Community Engagements/Events

	Engagement/Events
18 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup> September	Represented DkIT at Higher Options Event
18 <sup>th</sup> October	Access Office study visit to LIT
October	Represented DkIT at ASD Post School Options for people with Special Needs Exhibition 2019 in association with Autism Support Louth and Meath
13 <sup>th</sup> November	Access Officer Presentation to Mature Students DIFE
14 <sup>th</sup> November	CMETB Careers event in Monaghan
November	Disability Service Represented DkIT at Better Options
29 <sup>th</sup> November	FE presentation in MIFET
2 <sup>nd</sup> December	FE presentation Cavan Institute
3 <sup>rd</sup> December	Presentation to mature students MIFET
December	Sponsored and hosted the Lennon Cup All Stars U18 GAA Schools All Star Team
March	Organised the 1 <sup>st</sup> year secondary school ladies GAA 5 aside blitz
	Represented DkIT at DARE information Day
September (originally planned for April)	Organised the Dundalk 10k run
	Planned visits from February onwards were cancelled due to Covid.

## 4 Quality Review

### 4.1 Access and Disability Service

- The access rates of target groups is collated by the HEA and comparisons made with other IoTs (incl. TUD). According to HEA data (2020 Equal Access Data for RGAM), DkIT has performed strongly over the recent past and recorded an increase in our access rates from the target groups of 12.8%. By comparison only one other IoT has an increase near this rate (9.3%) – all others had a small increase or decrease. The rate across all IoTs (incl) TUD was an average (increase) of 1.5% This level of increase in DkIT is a welcome outcome in what is an increasingly challenging and competitive environment.
- The Access Officer made a visit to LIT in the past academic year to benchmark access services in both institutions. The Access service in DkIT differs from that in LIT (and all other IoTs) in that only in DkIT is the Access Officer directly involved in the admissions process (e.g. dealing with CAO files and data, fielding admissions queries from mature applicants, organising assessment of mature applications, communicating outcome of this assessment to the Admissions service etc). One area of interest was LIT's involvement in outreach provision of access courses. On enquiry, it transpired that LIT is not offering access courses to the extent envisaged or advertised – take-up of these courses has been poor and the viability of these courses is in question. The Access service in LIT employs three dedicated members of staff (compared to one staff member in DkIT): the Access Officer, a Pre-entry Officer and a Post-entry Officer. The LIT Pre-entry Officer tends to concentrate more on primary and second level students whereas in DkIT the Access Service concentrates more on FET students and second level in a targeted way by working with other agencies or groups (BITE, JAI, etc.).
- An on-line survey was sent to 265 students registered with the Disability service with 74 responding: 76% of respondents said they were happy with communication and support from DS post campus closure on 12<sup>th</sup> March with 55% of respondents indicating they would prefer to be on campus.
- From feedback at DAWN meetings the Disability Service is comparing well in the sector.

#### *Disability Service usage statistics – Numbers of students (FT/Undergrad)*

	2019-20	2018-
Full Time Undergrad Disability		19
ADD/ADHD	6	4
Autism Spectrum Disorder (Including Asperger's Syndrome)	24	25
Blind/Visual Imp	3	3
Deaf/Hearing	4	3
Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) Dyspraxia	26	23
Mental Health Condition	24	26
Neurological Condition	14	8
Physical Disability	16	12
Significant On-going Illness	33	39
Specific Learning Difficulty	111	115

- There is an increase in students presenting with DCD (the service employed the service of a specialist DCD remote coach for two Nursing students who were struggling with Clinical Placement, this will most likely be required again in the future). Physical disability has increased this year by 4. A lot of students have more than one disability and above only takes into account their primary disability. Increase also in Neurological, this would include Epilepsy, Acquired Brain Injury and now includes Speech and Language Disorder (as per FSD guidelines).

#### 4.2 Health Unit

- The feedback from the student body regarding the “Healthy Campus” week was very positive with many students actively participating in the various activities and they also availed of advice from the volunteers.
- Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the Health Unit have been in constant contact with nursing colleagues in other HEI’s communicating shared difficulties, experiences and appropriate responses. Since the closure of the Institute in early March they have maintained regular contact regarding protocols, changing HPSC Algorithms and adaptations required for remote working.

