



# DKIT Student Services

Support, Empower, Include



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Student  
Services**  
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It is the mission of Student Services, to offer the highest quality experience and support for all DkIT students and to ensure effective communication and planned actions between the various student service supports.

Student Services, which are managed by the Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager (AASAM), and operate under the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (Registrar's Office), are a team of professional service providers who provide support for students to actively engage in their third level experience. The services are provided to full-time and part-time undergraduate, postgraduate, Springboard and apprentice students. The Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager meets representatives of the services on a regular basis to ensure efficient and effective delivery of supports to students. The Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager is also a member of the Institute Management and Planning Committee (IMPC) and Academic Council (AC). All activities in the area are driven by strategic objectives aligned with the Institute Strategic Plan (2024-2028).

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# 1 Strategic Developments and Updates

This section provides a summary of the activities and developments in Student Services for the reporting period 2023-2024.

## 1.1 HEA, Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)

The Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) is a dedicated fund, broken into five strands, committed to increasing participation by under-represented groups in higher education. The programme supports the delivery of the National Action Plan Objectives. The following is an update on projects which have been developed over the reporting period in DkIT, under strands 2-5, to support the priorities of the National Access Plan.

### **PATH 2 - 1916 Bursary**

In 2023/24 the application process moved to a centralised national process and the Access Service promoted the scheme and provided information to 1<sup>st</sup> year students pre and post entry. This scheme will be administered by SUSI, the national awarding authority for Further and Higher Education Grants, for the next academic year.

### **PATH 3 - Higher Education Access Fund**

DkIT has a particular focus on working to support the recommendations made in the Drogheda Report Implementation Plan which is a development from the Geiran report. The Access Service worked on building relationships with community groups and organisations (particularly Youthreach) that deliver diversion activities and after-school supports to young people who are at risk of dropping out of formal education as well as working with those who have already dropped out of school but who are being encouraged to return to formal education or related. We supported 'New Choices' in Drogheda and 'NYPD Youth Diversion Project' in Navan working with young people at risk of early-school leaving and involvement in criminality.

### **REACH (Raising Educational Aspirations for Communities in Higher Education)**

Further discussion between DkIT staff and the community organisations working in the area of diversion highlighted the need for further networking and training opportunities given the scale of the challenges faced in working with young people most at risk. These discussions culminated in the REACH (Raising Educational Aspirations for Communities in Higher Education) seminar on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024 - funded by PATH 3 College Connect. There were over a hundred attendees at this event (including our partners in Drogheda and Navan). The focus of the event was how to empower community organisations to increase access rates from young people in their community. A particular focus was conducting this work in an environment in which child trafficking is rife (specifically 'recruitment' of young people into the illegal drugs trade). DkIT is committed to being responsive to the needs identified rather than being prescriptive

in terms of what is required and to providing further opportunities to these community groups to meet, to develop strategies and to collaborate.

#### **PATH 4 Phase 1 - Universal Design Fund - Supporting inclusive universally designed higher education environments for all**

The Disability Officer led out on 2 projects under this PATH Strand to provide Campus Accessibility Improvements that will demonstrate best practice in UD and support autism-friendly campuses. The third project under this strand, to provide Technology-based solutions that support inclusive practices in teaching and learning, was led by the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CELT). All of these projects will contribute to enhancing an inclusive environment and to the digital accessibility aspect of inclusive practices:

##### **Enhancing accessibility on campus:**

In July 2022 DkIT commissioned an accessibility audit, conducted by a consultant architect with expertise in universal design. The output of the audit will aid in the formulation of an action plan to support improved accessibility. In 2023 funding from this project has been used to support the implementation of priority actions from the plan.

##### **Towards an Autism-friendly campus at DkIT:**

AslAm conducted a campus sensory audit in September 2022. The outcome of this audit, together with evidence and best practice, has been used to develop an action plan. Funding has been used to support the development and commence implementation of this action plan.

##### **Enhancing digital accessibility at DkIT:**

This project supported the implementation of an accessibility toolkit for the VLE. This toolkit was used to conduct an accessibility audit of the VLE and to develop an action plan. The project focused on building capacity among staff and students through awareness raising, training, guidance, and support.

#### **PATH 4 Phase 2 - To improve opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to engage in higher education**

The Careers & Employability Centre, Disability Service and Sports and Societies were part of the steering committee alongside other student services colleagues and the Department of Nursing, Midwifery and Early Years, that secured funding following a competitive call for proposals to enhance the existing DkIT Certificate in Skills for Independent Living programme.

This project will facilitate the Career Preparation and Work Placement optional modules for the 2024 student intake. This will provide employability skills and workplace opportunities for students thus enhancing their potential to enter the workforce. A dedicated Placement Officer managed through the Careers & Employability Centre will lead out on the employability element of this programme and work with the Centre on supporting placement students registered with the Disability Office in planning, securing and completing their work placement modules. The recruitment of a Support and Integration officer shall further enhance the integration of the students into the DkIT college community and shall provide them with the additional support required to maximise their student experience in DkIT. The Support and Integration Office will develop and implement programs aimed at fostering social integration and inclusion for students registered on the Independent Living programme and those registered with the

Disability Service. This enhanced programme shall be evaluated throughout its lifecycle to optimise the delivery and student experience for future student cohorts.

#### **Path 5 - Funding to support Traveller and Roma Students in Higher Education**

The Access Office focused in particular on a cohort of Navan-based second level students from the Traveller community. These students availed of structured visits to the DkIT campus and related field trips. A dedicated Traveller and Roma outreach worker has been recruited for the next academic year.

## **1.2 Autism Friendly Institute**

DkIT was accredited as an Autism Friendly HEI Candidate at the start of the academic year. As part of that accreditation the Autism Friendly HEI Working Group developed an Action Plan which was presented by the DkIT Disability Officer to AsIAM's Accreditation Panel in June 2024. The Action Plan was accepted and the Institute accredited as an Autism Friendly HEI. The Institute will continue to implement the actions outlined in the plan over the next three years.

## **1.3 National Frameworks**

#### **National Framework for Consent in Higher Education - RESPECT Campaign**

The DkIT frameworks manager worked closely with the Marketing team to develop the RESPECT Campaign (**R**esponding to and **E**nding Sexual Violence and Harassment, **P**romoting Positive sexual **E**xperiences and **C**hanging Campus culture **T**ogether).

The campaign was launched in March 2024 to coincide with RAG Week. A new dedicated RESPECT Webpage, with information on key messages, training, internal and external supports and pathways to reporting, was developed. Promotional videos were created with students and key members of staff to engage students. A range of resources including badges, lanyards and phone pop sockets have been used both to promote the campaign and as an incentive for staff and students to engage in training.

The following awareness raising and training sessions were provided during the reporting period:

- Induction for first year students outlining the implementation of the Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment Framework in DkIT (RESPECT Campaign) and the key messages of 'Consent'. This included an introduction to online training resources that are available to all students and the 'Speakout' Anonymous Reporting Tool.
- Training for Sports and Societies officers and Student Ambassadors including a presentation on ESVH and the RESPECT Campaign in DkIT.
- Presentation for new staff members on the ESVH Framework; Training Commitment by DkIT on ESVH, Online Trainings Available, Speakout Anonymous Reporting Tool, and pathways to reporting incidents.
- Interactive Information Stands at key events including the Health Fair, S.H.A.G week, Sports and Societies Sign up day and RAG Week
- 'Active Consent' workshops were facilitated for 1st Years in October 2023 (30 students).
- 'Disclosure Training' facilitated by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre was delivered in Semesters 1 and 2 (20 staff).
- Information on 'Active Consent', 'Bystander Training', 'Speakout' and 'IADT Moving Parts' Videos were made available for students on Moodle in the Counselling Hub.

## **National Framework for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention**

This year, the Institute Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework action plan was revised and re-structured to support a more effective implementation process. Four key areas (Live, Learn, Support and Improve) now encompass the key recommended actions from the HEA framework and the working group membership has been expanded in line with this to ensure key elements from the Institute are represented.

The Institute appointed a Mental Health Nurse Advisor in January 2024 on a two-year fixed term contract, funded by the HEA Mental Health Funding, to provide a comprehensive suite of mental health and wellbeing supports within DkIT Student Services. One of the key actions under the SMH Framework this year has been the partnership with [The Jed Foundation](#), a US based charitable organisation that provides colleges and universities with expert support, evidence-based best practices, and data-driven guidance to promote and support student mental health and work towards reducing rates of suicide within the student population. This is a 2 - year process, where we will work with JED, with an Institute Wide Approach on creating a culture of care where all students feel seen and supported

## **Making Every Contact Count (MECC) Programme - guided by the HSE MECC Framework**

The Institute Health Unit is participating in the HSE MECC Programme by helping students who visit the service make changes to lower their risk of chronic disease. This approach encourages students to make healthy lifestyle choices during this critical period of their lives, with the goal of preventing chronic disease.

## **1.4 DkIT Elevate Award**

The Elevate Framework and Award, in its fifth consecutive year, is the result of a partnership between the Students' Union, the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and Student Services, and is led by the Careers and Employability Centre. This event has become a highlight in the Dundalk Institute of Technology calendar. On June 17th, 22 students across disciplines and stages received this unique award for 2024, this was the largest number since the initiative began, and an increase of 9 students on previous year. Stronger connections with the Sports & Societies Office in particular has contributed to this increase. The ambition is to grow these numbers by reviewing the process alongside the key stakeholders and adapt the process to increase the level of student awareness and engagement with the award. The Award is part of DkIT's commitment to support greater student engagement and partnership within DkIT, but also to empower students to recognise and evidence the employability skills they develop through active engagement. The Elevate Awards are made to students who, through their engagement with DkIT life (a minimum of 45 hours) have contributed significantly to the DkIT community and who have evidenced a range of impressive employability skills through their engagement. Alongside their voluntary work, students must complete a CV, LinkedIn, Graduate Attribute reflection and a recorded Elevator Pitch to meet the award criteria





## 2 Changes to Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures were introduced/updated during the reporting period 2023/2024:

**2.1 Mental Health Policy** - The Student Counselling Service introduced a drop - in service to support students in need of urgent, same or next day support. This also enabled us to offer practical support to any students who are struggling with the registration process. The service operational policy was updated to reflect this.

**2.2 Health Unit** – the following policies and procedures were updated for the health unit: Sexual violence policy for nurse led clinic, Venepuncture policy, Removal of sutures policy, Ear irrigation policy, medication protocol for administration of influenza vaccine, handling of clinical samples policy, and procedure templates added to medical system.

**2.3 Sports and Societies** – Compulsory training was introduced for societies and procedures documented for society membership, event organisation, registration and budget proposals.

**2.4 Access to Facilities** - The introduction of card-swipe access to the AT Room and the Sensory Room provided access to registered students with disabilities to independently access both spaces when required providing increased usage of the rooms and resources.

## 3 Service Activities and Developments

This section outlines some of the key achievements and initiatives within the Student Counselling Service during the year 2023 – 2024 along with some learning points and plans for next steps.

### 3.1 Access Service



**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 access service also works to increase the participation of these students in third level with a view to successful completion of their programme of studies.**

In academic year 2023/24, work began on the PATH 5 project. This involved eight field trips / workshops offered to second level students engaged with Meath Travellers Workshop (MTW):

Apprenticeship Section DkIT, LMETB Regional Skills Training Centre, Cookery School, Irish National Stud, Veterinary Nursing DkIT, Aiken Barracks (Defence Forces), Humanities DkIT, Battle of the Boyne site. Following discussion with students and staff in MTW, further development of this project will, in 2024/25 academic year, likely prioritise additional tuition supports. Students are more motivated and aware of the benefits of third level study as a result of the year's activities.

The Access Service engaged with those working with people engaged in diversion projects / activities. Visits to campus were arranged for two groups of young people engaged in these projects. Following meetings with staff on these projects, PATH 3 funding was provided to the projects in order to purchase learning equipment and learning resources. This is work that was highlighted as a future priority for DkIT as part of our College Connect PATH 3 work. Allied to this, the Access Officer and staff from other HEIs participated in a structured visit to Mountjoy Prison (June 2024). The visit included meetings with prison staff, prisoners and CDETb staff with a view providing education to prisoners above FET level 5. Please see below for details on the REACH seminar held on 6<sup>th</sup> February. Venues / events / talks delivered in 2023/24 include:

- Dunboyne FET College
- DIFE - talks and Careers Fair
- Colaiste Dhulaigh Careers Fair
- Louth Meath Migrant Forum
- LMETB Careers Fair
- Apprentices Expo
- Higher Options
- Jobs & Education Fair Navan (Meath Partnership)
- Monaghan Institute

### **The Bernard Duffy Scholarship**

The Access Service launched The Bernard Duffy Scholarship scheme in 2023/24 academic year. This scholarship targets HEAR eligible students entering DkIT having completed the Leaving Certificate in a non-fee paying second level students in Dundalk town. Exceptionally in this inaugural year, three rather than two scholarships were awarded as two of the top three points scoring students were “tied” on Leaving Certificate points.

### **TUSLA - focused effort on reaching those in the care system (new target group)**

The Access Officer has met with TUSLA staff in Counties Louth and Meath with a view to increasing awareness of supports (financial and otherwise) for students in this geographical area who are in the care system.

### **HEAR entry route promotion**

The Access Service promoted the HEAR entry route at a series of external events during the academic year (including LMETB Careers Fair, Coláiste Dhúlaigh Careers Fair, Louth Meath Migrant Forum event, Meath Partnership Jobs and Education Fair, Higher Options, Dunboyne FET College Careers Fair, DIFE Careers Fair, etc.).

### **DkIT Sanctuary Scholarships Programme**

One student continued to be supported under the terms of this programme. While there were many queries throughout the year, most prospective applicants were not eligible to apply and of the minority who were eligible, they did not receive an offer of a place at DkIT. It is noted that prospective Sanctuary Scholarship applicants apply, in the main, for very high-demand programmes (nursing programmes).

### **Kickstart Scholarship**

Two students are being supported with this Scholarship (funded by The Probation Service). DkIT will have two more scholarships available for the next academic year.

### **PATH 3**

DkIT used PATH 3 College Connect funding to support projects (New Choices in Drogheda and NYPD Youth Diversion project in Navan) working with young people at risk of early-school leaving and involvement in criminality. We began engagement by delivering a mentoring workshop in a community premises in Drogheda to community workers in the region - with a specific focus on working with young people at risk. DkIT alumni were now working in many of these organisations and a degree of follow-up networking took place. (This culminated in the REACH event on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Further meetings saw the Community Connector meet with staff on the New Choices project in Drogheda. Young people engaged with these projects were facilitated with structured visits to the DkIT campus in academic year 23/24. Many of the young people engaged in the Navan diversion project are from the Traveller community. While the PATH 5 partnership with Meath Travellers Workshop allowed DkIT to focus on those still in second level education, we worked to develop ways to reach those who have already left formal education and identified Youthreach in particular as a valuable partner.

### **DEIS Schools**

DkIT engaged in a series of meetings with newly designated DEIS school in Dundalk - St Louis Secondary School and Coláiste Chú Chulain. Following discussion between DkIT and St Louis

Secondary School about possible ways in which to best support their students, it was agreed that a sensory pod would be a very practical way in which to support two categories of students (not mutually exclusive) most in need of support were those who were neuro-diverse and also those experiencing heightened anxieties around engagement on the physical campus in the post-lockdown environment. Seven schools were supported with a fully-funded online tuition service (Studyclix). Two of the schools received this support for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year students (St Louis Secondary School and Coláiste Chú Chulainn) - this is in line with our particular focus on newly-designated DEIS schools. The remaining five schools received this support for their 6<sup>th</sup> year students. This support is greatly valued by the students and staff of these schools - as all students in the year have access to the resource, lesson plans and homework activities can be planned around the use of this online service.

## **PATH 5**

DkIT focused in particular on a cohort of Navan-based second level students from the Traveller community. In academic year 23/24, these students availed of structured visits to the DkIT campus and related field trips. In addition to working with our second level school partners, we believe that there is a need to reach out to the parents of these students and this will form part of our outreach learnings from 23/24 to input into activities in the 24/25 academic year.

DkIT has supported our community partner MTW to deliver cultural awareness training to schools and Youthreach centres as part of the underpinning of the work we carried out in 23/24 academic year to increase Traveller access rates to third level (which starts with being supported to continue with study at second level). This reflects the need to foster an environment that is conducive to the aims of PATH 5. In tandem with this, on campus diversity initiatives have celebrated Traveller culture. One day (18<sup>th</sup> October 2023) of Diversity Week was specifically dedicated to the experience of the Traveller community via a vis education and an open forum discussion took place following talks from a panel made up of members of the Traveller community.

DkIT used part of its PATH 5 funding to fund the Whidden Workshops delivered through the PATH 3 College Connect project. Whidden Workshops - its Kusti to Rokker (WWKR) are a series of virtual, peer-led workshops where current Traveller & Roma students come together to inspire, inform & increase Traveller & Roma participation in higher education. The workshops provide prospective Traveller & Roma students with information, guidance, and insight into the real experiences of Traveller & Roma students accessing and currently progressing through third level education. DkIT students were active in these workshops during academic year 23/24 and it was also arranged by the DkIT Access Service for Traveller students from St. Louis Secondary School to join the (online) workshops during class-time (and with their teacher present).

## 3.2 Disability Service

 <div data-bbox="379 309 874 544"><b>Disability Service</b> Seirbhís Míchumas</div>	<b>The Disability Service provides support to students with a verified disability, significant ongoing illness or mental health condition who disclose to the service and request support</b>
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DkIT is committed to providing an equitable learning environment for all its students (including those with a disability). The Disability Service (DS) provides a wide range of supports and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Since 2018 DkIT has been supporting students who apply through the DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) scheme thus enabling those students who meet the criteria to avail of reduced points places on courses in DkIT. The DS works tirelessly to support students with physical, sensory, learning or mental health disabilities through a variety of supports offered, these include but are not limited to:

- Advocacy
- Note Takers (Human and Electronic)
- Personal Assistants
- One to one Learning Support Tutors
- Extended Library Loans
- Access to Sensory Room
- Access to Assistive Technology (AT) equipment, training and room.
- Reasonable Accommodations (RA) in Examinations

The following are some of the key highlights for the service this year:

- Accreditation as an Autism Friendly HEI
- The appointment of a Mental Health Nurse within Student Services is welcomed and provides another level of support for students. This post will be used to assist with assessment of student need for the next academic year, for students who disclose a Mental Health condition.
- The ongoing availability of an Assistive Technology Officer provides training to support students with regard to literacy difficulties and AT queries.
- The DS now provides information to new Invigilators and Scribes during their training. These sessions help invigilators and scribes understand the specific guidelines and regulations for supporting students with disabilities during exams, helping to maintain fairness and compliance. It also ensures that reasonable accommodations are implemented correctly, issues are addressed proactively and the process of invigilation runs smoothly and instils confidence in students and invigilators.
- The MS Form students use request supports in RA in Exams in In-Class tests has been updated to include a question to encourage students to engage with their lecturer before requesting

supports, this update is as a result in the over/miss-use of the form and the fact that some students' lecturers can accommodate the RA in in-class tests at a local level and not all in-class

tests require reasonable accommodations such as MCQ tests for example, without input from the DS and Exams to provide the support.