Health Unit Usage	Student No’s 2018/19	Student Numbers 2019/20		
		6/9/19-12/3/20	13/3-30/4/20	1/5-30/7/20
Visits to Health Unit	2660	1860	295	186
Visits to GP	2216	1774	125	124

#### 4.3 Student Counselling

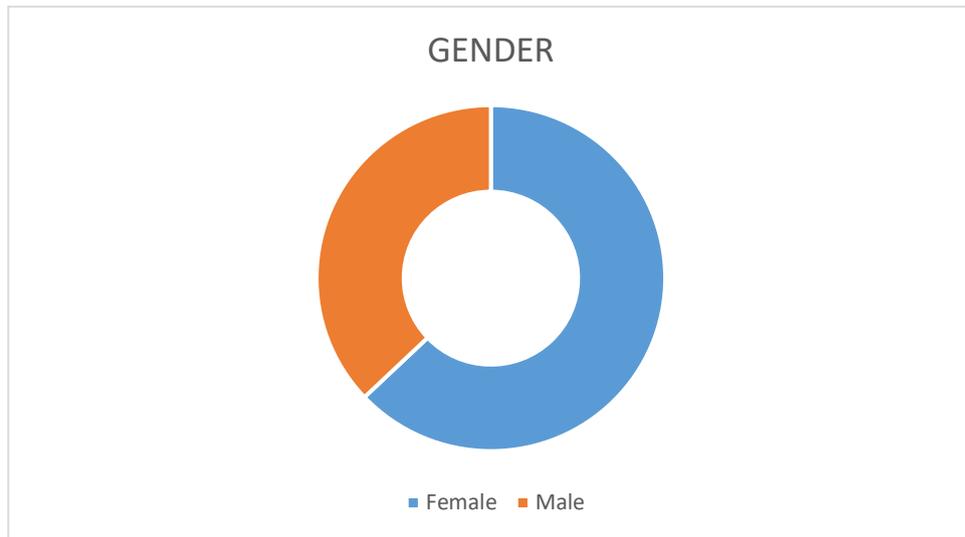
425 clients contacted the service seeking appointments this year, a 4% increase on last years figures despite the service being operated remotely from 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1911 sessions were offered.

See table below with figures from the last 5 years

15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	National Benchmark
315	316	345	407/4577 8.9% of students	425	6.9%

Our DNA rate at 6% and cancellation figures of 11% the same as those from the last two years – due to the fact that we continue to send text reminders on the morning of the appointment..

Average number of sessions per client is 3.8 which compares well with the average figure nationally which is 3.5



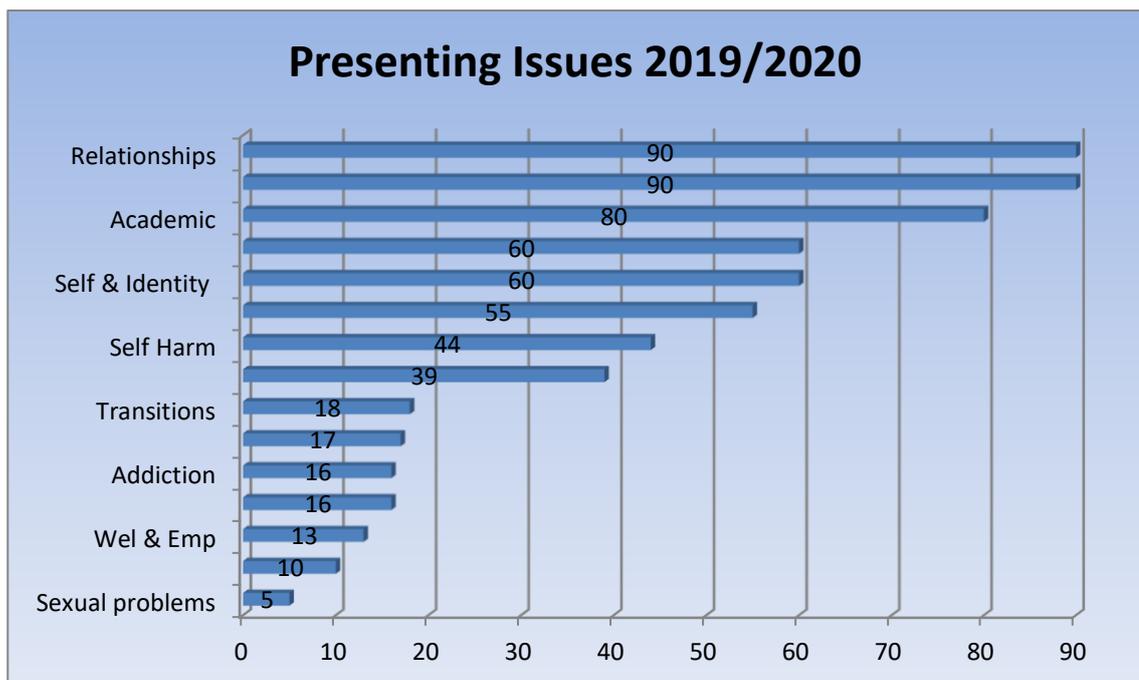
263 clients were female and 155 were male, a slight drop in the number of males accessing the service this year