- Ongoing updates and maintenance of website, Autism&Uni website and the student Moodle support hub. A specific Staff section has been created on the Moodle hub which includes information about supporting many disabilities and RA in Exams and Marking guidelines.

<b>Types of Disability Supported (UG and PG) – Primary Disability</b>	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
ADD/ADHD	19	25	19	12	6
Autism Spectrum Disorder (Including Asperger's Syndrome)	47	27	32	23	24
Blind/Visual Imp	4	3	4	3	3
Deaf/Hearing	5	5	4	4	4
Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) Dyspraxia	33	29	31	33	26
Mental Health Condition	34	24	22	28	24
Neurological Condition including Speech and Language Dif.	22	24	22	20	14
Physical Disability	12	12	14	13	16
Significant On-going Illness	24	20	25	31	33
Specific Learning Difficulty	116	129	120	107	111
Other incl. General / Mild / Borderline Learning Difficulty	5	4	7		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>261</b>

For 2023-24 113 students had two or more confirmed disabilities/conditions.

### 3.3 Pastoral Care

	<h2>Pastoral Care</h2> <h2>Cúram Tréadach</h2>	<p>Pastoral Care is about welcome and working collaboratively in the provision of holistic care within the College community.</p>
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The pastoral care service continues to grow and develop. It is constantly adjusting to the need of staff and students. The following are some of the highlights for the Service:

- During Mental Health week a Gi-Qong class was organised with a certified Instructor. This is an active form of meditation which was very well attended. Also, a hike in the Cooley Mountains was organised during this week. This gave students an opportunity to spend time in nature, connecting with others looking after their wellbeing.
- Once again, we ran a Speechcraft 5-week workshop which offers students an opportunity to practice public speaking, improve their communication and confidence with an experienced instructor. This was very well attended once again and certificates of attendance were handed out to all those who completed the course.
- In November an Introduction to Yoga and Cocoa was offered to staff and students. This was an opportunity to take time out from a busy schedule to relax and unwind. These unique classes give staff and students and opportunity to try new things to promote their wellbeing.
- Breathwork classes were established in November, Breathwork is a form of active meditation. Classes were offered twice a week at lunchtime. Both students and staff were able to avail of these classes which were well attended and very positive feedback especially to students who were feeling overwhelmed.
- At Christmas we organised a massive raffle to win an E-Scooter which was kindly donated by a member of staff. This helped generate important funds for the Student Hardship Fund which supported keeping the food press stocked and supporting students who were experiencing financial difficulty.
- In February another trip to the Cooley Mountains was organised. These trips are important for encouraging students to spend time outdoors looking after the mental wellbeing and physical health. These trips are always a great success and a staple in the Pastoral Care calendar.
- This year a Positive Masculinity workshop was organised. This was a first for DkIT and this event was extremely well attended. It offered a safe and confidential space for men to open up and have conversations around their wellbeing and societal expectations and their impacts on men's mental health. It highlighted the need for more events like this.
- Pancake Tuesday was a big success this year. The set up and organisation was much better this year. There was a huge turn out from students again this year. Donations were made in support of the student hardship fund. It generated a good buzz on campus while also pulling staff together helping out to create a successful event.

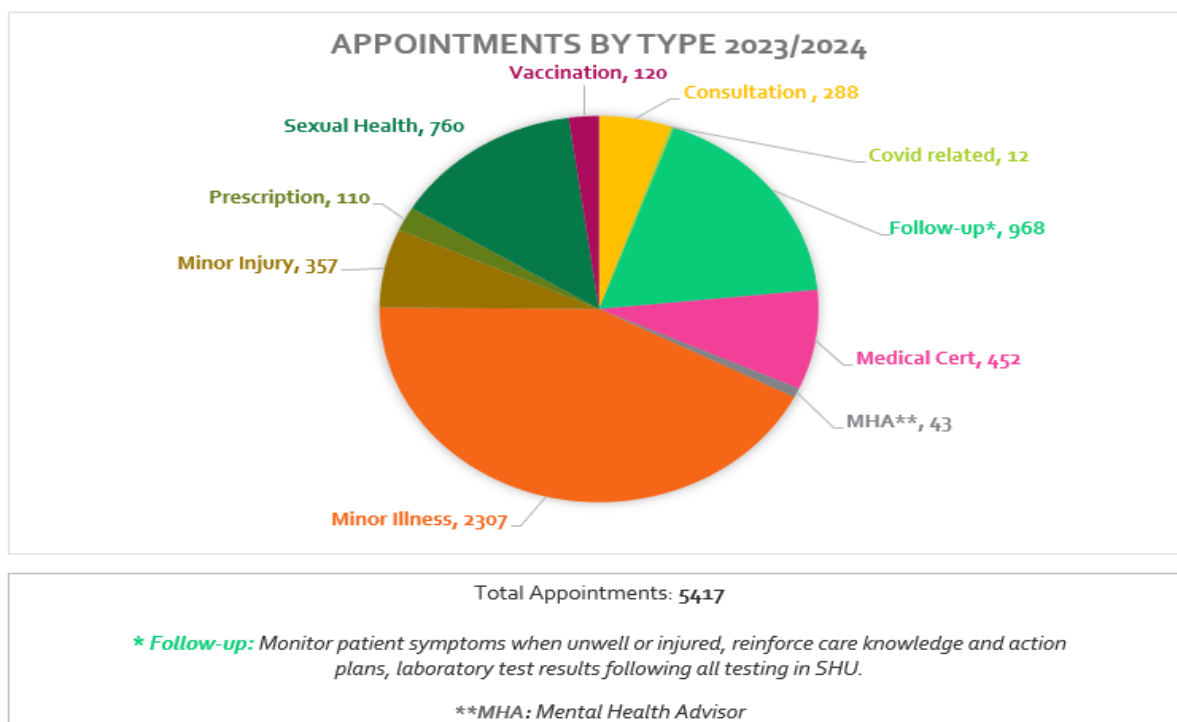


- DkIT Student Connect was established once a week at lunchtime to aid bringing students together to chat and connect over tea/coffee and biscuits. This will need work in the following academic year to really establish a consistent and regular meet up every week and to raise awareness of events such as these.
- A Tribal Drumming Workshop was organised in March. The facilitator John Bowker educated staff and students on the power of rhythm and its importance in our culture. It was beginner friendly and participants learned a little about each other as well as learning some drumming rhythms. This was a powerful event for all those that attended and the feedback has been great.
- A Historical Walking Tour of Dublin was arranged in April with a professional and experienced Tour Guide. We took a large group from Dublin to the City Centre and there we met our guide. The students were fully engaged as the brilliant powerhouse of knowledge and storytelling guide entertained for over two hours with detailed and amazing stories of Ireland's history.

### 3.4 Student Health Unit

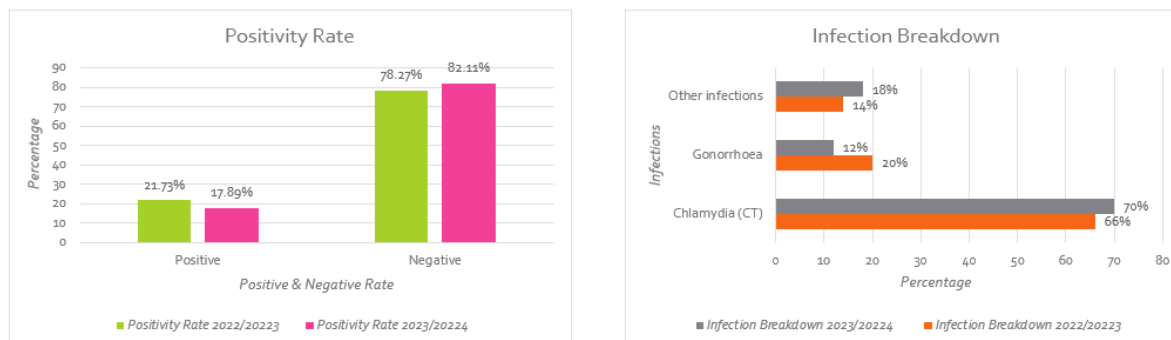
 <div data-bbox="395 846 901 1077"> <h2>Health Unit</h2> <h3>Seirbhísí Sláinte</h3> </div>	<p>Student Health Unit provides a general medical, psychological and health educational service to all students in a confidential, professional &amp; courteous manner. The centre includes free nursing care and access to a doctor at scheduled times throughout the week.</p>
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The Student Health Unit (SHU) team continue to improve the quality of the service provision to actively promote and support wellbeing and positive mental health. This is an on-going challenge with the continuous increase in the numbers of students seeking this support and the complexity of the issues presenting to the SHU.



The number of students attending the Student Health Unit (SHU) continues to rise, reflecting the increasing demand for our services. Among our various initiatives, we are particularly proud of our sexual health promotion and screening and the positive outcomes achieved:

#### Sexual Health Statistics



• In the **2022/2023** academic year, we observed an increase in the number of sexual health screenings among our students. Females accounted for 63% of the total screenings, while males made up the remaining 37%. The overall positivity rate was 21.73%. Chlamydia (CT) was the most common infection, representing 66% of the positive cases, followed by Gonorrhoea at 20%, and other infections (including HSV, M.Gen, Syphilis, and HPV) at 14%.

• In the **2023/2024** academic year, there was no change in the trend of increasing student usage of our sexual health services. We observed a 27.95% rise in the number of tests carried out. The positivity rate was 17.89%, similar to the previous year. Chlamydia remained the most common infection, accounting for 70% of positive cases, followed by Gonorrhoea at 12%, and other infections at 18%. Females continued to be more likely to use the service, with more than twice as many women getting tested compared to men.

The Health Unit kicked off the 2023-2024 semester by supporting the Student Union's Freshers' Week, as always. This event provides a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about the various student services available, especially for new students. Given the numerous social events during this week, we put significant effort into promoting healthy sexual behaviours, STI and unplanned pregnancy prevention, consent, and alcohol and drug awareness. To achieve this, we enhance our presence on social media platforms with informative posts and relevant links. Additionally, we update and expand our poster campaigns and visual displays around campus. We also set up pop-up stands across campus to offer advice and education, distribute free condoms and lubricants, and ensure that the condom dispensers are well-stocked.

On October 23, 2023, the Laura Brennan Catch Up HPV vaccination program returned to campus. This marked the third visit we organised for the HSE to provide this invaluable service to our students. Both male and female students, regardless of nationality or possession of a PPS number, could receive the vaccination if they had missed their school vaccination. The vaccinations were provided free of charge, and the campaign concluded in December 2023. Now, students seeking the same vaccines at third level might face costs up to €600. Each clinic saw an increase in uptake compared to previous numbers. These clinics are no easy task and involve extensive organising, communicating, planning, and advertising between the Health Unit and the HSE. This is all done while still striving to run an efficient service and care for sick students.

We successfully delivered two very busy Flu Vaccine Clinics in the Health Unit on November 23, 2023, and December 7, 2023. We saw a significant number of both staff and student participants.

## DkIT Health Fair 23<sup>rd</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024

The Health Unit was delighted to host its second in-person, on-campus Health Fair since the COVID-19 pandemic, which had necessitated a hiatus of several years. The event spanned three days and took place at various locations across the campus, showcasing a diverse array of companies and projects dedicated to promoting good health within our community.

Dr Sean Owens, a valued member of the Clermont Health team, working with the SHU, attended our Health fair this year to speak on “Healthy eating & lifestyle”. Sean has a special interest in sustainable diets, lifestyle medicine and planetary health and he is the current chair of the Irish Climate and Health Alliance, which represents Ireland’s leading healthcare institutions position on the potential co-benefits for Health with effective climate action.

As always, this successful collaboration between other student services colleagues particularly the sports and societies, counselling team, pastoral care coordinator, the student union team, personnel from the school of nursing, the Hospitality department along with other external agencies. Each day’s highlights:

### Day 1: General Wellness and Mental Health

- **Exhibitors and Activities:** A variety of exhibitors offered advice on wellness, sexual health, healthy eating, addiction support, mental well-being, metabolic testing, and body composition analysis.
- **Visual Display:** The “Share the Load” exhibit featured an eye-catching display of backpacks, symbolizing the average number of college-aged individuals who die by suicide annually in Ireland.

### Day 2: Healthy Heart Focus

- **CPR Training:** Our on-campus nurse trainers facilitated CPR training sessions, emphasizing the importance of immediate response in cardiac emergencies.
- **Health Checks:** The Irish Health Foundation's mobile unit provided on-board health checks and distributed heart health information.
- **Healthy Eating:** The campus canteen featured a "Healthy Heart" menu, promoting heart-friendly food choices.
- **Expert Talk:** Dr. Sean Owens delivered an engaging talk on “Healthy Eating & Lifestyle,” sharing insights on maintaining heart health through diet and lifestyle.

### Day 3: Road Safety and Nutrition

- **Road Safety:** The day was centered around road safety, highlighted by the launch of “The Lifesaver Project” by An Garda Síochána, marking its first introduction in County Louth.
- **Interactive Learning:** The Road Safety Authority (RSA) engaged attendees with interactive VR goggles to simulate safe driving experiences.
- **Nutrition Talk:** Sharon Courtney, a sports and exercise nutritionist, gave an informative talk on nutrition, tailored for active lifestyles.

Throughout the three days, the event also featured:

- **Breathwork Classes:** Daily breathwork sessions with Alan, promoting relaxation and stress management.
- **Vaccine Clinics:** COVID-19 and flu vaccine clinics were available for attendees.
- **Fitness Opportunities:** Sign-ups for exercise classes and hikes were offered, encouraging participants to stay active and engaged.

This year's Health Fair not only marked a successful return to in-person engagement but also reinforced our commitment to fostering a healthy and supportive campus environment.

In association with S.H.A.G (Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance) week, we organised an **HIV and STI awareness** mini-event on February 14th and invited HIV Ireland to join us. They brought their new team and van to launch their initiative "Equal Check and Chat," which aims to visit remote communities around Ireland, creating HIV awareness and offering rapid HIV testing and other services. We set up information tables outside the main canteen with posters, leaflets, and materials promoting healthy sexual behaviours, STI and HIV awareness, contraception, and unplanned pregnancy advice.

Additionally, we had a table displaying various contraceptive devices available to students, providing education on their use and how to access them.

To encourage engagement, we ran a sexual health quiz and offered free food and merchandise. The Equal Check and Chat team set up on Civic Square, educating, promoting, and offering HIV tests. They were impressed by the students' response and their existing knowledge. We were honoured to have HIV and Irish Trans Activist Rebecca de Havilland join us for the event.

DKIT was one of the first HEI's in Ireland to facilitate three **MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccination clinics** in March 2024 on campus. This was in association with the HSE due to the rise in measles cases across the UK and mainland Europe.

The MMR vaccine uptake in Ireland is currently below the WHO recommended target uptake of 95%. Nationally, uptake has been below 90% for seven consecutive quarters. There are also significant geographic variations with uptake *rates below 80% in Louth and Meath*, but as high as 94% in Dublin Southwest. A recent Irish study has also estimated that more than a tenth of adults aged 18-34 are non-immune to measles. It is nearly 20% for males aged 18-19 years. The likely reason for this high level of non-immunity relates to misinformation in the past about the vaccine which falsely implicated it with a risk of autism. As autism is more often diagnosed in young male children it is likely that a cohort of now young men were not vaccinated due to parental decisions informed by this "erroneous science" which has since been discredited.

The Health Unit team meticulously monitored the situation, maintaining constant communication with public health teams due to the elevated case numbers in our area. We proactively prepared for the clinic ahead of the official date announcements, ensuring we were ready to facilitate these clinics at a moment's notice.

The steps that were mentioned for organising the HPV clinics and Flu Vaccine clinics all needed to be put in place for these clinics also.

#### Service development;

The appointment in January of a Mental Health Nurse Adviser to help support students experiencing mental health difficulties has been a great addition to the SHU team. This role extends beyond offering immediate support to a more holistic approach to student wellbeing and includes the following:

- Personalised care plans tailored to each student's unique needs and strengths, which helps determine the type of mental health support they require and identify any additional support they may need. This can sometimes involve other resources available through DKIT student services.

- Close collaboration with the staff in the student health unit, student counselling, and disability services, providing support and assistance to all other offices and academic departments within DKIT when a student needs help.
- Working with students to help them understand their mental wellbeing and provide education and sessions on managing anxiety, stress, low mood and other issues.
- Offering support and resources when they feel overwhelmed.
- Support with medication management and regular check-ins
- coordinates with external services such as GPs, community mental health teams, psychiatry liaison teams, and inpatient mental health settings to ensure comprehensive support for the students.

### 3.5 Student Counselling Service

 <div data-bbox="363 658 951 851"> <p><b>Counselling Service</b> Seirbhís Comhairleoireachta</p> </div>	<p>The Counselling service is free and confidential for students.</p> <p>The service is operated by a team of psychologists and counsellors who are fully trained and accredited.</p>
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This section outlines some of the key achievements and initiatives within the Student Counselling Service during the year 2023 - 2024 along with some learning points and plans for next steps.

In the previous year's annual report, we reflected on some issues that we felt could be improved: We noted that there were high levels of missed and cancelled appointments at different times of the year and considered ways in which this could be addressed.

Service feedback indicated room for improvement in relation to 'accessibility' with students asking for quicker access to appointments, and access to more appointments. Additionally, some students reported to struggle with the online registration process (i.e., completing forms when struggling with mood). We considered introducing drop - in sessions to allow students to have a short exploratory conversation with one of the counselling team to identify needs and to signpost to resources and supports in line with this. We felt that this would support students in decision making with regards to their need for therapy and their capacity to engage with it. It would allow us to ensure availability for urgent appointments and the spaces could also be offered to students who are having difficulty with the registration process. In September 2023 we introduced a drop - in service from 11 am until 1pm each day, shared on a rotational basis across the team. The 'duty counsellor' is also allocated responsibility for responding to issues of concern that may come in to the counsellor email throughout the day.

We also recognized the need for greater visibility of the service across campus. We updated our information leaflets, webpages and Moodle tiles to assist with this. This will include key information regarding the nature, purpose and scope of the service, as well as how to access appointments.

Increased engagement with the service by international students had been observed as a trend in recent years. We identified a need for training to support our abilities to provide culturally sensitive care. To meet this need, this year, we organised training from (ICOS - Irish Council for International Students) for staff including ourselves and also attended further training on 'Cultural Humility'.

### Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework

The counselling team continue to lead the student mental health working group. This year, the action plan was revised and re-structured to support a more effective implementation process. Four key areas (Live, Learn, Support and Improve) now encompass the key recommended actions from the HEA framework and the working group membership has been expanded in line with this to ensure key elements from the Institute are represented.