**Non-traditional students:**

Mature	73(17%)
International	13 (0.3%)
Disabled	38 (9%)
<i>Learning</i>	9(2%)
<i>Physical</i>	4(0.9%)
<i>Psychological</i>	25 ( 6%)

There was a big increase in the percentage of mature students attending counselling up from 9% last year

**Presenting issues**



Interestingly for the first year relationships ties for the top most common presenting issue++++

There were 5 clients who reported rape, 2 who reported sexual assault and 8 who had been sexually abused all of which bears out the reported increase in this type of crime

### **Students at risk:**

At assessment 44 clients were assessed as at risk that is 10% of our clients. Risk criteria include suicidal thoughts 19, previous suicide attempt 14, history of self-harming - 7.

### **STUDENT RETENTION, ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND OVERALL STUDENT EXPERIENCE 2018-2019**

(Statistics based on Ciao, a standardized measure of Counselling Impact on academic Outcomes used across colleges in the UK)

81% said that counselling helped them stay in college

For 61% it was an important or the most significant factor in helping them stay in college

88% said it helped them do better in their academic work

For 60% it was an important or most significant factor in doing better at their academic work

90% said it had improved their overall experience of college/university

For 65% it was an important or the most significant factor in improving their college experience.

89% said counselling has helped them develop skills that might be useful in obtaining future employment

For 73% it was an important or most significant factor

90% said that counselling has improved their self-esteem

For 61% it was an important or most significant factor in improving their self esteem

91% said that counselling had helped them feel more positive about the future?

For 68%% this was an important or most significant factor in feeling more positive about the future

(Based on 25% of clients – those that completed both pre and post CIAO)

#### 4.4 Careers & Placement

The Careers Service carries out feedback on one-to-one appointments via a short survey questionnaire, once per semester: See below summary of survey feedback:

##### **Student Satisfaction**

100 % Agreed (93% Strongly Agreed)	My Careers Advisor paid attention to my query
100% Agreed (92% Strongly Agreed)	My Careers Advisor was knowledgeable
100% Agreed (70% Strongly Agreed)	My expectations were met as a result of my conversation
92% Strongly Agreed	I felt comfortable discussing my concerns with the Careers Advisor
92% Strongly Agreed	I would recommend my Careers advisor to others
85% Agreed	Scheduling an appointment was easy

##### **How Students Scheduled Appointments**

- 54% via Careers Connect
- 23% via Email
- 15% In person
- 8% via Referral

##### **Overall Experience**

- 92% Agreed (85% Strongly Agreed) - Talking with my Careers Advisor was valuable
- 92% Strongly Agreed - My experience was positive
- 92% Agreed (77% Strongly Agreed) - I would return to speak with a Careers Advisor if I needed further assistance

##### **Placement Office**

In May 2020, the Placement Office carried out their annual survey to obtain feedback from both host sites and students regarding their work placement experience for the academic year 2019/20.

- **97%** of host site respondents said that DkIT students added value to their service. The top areas where student added value:
  - Extra resource to start/complete specialised projects
  - Motivated and enthusiastic undergraduates who are willing and eager to learn
  - provide new perspectives and approaches to problems
- **96%** of host respondents said that they would hire a DkIT graduate.
- Professional Attitude and Willingness to Learn are the two most sought after skills from our host sites.
- Feedback from students was also useful where **95%** of students who responded said that their work placement had a positive impact on their future career confidence.