<b>Live</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We organised a <i>'Mental Health Awareness week'</i> to align with World Mental Health Day (10<sup>th</sup> October) in partnership with other teams from student services and the student union. This jam-packed weeklong event consisted of a myriad of workshops, mental health guest speakers, positive mental health tips, music and mindfulness, onsite supports and fun activities for both students and staff. We also celebrated the 20-year anniversary of Student Counselling within the Institute.</li> <li>We led a 'task and finish' group to develop a <i>'Student Mental Health' Policy</i>. This has been completed and the policy will now be submitted for approval to the Policy Committee.</li> <li>In semester 2, we organised a <i>'Pride Across the World'</i> - Living Library Event in partnership with 'Dundalk Outcomers'. A panel of speakers from different countries shared their experiences and challenges living as a member of the LGBTQ+ community to an audience of 70 students and staff.</li> </ul>
<b>Learn</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We created a dedicated tile on Moodle called <i>'Supporting Students as Staff'</i> (SSAS). This holds information on the Counselling Service, schedule of training events, online training modules, information videos, general information on how to access our service and details for additional supports that are available on a 24/7 basis.</li> <li>We organised and facilitated <i>training sessions for staff and students</i> to enhance awareness of mental health issues and build skills in responding effectively to students who are experiencing distress. (See table below)</li> </ul>
<b>Support</b>	<p><b>Togetherall</b> - We continue to offer students access to 'Togetherall', an online space where students can talk, share, support and be supported by peers, anonymously. It also provides the option to enroll on one of twenty-two structured self-help courses. It is suitable for students with mild to moderate mental health concerns and it has a large clinically trained team of mental health professionals who moderate the site 24/7, known as 'Wall Guides'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Togetherall' has been promoted through bespoke emails to all staff and all students, pull up banners located strategically across campus, a Togetherall Tile on Moodle, the provision of a PowerPoint to academic staff to share within lectures, the development of a promotional video and regular visibility on social media channels (e.g., Instagram accounts from Students Services; DkIT; Students Union), and the use of the Togetherall logo within e-mail signatures and 'out of office' replies.</li> <li>A total of 100 DkIT students registered with Togetherall this year, bringing the total number of students who have registered with the platform since it was launched in October 2022 to 191. The main issues addressed related to: Anxiety, Stress, Relationships</li> <li>29 courses were completed by DkIT students, the top two being:</li> <li>Managing Depression &amp; Low Mood</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve Your Sleep</li> <li>• The platform has been able to reaching traditionally underrepresented students, with 35% identifying as being from an ethnic background and 34% identifying as male. It has supported students who otherwise did not engage with support services (64% reported that Togetherall was only form of support and 22% reported having had no additional support, including no friends or family).</li> <li>• Support was given to students considered to be 'at risk' of harm, with 34% of users reporting having considered suicide in the past 6 months and 34% also reporting having self-harmed.</li> <li>• 37% of users were given 1:1 support from online mental health practitioners.</li> <li>• Emergency support outside of traditional hours (over a weekend) was reported to be given on one occasion. The student was then signposted to engage with the counselling service and registered with us on the following Monday morning.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Body Project</b></p> <p>The Body Project is a group-based intervention that provides a forum for students to confront unrealistic beauty ideals and engages them in the development of healthy body image through verbal, written, and behavioral exercises. The programme is publicised as 'Body Acceptance Classes'. It was hoped that peer facilitators trained last year by student counselling service staff, would be able to run the classes this year but due to personal and academic demands this was not feasible. Two members of the counselling team successfully publicised and co-facilitated the programme in semester two. A DkIT video recorded with SU Vice President for Welfare, was developed on campus to help promote the classes. The video was subsequently offered to all HEIs nationally to use with their own internal promotion of the Body Acceptance classes. A total of 4 participants started the 4- week (1xhr/week) programme. Two participants were unable to complete the course for practical reasons, with two participants successfully completing the programme. One participant expressed an interest in becoming a peer facilitator for future programmes.</p>
<i>Improve</i>	<p>One of the key actions under the SMH Framework this year has been the partnership with <u>The Jed Foundation</u>, a US based charitable organisation that provides colleges and universities with expert support, evidence-based best practices, and data-driven guidance to promote and support student mental health and work towards reducing rates of suicide within the student population. This is a 2 - year process, where we will work with JED, with an Institute Wide Approach on creating a culture of care where all students feel seen and supported.</p> <p><i>Niteline</i> - We continue to partner with <u>Niteline</u> to offer an out of hours support service to students. Niteline is a telephone helpline service offered to students by students from 9 pm until 2:30 am every night during term time. Volunteers are trained and offered support by staff from counselling services across the country.</p> <p>Under this, we review annual statistics including service - related statistics, outcome measures and evaluation forms.</p>

## Training Sessions for Staff and Students

Training	Facilitated By	Delivered	Audience
'Safetalk' Suicide Awareness (Half Day)	HSE	Semester 1 & 2	36 staff and students
Understanding Self - Harm (2hrs)	HSE	Semester 2	5 staff
LGBT+ Awareness' (Half Day)	Dundalk Outcomers	Semester 2	10 staff
'Intercultural Awareness' (Half Day)	ICOS	Semester 1	8 staff
Supporting Students in Distress (Half Day)	Counselling Service	Semester 1 and Semester 2	38 staff

## SCS Service Statistics

The service continues to use CORE-IMS as our patient information system. This allows for data collection and collation regarding key aspects of service delivery including service outcomes and evaluation.

*Clients:* 341 students registered with the student counselling service during the period 01.09.23 and 31.05.24. This is a reduction in registration figures in comparison with recent years. Semester 1 registrations were comparable to previous years but a reduction in registrations was seen within the second semester.

*Table 1: Number of Clients registering with SCS across recent years*

17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
345	407	425	312	451	410	341

Of these who registered, 144 students (42%) identified as female, 108 (32%) identified as male. 9 (3%) students identified as transgender or non-binary and 80 students (23%) did not report their gender.

## Representation of non-traditional students

Category	2021 - 2022 N (%)	2022 - 2023 N (%)	2023 - 2024 N (%)
International	66 (15%)	70 (17%)	72 (21%)
Mature	93 (21%)	59 (12%)	73 (21%)
Registered with Disability	76 (17%)	22 (5%)	21 (6%)

## Appointments

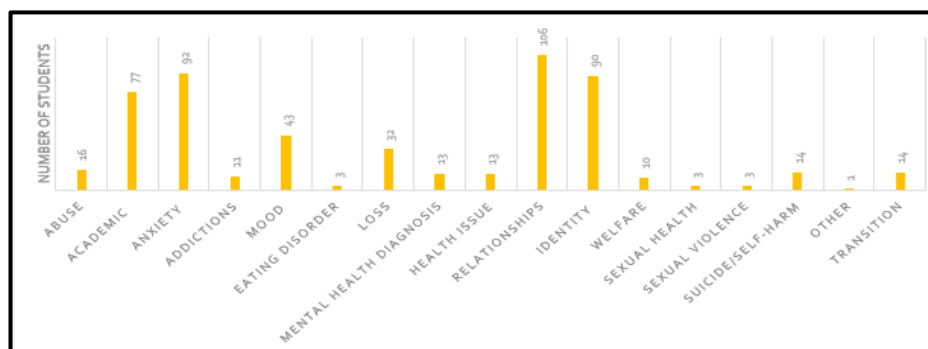
We offered a total of 1,769 appointments for assessment and counselling sessions this year which was a reduction in comparison to 2022 - 2023 (1977). October and November remained our busiest months for assessment and counselling sessions. In addition to scheduled assessment and counselling

appointments, we had 91 students attending 'drop - in appointment sessions', bringing total offered appointments up to 1860. Attendance at drop - in sessions were highest in November (n=16), March (n=14) and April (n=14). DNA's and cancellations were recorded at 6% and 10% respectively. This is similar to overall trends in attendance in the year 2022 - 2023. Looking more closely at the data, it is apparent that missed appointments were more likely to happen during the months of November and December, potentially reflecting increased academic pressures and reduced capacity to attend appointments. Appointments were most frequently cancelled or missed at the treatment stage of the counselling process with 27% of all missed appointments occurring within this stage.

### *Presenting Issues*

Students were most likely to register with the service for support with relationship and interpersonal issues, self-identity and anxiety. This is a change in trend from previous years where anxiety has been the primary reason for referral.

Table 1: Presenting Issues at Referral




### *Self - Harm and Risk Issues*

Data recorded in the year 2023 - 2024 indicated that 38 (11%) students were deemed as being within the clinical range of suicide risk ranging from 'mild to severe' at the point of assessment and 21 (6%) were rated as being at 'mild to moderate' risk of self - harm. 8 students were supported through the CAMS process this year. Fewer students were deemed at risk of self-harm this year in comparison to last year however the number deemed at risk of suicide was comparable and the number of students supported through the CAMS process was 4 times higher this year than last indicating the value of having the team trained in this model.

### *Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault*

7 clients in total reporting this as a primary presenting issue. This included reported experiences of rape and sexual assault, sexual abuse including childhood sexual abuse and stalking.

## 3.6 Sports and Societies

 <div data-bbox="370 235 839 461"><h3>Sports &amp; Societies</h3><p>Spóirt &amp; Cumainn</p></div>	<p>The Sports &amp; Societies Office runs over 65+ student-led clubs and societies so whether students want to pursue an existing interest or try something completely new, there is something for everyone.</p>
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The following updates to policies and procedures were introduced during the reporting period:

- The introduction of compulsory sports and society officer training at the beginning of semester one. All clubs and societies had to have at least one committee member in attendance and 68 students attended.
- The introduction of event registration system via the sports and societies Moodle support hub page. Each sports club or society had to register their event prior to holding it. This assisted the sports and societies officer to monitor all events. It also assisted the club/society in organising it as part of the registration form is a checklist such as booking a venue, promotion of the event etc.
- All official society meetings had to have an attendance register which could be spot checked at any stage by the sports and societies officer.
- When applying to host an event which requires financial support from the sports and societies office a proposal must be submitted with a budget plan.
- All sports clubs and societies must submit their committee members via the Microsoft form on the Moodle support hub and all must be student led.
- Each sports coach will receive a maximum of 2 items of sportswear with the DkIT logo.
- Scholarships are reviewed annually and the financial bursary element is decided and confirmed in January and signed off by the Student Services Manager.
- All bus bookings and food orders must be recorded on an excel file.



### Service Activities and Developments:

Last year's feedback stated that if students are not on social media, they may not see the advertisements. To address this sports and societies used a lot more posters around campus and shared all student emails when required.