- The *greatest learning* for students on placement was *Professional Confidence*
- The top *3 challenges* for students on placement were *Communicating with New People, Confidence, and Stress/Pressure*

### **Benchmarking - Trendence Student & Graduate Survey on Careers Thinking**

DkIT participate in the national Trendence Online Questionnaire Survey - Conducted Oct 2019 - Jan 2020

15,014 Respondents Nationally

- 30 HE Institutions
- 231 respondents from Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Weighted sample

#### **Summary of Key Findings:**

- **71% of DkIT students are satisfied with your careers service, higher than the national average (59%).** Students are particularly satisfied with the email communications they receive and the availability of appointments.
- IT, Public Service and Science are three most popular sectors with your students, while first years are interested in the Department of Education. Your finalists are primarily focused on Engineering and Accountancy employers with Aer Lingus, Bank of Ireland and Deloitte in the lead. Most active employers on campus are Amazon and AIB.
- The most popular on campus engagement methods are on campus career workshops and stands at careers fairs. Digitally, your students prefer to communicate via email. In comparison to the total sample, your students are more engaged with emails from gradireland.

## 4.5 Sports and Societies

### **'Student Activity and Sports Study Ireland Institutional Report Self-Assessment Review' (SAR)**

The Sports and Societies Officer was involved in this national review with input from colleges and universities throughout the island, to provide an up-to-date national portrayal of the current third level sporting landscape, including facilities, personnel, current and capital investment, and student participation across the sector as a whole, as well as providing individual institutions with the opportunity to compare their individual data and activity levels with other participating institutions.

Some key findings from the report include:

- **STAFFING Per 100 students:** Staffing provision, in particular full-time staff (ranked 16th of 17 TLIs) is very low. DkIT is ranked 3rd of 7 ITs and Other Colleges for part-time staff and volunteers.
- **INDOOR FACILITIES (m2) Per 100 students:** DkIT is ranked highest among all TLIs for (i) overall indoor facilities, (ii) owned facilities, (iii) fitness suite area, (iv) free weights area, and (iv) studio rooms/other courts. However, no indoor track and field facilities were reported. DkIT is ranked 5th of 7 ITs and Other Colleges (8th of 17 TLIs) for the area of sports hall(s). Other facilities reported for DkIT included ten indoor astro-turf pitches.
- **OUTDOOR FACILITIES (m2) Per 100 students:** For the overall area of outdoor facilities, DkIT is ranked 5th of 7 ITs and Other Colleges (and of all 17 TLIs). DkIT is ranked 4th of 17 TLIs (and of the 7 ITs and Other Colleges) for both (i) owned facilities and (ii) grass pitches. However, no synthetic pitches, outdoor track and

field, rowing or sailing facilities are available. Other outdoor facilities reported for DkIT include walking/cycling trails.

- CAPITAL INVESTMENT (€000) Per 100 students: Capital investment in both indoor (ranked 16th of 17 TLIs) and outdoor facilities (ranked 15th of 17 TLIs) is very low. DkIT is ranked 6th of the 7 ITs and Other Colleges for both indoor and outdoor facilities.

We can see from the Student Sport Ireland report that we haven't excellent facilities in DKIT Sport but our capital investment has been weak in recent years compared to other third level institutes.

Student Sport Ireland have introduced a grading system for college competitions called 'Student Sport Ireland Sports College of the Year'. This system awards points for participation and performance at third level sporting competitions. We ranked 11<sup>th</sup> out of 31 colleges and we were the fourth ranked Institute of Technology on the list. This is similar to our position in 2019.

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## 5 Staff Training

<b>Service</b>	<b>Training</b>
Access	SUSI training Identifying and Responding to Students in Distress provided by DkIT Counselling Service
Access/Disability	HEAR Training
Disability	Coaching Training with DAWN Weekly webinars with AHEAD
Health	ISHA 2020 Conference on the 28-29 <sup>th</sup> of February 2020. "Healthy Campus Network meeting" on 26/11/2019 Consultant to the DkIT Covid 19 Taskforce
Counselling	Attended the Launch of the Myworld Survey 2 report Provided keynote speeches the the launch of the USI report on Student Mental Health Attended CAMs triaining on managing Suicide risk with Dr Eoin Galavan Training on the impact of the findings of the My World 2 Survey with PCHEI Training on attachment SAI online training inputs
Careers & Employability	Certified Professional Coaching Training via AHECS (May – September 2019
Sports & Socs	Showing Resilience in Adversity by Sport Ireland
All	Moodle training for Student Hub