Students also stated last year that at times they found it difficult to make the times of activities. To address this the sports and societies office offered more lunchtime classes however this is something they wish to increase further in the coming year.

Some societies struggled last year depending on changeover of personnel on committees. To address this, sports and societies' held training for committee members to assist and support them in the running of a society and to ensure the society doesn't end if certain personnel graduate.

The Gaelic Players Association (GPA) held drop-in sessions on campus and held individual appointments with any county player at DkIT to inform them of the additional financial and career supports they can avail of as a third level county player. Twenty-two students availed of this service and found it extremely beneficial and informative.


This year's sign-up day began with a campaign called "Find Your Tribe" to try and get as many people involved in a club or society on campus as possible. This involved social media campaign and posters etc. Feedback from sign up day highlighted that sometimes it took a bit of time for people to be added to the sports club or society if they missed sign up day. This year this was checked at completed every Friday to ensure this was not a barrier to participation.

Feedback from the Annual Sports and Societies Awards Night last year was very positive so this year's event stuck with the format of having an after party after the awards ceremony. This was held in the Imperial Hotel with over 200 in attendance for the awards ceremony alongside those who attended the afterparty. This event was a huge success and this was reflected in the great attendance from students, staff, sponsors and coaches.





### 3.7 Careers & Employability Centre

 <div data-bbox="341 203 874 387"><h2>Careers &amp; Employability</h2><p>Gairmeacha &amp; Inbhuanaitheacht</p></div>	<p>Careers and Employability is DkIT's dedicated careers and enterprise service. We're here to support students and graduates identify their career goals, plan for their future and achieve their full personal and professional potential.</p>
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DKIT's Careers & Employability Centre (CEC) 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. The Centre provides support and informs the employability agenda of DkIT through their work in industry partnerships, research, resource development and participating in local and national employability networks.

#### Careers Fairs & Employability Events 2023/24

2023/24 was an active year for the Careers & Employability Centre, the team continued to deliver a wide range student centered and employability focused services and initiatives. The Centre responded to the student requests and employer's interests to build on the bespoke employability events piloted in the previous year.

The continued tailoring of employability events in 2023/24 gained positive reaction and feedback from all parties involved and made more progress in linking and showcasing potential career pathways for their chosen area of study.

## DKIT 2023 Careers Fair

Tuesday Oct 10th  
9.30am to 1.30pm  
MPC, DKIT

Sponsored by





**Careers & Employability**  
Gairmeacha & Inbhuanaitheacht

Our flagship Annual Careers Fair took place in October 2023 with 70+ companies on campus. The lead sponsor for the event was Dole Ireland, and a wide spectrum of local, regional and national companies. Many repeat companies including like Combilift, Intact Software, Controlsoft, UHY Farrelly Dawe White, FitzScientific Prometric, Kaseya, ABP Foods and Grant Thornton and community and voluntary organisations Louth Sports Partnership and Peter McVerry Trust, each of whom came to DkIT and spent hours with our students.



## School Specific Careers Events.

In total we had 8 on-campus themed career events on 2023/24. Whilst these events were led by the Careers & Employability Centre, a key contributor to their success was that each event was developed in partnership with the academic schools and programmes. Two of these events were provided with financial support from the N-TUTORR funding, which increased participation and engagement from Schools.

- Nursing & Midwifery Careers Event (22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023)
- Careers & Teaching Event (December 2023)
- Creative Careers Event (23<sup>rd</sup> February 2024 - sponsored by N-TUTORR)
- Business & Humanities Careers Event (27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 - sponsored by N-TUTORR)
- Engineering Futures Careers Event (20<sup>th</sup> March 2024)
- Tech Careers Event (1<sup>st</sup> May 2024)

The Centre also supported a range of employer talks and school led Career and Alumni insights such as the Veterinary Nursing Career Insights Panel, Career Paths in Science, Agriculture Careers Morning, Teacher Training in the UK, Unlock Your Potential Careers in Sport Seminar, Engineering Lunch n' Learns and Tech Masterclass Series.



The significantly increased number of themed employability fairs, events, workshops was in direct response to the calls from previous student surveys and employer's surveys which called for specific events tailored to their areas of study.

## Student Work Placement 2023/24

DKIT's Careers & Employability Centre demonstrates its commitment to supporting student success by adapting to increased demand and providing resources for students navigating the transition back to in-person learning. 745 students across 31 undergraduate programs, 7 postgraduate program (incl 7 6 Springboard courses) prepared for work placement. Slight increase on 2022-23 figures of 739.

- The School of Health & Science supplies the largest number of student placements, with 34.5% (247 students) of total student placements at DkIT. With programmatic review there is a strong possibility that additional programmes from the School of Health & Science will have placement modules added. Placement preparation for the first cohort of Students due out on Placement on the BSc in Nutrition and Health will commence in 2024.
- This is followed by the School of Business & Humanities with 30% (215 students) of total student placements at DkIT.
- The School of Engineering saw 135 students prepared for placement, making up 18.7% of the total DkIT placement numbers. There will be a new intake of students to the BSc Hons in Quantity Surveying who will have placement in Jan 2027. The placement office welcomes this programme as it will cater to the needs of the Built Environment companies currently engaged with the DKIT Placement office
- The School of Informatics & Creative Arts saw 106 student placements representing 16.5% of total DkIT student placements. Placements in the School of Informatics & Creative Arts will continue to increase in 2024 and 2025 years with 2 new placement programmes coming on board including a BSc (Hons) in Mathematics & Data Science and the BSc Hons in Computer System Operations. The first set of students due for placement on these programmes are due out in Jan 2025. These new programmes reflect business needs of the workplace as it becomes more tech-driven and fast paced, and skills needed for data analysis are going to play an increasing role in business.
- **Focus on Veterinary Nursing:** The Centre successfully accommodated a significant rise (almost double) in first-year veterinary nursing students seeking placements.

## DKIT Placement Numbers and Trends

School	2023-2024	2022-2024	2021 - 2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
School of Health and Science	287	277	316	303	297	278
School of Informatics and Creative Arts	126	104	137	69	98	95
School of Business and Humanities	203	205	227	222	267	282
School of Engineering	129	124	123	122	64	87
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>742</b>

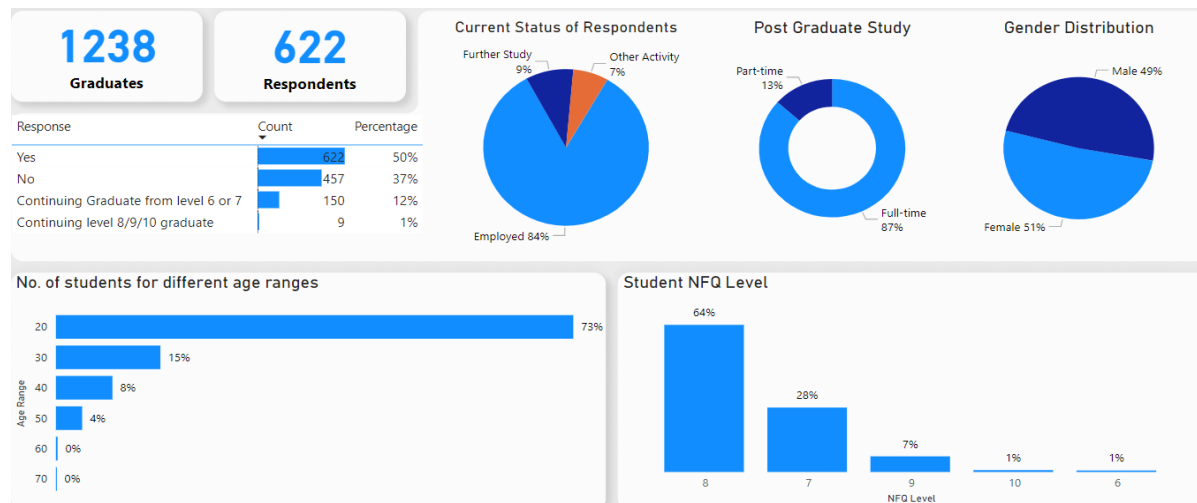
### New Developments

Further to the Student Services Self-Assessment Report (2023), an extra student engagement session “Post Placement reflection” has been implemented with the Placement office for students returning to the campus after placement. This is still a work in progress where first feedback sessions were held in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2024. The hope is to develop more robust reporting around such topics as remuneration and key feedback for future students.

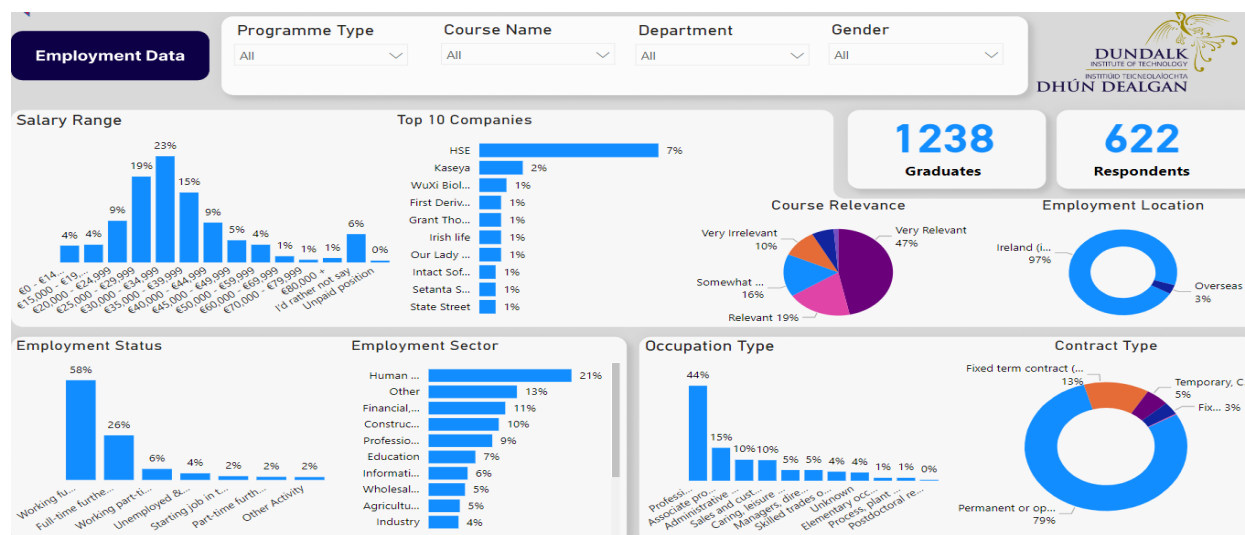
**Graduate Outcomes Survey 2023** (*the 2022 graduate cohort*)

The Careers & Employability Centre conducted their Annual Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) between June and July 2023. The Centre employed the skills of a DkIT Data Analytics graduate as a consultant to build an online, interactive dashboard to present the GOS data. This dashboard was developed using MS PowerBi. This work will be of value across the Institute for quality assurance, academic and programme development, marketing and employability. The intention is that this interactive dashboard will be further developed in 2024/25.