## 6 Challenges

- The absence of a Community Connector in DkIT for almost a full calendar year has been challenging. This Community Connector has special responsibility for the Communications work of the cluster on the PATH 3 project (College Connect). A number of discussions have taken place over the past year with our MEND partners. It has now been agreed that henceforth the communications brief of this role will be managed by MU (and a staff member has been hired for this work) and the community engagement element of the role will continue to be operated from DkIT once a Community Connector is back in this post.
- It has been a challenge to incorporate the work of PATH 3 into the existing workload of the Access Service. DkIT's communicated position for some time now has been that the College Connect project needs to focus more on community outreach – now with the emergence of COVID 19 this goal appears to be further away than ever however DkIT has asked that online modes of engagement be examined. There have been significant staff changes which have had a negative impact on the project – the project manager employed by MU has recently resigned her post and the Research Officer post (also employed by MU) has been vacant for most of the project duration to date.
- It is not clear how sustainable some of the current projects developed under College Connect will be once the funding comes to an end.
- Bernard Duffy Scholarship: As the 1916 Bursary scheme is to be extended for another three years and receipt of same is not permitted in conjunction with any other scholarship, it has been decided not to establish the Bernard Duffy Scholarship scheme until such time as the 1916 Bursary scheme is due to come to a close.
- While the access service in DkIT is conceived as having very much a recruitment function, this recruitment role must be balanced by the reality that the Access Officer has a strong and ongoing interaction with current DkIT students. The Access Officer now administers and operates three scholarship / bursary programmes and liaises with student recipients of these supports. These are invariably students that are experiencing multi-faceted disadvantage and require high levels of support and encouragement.
- There is little to indicate that involvement in PATH 3 College Connect will lead to increased student numbers from the target groups. It is hoped that a more coordinated approach within DkIT to recruitment will yield positive results in this area.
- The Access Service is reviewing improvements that could be made to the mature entry route, further clarity is required from academic departments in relation to their requirements of a mature application and the number of places they have available to offer.
- Better linkage between SOLAS and the Disability Service in DkIT is required, information regarding students with a disability could be shared to reduce the time that the apprentices need to meet with the DS and the Service could liaise with these students on registration.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there will be many difficulties and unknowns adapting to a unique situation. Amongst the many obstacles are the following:
  - The adjustments to be made in relation to Health and Safety.
  - The alteration to the physical layout of the Health Unit.
  - Organisation of safe staff rostering.

- The technical changes with regard to virtual triage/diagnostics/treatment.
- Ongoing communication with the student body.
- The organisation of a suitable isolation area.
- Adapting to ever-changing protocols and algorithms as per HPSC recommendations.
- The impact of Covid 19 on the work and supports offered by the CEC; including
  - Ensuring quality of service provision in a remote context
  - Adapting our services / supports to the online environment – e.g. Careers Fairs / Employer Engagement events etc
  - Student engagement issues – due to remote learning / working
  - Uncertainty of the employment landscape, and how best to prepare graduates in this context
  - Availability of student placements in line with public health guidelines and in sectors which have been particularly negatively impacted by Covid19, hospitality, events, construction etc.
  - Developing quality supports for Remote / Virtual placements
- Training for staff on necessary IT developments / platforms to support effective remote working and workshop delivery
- CRM system to support Placement Office in their work
- Develop a more robust structure for measuring centre type and impact of activity – feedback, metrics etc.
- Increasing student engagement on Careers activities
- Increasing graduate engagement on Careers Connect
- Managing the SATLE project for Embedding Employability in such changed environment – extension of project provided until May 2021
- The impact of Covid provides a huge challenge to Sports and Societies. The service is about bringing people together to enhance their third level experience. We have learned that we are able to provide a service that provides reasonable interaction using online platforms.
- Although we have excellent facilities, we are still short in a number of important areas in particular the upgrade of floodlights and the development of a multipurpose floor in DKIT Sport.
- Student applications for funding through the Student Assistance Fund continued to increase with a high number of students seeking financial support. The administration of the fund with existing resources continues to be a challenge.