Below are the key data points of the GOS 2023 using images from the DkIT GOS Dashboard:



- 93% in employment and/or further study in 2023 Compared to 95% in 2022
- Response rate of 57.1% an increase of almost 10% from 47.8% in 2022.
- Response rate was almost equal split female: male, i.e., 51% female, 49% male
- Total of 84% in employment, compared to 89% in 2022
- Total of 9% in FT/PT education, it was 6% in 2022
- Unemployment was 5% v's 4% in 2022



- The average salary remains at approximately €30,000, with the majority of graduates (23%) were earning between €30- 35,000.
- 79% of the contracts are permanent,
- The top employment sectors were the Human Health & Social Work (21%), Other (13%), Financial Services (11%) and Construction (10%)
- Majority of graduates are employed within Ireland (97%), and a large majority within the region, 29% Louth, 26% Dublin, 5% Monaghan, 4% Meath.
- 59% would be very likely or likely to do the same course again. This is compared to 64% in 2022.

The continued high percentage of full-time employment 84% (in the 2023 graduate cohort suggests that the DkIT graduate is successfully navigating the graduate labour market. The Health, Social Care and Construction sectors remain the big recruiters of our graduates. Securing employment within the region remains a key feature of the DkIT graduate profile and continues to show that DkIT commitment to regional employer engagement and partnership is resulting in direct graduate employment.

### Careers & Placement Appointments, Class Sessions & Resources

One-to one appointments are in consistently high demand, with a total of 498 Careers Appointments, and 421 Placement Appointments facilitated in 2023/24. An increase of 22% on Career appointments on 2022/'23. Careers and Placement one-to-one appointments continue to be in high demand across the full life cycle of the students, however, awareness needs to be maintained so all students avail of career guidance and coaching during their particular life cycle. The diversity of class sessions being delivered has improved however, we have changed our model of delivery to academic / student request, rather than creating a set series of workshops. We plan to review the delivery of monthly short career skill focused workshops in 2024/25, and analyse the uptake and promotional mechanism through social media.

Activity Type	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21
No. of Student Appointments	<b>498 - Careers</b> (232 unique students) <b>421 - Placement</b> (1-to-1 appts)	<b>384- Careers</b> (264 unique students) <b>579 - Placement</b> (1-to-1 appts)	<b>430 - Careers</b> (286 unique students) <b>399 - Placement</b> (1-to-1 appts)	<b>412 - Careers</b> (247 unique students) <b>349 - Placement</b> (1-to-1 appts)
No. of Class Sessions (if relevant to your service)	<b>28 Careers</b> Sessions <b>99 placement</b> workshops	<b>38 - Career</b> Sessions <b>126 placement</b> workshops	<b>44 - Careers</b> Sessions <b>119 - Placement</b> Workshops	<b>37 - Careers</b> Sessions <b>112 - Placement</b> Workshops
No. of Workshops/Training Sessions Delivered to students (if relevant)	<b>15 Careers Workshops</b> <i>CV, Interview, Elevate Award workshops, grad Ireland, school careers events presentations.</i>	<b>10 - Careers Workshops</b> <i>CV, Interview, Elevate Award workshops, gradireland</i>	<b>16 - Careers</b> <i>CV, Interview, Elevate Award workshop, gradireland</i>	<b>12 - Careers</b> <i>CV, Interview, Elevate Award workshops</i>
No. of Workshops/Training Sessions delivered to staff (if relevant)	<b>8</b> <i>Staff inductions, school programme boards, employability framework sessions</i>	<b>6</b> <i>1<sup>st</sup> year convenor sessions, Quality Review sessions, Placement</i>	<b>8 Careers</b> <i>Graduate Attribute Awareness, Employability Superfood sessions</i>	<b>5 Careers</b> <i>Sessions including Embedding Employability Awareness,</i>

		<i>Guideline sessions</i>	<i>Presentation at Promoting Student Success seminar May 2022</i> <b>5 Placement</b> <i>(Guideline W/shops)</i>	
No. of external agency workshops / training your service hosted (if relevant)	15 events <i>Gradireland, AHECS, Lifelong Guidance, Louth Leader Partnership, Dundalk Chamber</i>	18 events <i>Gradireland, Enterprise Hub, Creative Spark, Regional Skills</i>	20 events <i>IDA, Creative Spark, Regional Skills Fora, Louth Leader Partnership</i>	16 events

As with previous years we have ongoing challenges in engaging students on our DkIT Careers Connect platform and our Careers Hub Moodle resources. We have made efforts to increase awareness of this via social media posts, class presentations, and incorporating slides on Placement Preparation sessions. However, student engagement is still falling short of the level we would like to see. We do think a concerted effort in awareness raising sessions with academics and class representatives via the Student Union in 2024/'25 should result in increased engagement.

### **Moodle**

The Student Support Hub on Moodle is the central repository for hosting all careers information, resources and templates. The extensive career toolkit is updated annually and reflects the ongoing development to support response employability skills development. Our key portal DkIT Careers Connect and online resources of Shortlist Me Video Interviewing practice platform, Profiling for success - Psychometric Testing, are all accessible via Moodle. In 2023/24, the Careers Hub on Moodle achieved 550 logins, which is similar to 2022/23. We would have aimed for increased engagement this year, and will need to explore further mechanisms to improve awareness and engagement with this Moodle resources

### **Student Appointments**

All student appointments were offered in person, MS Teams or Phone. In 2023-'24 the Centre facilitated 498 appointments, an increase of decrease of 22% (385) appointments, on 2022/'23. This demonstrates a full complement of staff and in the Centre and an increased availability and up of appointments.

### **Job Opportunities / Graduate Programmes**

A total of 538 positions were advertised in the academic year 2023/24 on DkIT Careers Connect portal, by separate 304 companies, this is a decrease of 26.5% on the previous year of 732 opportunities. This could be due to the limited engagement of students and recent graduate on the portal and employers are looking to other ways of promoting their opportunities to students and graduates. Student engagement on jobs portal remains an ongoing priority, as well as monitoring alternative promotional and advertising mechanisms.



## Student Inductions

The Centre participated in the wider Student Services inductions including the services specific spotlights for 1<sup>st</sup> years, advanced entry, international etc. alongside the video inputs for online student resources.

## Class Sessions and Workshops

With over 40 careers workshops and sessions delivered in 2023/'24 we have developed a stronger in class presence, which has been requested via our student survey feedback. This is also a useful tool for service promotion and awareness among staff, who are key to sign posting students to our supports and resources.

## Employability Tools

As with previous years, we renewed licenses for specific online tools including DkIT Careers Connect (Online Portal for job postings, careers appointments, event promotion) Profiling for Success (Psychometric tests and practice tests), Shortlist Me (online video interviewing practice platform). These are central to supporting self-directed research, skills development and greatly enhance the in-person meetings and workshops delivered by the team. However, we will review student engagement numbers in 2024/'25 for Shortlist Me to if the assess level of impact is worth the significant investment.

## Social Media & Communications

The Centre has developed a targeted social media plan, sustaining focused effort on using the Instagram and LinkedIn platforms as the preferred social media platforms. We have proactively worked with the wider student services teams and the student union to increase awareness amongst students of our social media activity.

In 2023/'24 we started a social media campaign of a suite of fun, engaging and informative posts covering key careers insights and tips. This has also proven effective with our students and employers. The Jobs of the Month social media campaign continues to be a useful awareness raising message, and is appreciated by our employers.

The collage features four distinct posters:

- Jobs of the Month Engineering:** A poster with a red header and a list of engineering roles including Assembly Specialist, Graduate & Placement Site Engineers, Quality Surveyor, Graduate Civil/Transport Engineer, Graduate Customer Support Engineer, Graduate Electrical Engineer, Graduate Engineering Roles, Graduate Structural Engineer, Junior IT Engineer, Junior/Graduate Surveyor, Low Carbon Precast Concrete Product Developer, Mechanical Design Engineer, Trainee Quantity Surveyor, and Multiple Eng.
- How to Boost Your Employability:** A poster with a yellow background, featuring a laptop, a plus sign, the LinkedIn logo, and an equals sign. It includes the date 'Wed, 24 Apr @14:00-15:15' and the location 'NE178 Jocelyn Bell Burnell Science Building'. It is sponsored by N-TUTORR.
- How to prepare in advance of Careers Fair:** A red poster with a numbered list of four steps: 1. Be clear on what you are aiming to achieve, 2. Review organisations that will be attending, 3. Update your CV, and 4. Research the employers you plan to speak to.
- TIPS TO MANAGING YOUR TIME IN FINAL YEAR:** A poster with a yellow background and icons for time management, including 'ASSESS THE TIME YOU HAVE', 'PLAN TIME BETWEEN COLLEGE/PT WORK APPLICATIONS, DOWN TIME', 'REVIEW & RECORD ALL APPLICATION DEADLINES', 'ELIMINATE INTERRUPTIONS & FOCUS ON TASKS AT HAND', 'FOCUS ON APPLYING AND PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS', and 'IT'S A BUSY YEAR SO ENSURE TO BUILD IN TIME TO REST'.