## 7 Planning

The values of equality diversity and inclusivity underpin the DkIT Strategic Plan and these values underpin the access service. Under Strategic Priority 1, the access service is strongly engaged with NEFHEA and with the MEND Cluster (PATH 2 and PATH 3). Strategic Priority 2 directly intersects with the ongoing work of the access service in terms of the key role it plays in increasing access rates from under-represented groups.

Feedback from mature students has confirmed that visits to and talks in FET and adult education centres leads to increased access to DkIT from this target group. The restrictions around COVID 19 poses a difficulty in this respect. Over the summer the

access service (in conjunction with the Marketing Department and other colleagues) delivered webinars to actual and potential mature applicants and to FET applicants – this was a response to the COVID 19 situation. Levels of engagement were high and feedback was very positive – this mode of delivery and engagement has a lot of potential.

DkIT undertook to provide a specialised fully accessible changing room in summer 2019. This room will be available for use from first Semester 2020.

One to one, Learning Support will be offered online by MSTeams, we are also planning to have a service on campus if needed, depending on student requirements. S161 the Tutor room has been assessed by Estates for compliance. A 2<sup>nd</sup> Monitor will be required in the room for the tutors to avoid close personal contact.

The new ATTA will also be available to meet the Disability Service and students on appropriate Assistive Technology. We hope also to arrange group and individual training sessions in the use of AT and provide a space for this training in the Library.

A Sensory Pod was purchased and we are awaiting confirmation from Estates on a suitable location for it to be delivered and installed, it is hoped that this will benefit ASD and MH students primarily and will be bookable by students registered with the DS, it is hoped that its presence will create a calming, secure, safe space for students who may need that environment and that it will increase willingness of students to disclose to the DS the presence of a disability.

Whilst moving all counselling sessions online was disconcerting -as well as being exhausting, especially in the early days - it has not hampered the therapeutic process. In fact some clients have found it easier to work in this way. It is particularly beneficial for those students who are socially anxious and find it difficult being face to face with someone. Whilst it was easier to move online with clients with whom we already had a relationship it was possible to work well even with new clients. Going forward the Counselling Service intend to offer a suite of services and allow the client to choose what suits them best and that this will continue even in the aftermath of Covid. This will make the service much more accessible particularly those on placement or who have transport issues. The Service have developed a Netiquette Policy, which clients will need to sign up to. The Service will provide training in online counselling text counselling for those who need it.

We have no idea of the long term impacts of Covid other than we know that it has huge impacts on mental health and managing this going forward may involve and increase in personnel

The main priority for the Health Unit for the next academic year is to enable a safe return to the Health Unit for all students and Health Unit Staff.

The Careers & Employability Centre will continue to lead on the employability priorities in the Strategic Plan under the following Strategic Objectives:

- **Strategic Goal 4:** To foster the development of learners as graduates, personally and professionally, who can contribute positively to society
  - **Strategic Objective 1:** To enhance student engagement

- **Strategic Objective 2:** Ensure that employability is identified as a key aspect of the learning experience
  - DkIT Graduate Attributes developed
  - Institute Employability Statement developed, adopted, and interpreted in the context of each programme
- **Strategic Objective 3:** To enhance engagement between employers and learners.
  - Number of placements and the trends in growth, enterprise area and location
  - Number of employer/employability related events on campus
  - Number of graduate programme partners with DkIT on a national and regional basis

During the Semester 1 of 2020-2021, the CEC will develop an Operational Plan to support the implementation of the above Strategic Objectives and to feed into the Student Services wider Operational Plan

#### Priorities

- Prepare an CEC Operational Plan which reflects DkIT Strategic Plan and the realities of Covid 19 on services provision and student support
- Delivering on Embedding Employability project outcomes including - Institute Employability Statement / Graduate Attributes
- Increase Online / Virtual student supports and opportunities to engage with students on careers related supports.
- Support staff in relevant CPD training
- Developing a more robust structure for measuring centre type and impact of activity – feedback, metrics etc.

Sports and Societies plan to develop a structured mentoring system for Sports Scholarship students and provide specialised training for committee members for societies and clubs. The improvement of the indoor and outdoor facilities are a priority in meeting the growing needs of students with the Sports Capital Grant being allocated to the upgrade of floodlights and provisional approval granted for the multipurpose floor in DkIT Sport.

A strategy and implementation plan will be developed by the Student Services Team in line with the Institutes Strategic Plan for student engagement and support.

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