## 4. Community Engagement and Outreach

DkIT has an important role to play in engaging with the local community and beyond. Some of the Student Services community outreach initiatives for 2022/23 are listed below:

Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DkIT nominee on the board of Louth Leader Partnership</li> <li>Member of Mature Students Ireland (MSI)</li> <li>Member of the HEAR scheme's Income Advisory Board</li> <li>DkIT representative on the College Connect HEI - PATH 2 and PATH 3 committees of the MEND cluster</li> </ul>
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member of DARE/HEAR Practitioners Group</li> <li>Member of DARE Appeal and Review Committee</li> <li>Member of DAWN - Disability Advisors Working Network</li> <li>Careers Fairs.</li> <li>Member of HEI Festival of Autism Acceptance Committee - NCIRL, NCAD, CCT, ATU, AslAm, DCU</li> </ul>
Careers & Employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEC represent DkIT on national forums including the Head of Careers &amp; Employability as a Director and Treasurer of AHECS (2022-2024).</li> <li>Presented at the Department of Education, Lifelong Guidance Network Event, held in Dublin Castle on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May, representing AHECS as a model of best practice in the Higher Education sector.</li> <li>Delivered 2 separate <i>Career Decision Making and the Growth Mindset</i> sessions to the Headstart Programme in October 2024. This programme is a partnership with DkIT and Louth Leader Partnership to support adult members of the community who are considering third level education.</li> <li>Delivered to Louth Leader Partnership, International Women's Day.</li> <li>Grad Ireland Careers Fair- CV Clinic Participants</li> <li>CEC delivered workshops on Interview Success, and Virtual Interviewing at Grad Ireland Live in March 24</li> <li>Contributing Judge at Grad Ireland - Category- Graduate Employer of the Year 2023 (Awards April 2024)</li> <li>Opening and Networking of the Volumetric Building Companies- May 2024</li> </ul>
Pastoral Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-ordination of Daffodil Day on campus raising €450.65</li> </ul>
Student Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Institutes (PCHEI). All members of the team are members of PCHEI which offers support with professional development). The Head of Service sits on the Executive Committee with another member of the team participating on the 'Service Reps' group.</li> <li>Framework manager sits on the National Speakout Practitioner's Network which was responsible for analysing and reporting on the national data from 'Speakout' Reporting Tool.</li> <li>Engaged with HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention to facilitate trainings for DkIT campus on suicide prevention in 2023/2024</li> <li>Co - hosted with Women's Aid, an information stand organised by the Library, around the issue of Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence and Harassment and our services.</li> <li>Engaged with 'Irish Council for International Students' (ICOS) to organise training for staff in 23/24 on Cultural Awareness.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Counselling represents DkIT on the 'Connecting for Life Local implementation group'.</li> <li>• Head of Counselling participated in HEA Healthy Campus Conference 'Panel Discussion' as a representative of HEI Student Counselling Services.</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with voluntary groups and continued collaboration and care planning with local community mental health teams and services.</li> <li>• Engagement in with the Health Promotion &amp; Improvement officer, Health &amp; Wellbeing Division Louth Meath area.</li> <li>• Members of the ISHA - Irish Student Health Association group.</li> <li>• Ongoing engagement with HSE vaccination teams.</li> <li>• Regular contact with our nursing colleagues in the other institutes HEI's information sharing and service development planning.</li> <li>• Communication with public health to monitor and inform all sources of infectious diseases to enable all control measures to be put in place.</li> </ul>
Sports & Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaised with 13 schools to provide tours of the sports facilities and sports activities and inform them about sports and societies and sports scholarships (alongside the school liaison officer).</li> <li>• Hosted fitness testing days for scholarship partners Louth GAA academy squads</li> <li>• Organised Dundalk 10k run- Over 1000 athletes competed. We make a donation from this event to a charity parent and this year's charity partner was SAFE Castlebellingham (Suicide Awareness for Everyone).</li> <li>• Lennon Cup All Stars- Hosted the U-18 GAA schools All Star team which is now sponsored by Ganson and in conjunction with Louth GAA.</li> <li>• Rugby Future Stars- Sponsor and hosted U-18 Rugby All-star team for boys and girls. Hosted in conjunction with Leinster Rugby</li> <li>• Sponsor and hosted the DkIT/FAI Schools North East League All-Stars</li> <li>• Hub for Leinster Rugby North East Squads</li> <li>• Sports scholarship open night to inform potential students of the sports scholarship programme</li> <li>• Sponsorship agreement with Dundalk based company Control soft who now sponsor the GAA club.</li> <li>• Liaised with Dundalk Parkrun to ensure safe usage of the walking track for their local event every Saturday which caters for approximately 200 runners/walkers.</li> <li>• Sports scholarships with Louth GAA, Swords Thunder Basketball, Drogheda Wolves, and Louth LGFA.</li> <li>• Liaison with Louth Mavericks American Football Club and Dundalk Cricket Club to engage students in their clubs as we do not have enough members to have teams at DkIT.</li> <li>• Had 18 TY students complete their TY work experience as part of the sports and societies office from schools in the North East.</li> </ul>

## 5. Internal Monitoring and Review

Student services request feedback from service users as part of their annual monitoring activities. Feedback is reviewed on an ongoing basis with service providers and annually as part of the Service Annual Report (<https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/institute-reports-and-publications/student-services-annual-reports/student-services-annual-reports.html>). Service Providers participate on national committees and review their service in line with national standards and best practice. Work plans and resources are reviewed in line with feedback, best practice and the Institute's strategic plan.

A Quality Enhancement Plan was developed by the Services in September 2023, to support the implementation of the recommendations from the periodic quality review which took place in 2022/23. This plan was approved by the Institutes Executive and workplans developed by the individual services.

An institute - wide student survey was conducted to gather feedback in relation to students' awareness, understanding and experience of the service. The following is a summary of the data from that survey relevant to each service and also data from monitoring activities for the individual services for the reporting period 2023/2024:

### 5.1 Disability Service Monitoring

A student disability survey was issued to 320 students, disappointingly only 33 students completed the survey, however a question targeted at 1<sup>st</sup> years to ascertain how they felt induction was for them, of the 17 new 1<sup>st</sup> years who completed the survey, all were satisfied with their transition to DkIT and most of them made contact with the DS in advance of starting in DkIT. A recurring theme from the survey is that Students need more social spaces, more spaces to sit in main reception areas while awaiting lifts etc., particularly those with physical or mobility difficulties. They also need some programme enhancements to make them more inclusive for students with a disability e.g., project, group work, deadlines.

By being part of the Disability Advisory Workers Network (DAWN), we are consistently benchmarking our services, keeping up to date on legislation and new advances in technology and resources and best practice to support students with disabilities. DAWN provides a forum for Disability Officers to share expertise, develop knowledge and skills and collaborate on policies and procedures for supporting students with disabilities in higher education. DAWN works towards developing professional standards and best practices for student inclusion and professionalises the role of the Disability Officer. The collaboration among all the Disability Officers across HEIs allows us to share knowledge and helps strengthen the DS. DAWN also influences the allocation of and criteria for the Fund for Students with Disabilities. Being part of DAWN provides the DS with professional development opportunities, helps establish standards, promotes inclusive education, enables knowledge sharing and gives a collective voice to advocate for and support students with disabilities.

## 5.2 Student Counselling Service

In the general survey sent to all students 50 of 189 respondents (26%) reported having attended the student counselling service. The main reason cited for not accessing the service was not having felt in need of the service (35%) while others availed of supports from other services, including the online platform 'Togetherall', family or friends (21%). 16% cited lack of time as a barrier to engaging and 11% reported either not being aware of the service or not being sure of what attending would involve.

80% of students who reported attending the service were 'very' (60%) or 'somewhat' (20%) satisfied with their experience. 12% were either 'very' (4%) or 'somewhat' (8%) dissatisfied with their experience and 8% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Additional comments were not provided by these students unfortunately to help identify what had impacted negatively on their experiences. Students indicated multiple primary benefits from their contact with the service, including feeling listened to, heard and understood (56%); being helped to understand and manage the difficulties they were having (50%), reducing levels of distress (34%) and importantly, helping students to remain in college (28%). These are considered core outcomes in relation to service objectives.

The following statistics are drawn from CIAO, a standardised measure of 'Counselling Impact on Academic Outcomes' used across colleges in the UK.

**Table 1: Pre- and Post-CIAO Scores**

Question	Responses	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
To what extent are you considering leaving your course because of your problems?	Not at all Only occasionally Sometimes Often Most of the time	20 (44%) 9 (20%) 10 (22%) 4 (9%) 2 (4%)	23 (51%) 13 (29%) 7 (16%) 1 (2%) 1 (2%)
To what extent would you say your problems are affecting your study?	Not at all Only occasionally Sometimes Often Most of the time	1 (2%) 8 (18%) 12 (27%) 15 (33%) 9 (20%)	5 (11%) 14 (31%) 12 (27%) 11 (24%) 3 (7%)
To what extent would you say your problems are affecting your overall experience at university?	Not at all Only occasionally Sometimes Often Most of the time	1 (2%) 4 (9%) 14 (31%) 18 (40%) 8 (18%)	2 (4%) 19 (42%) 11 (24%) 10 (22%) 3 (7%)

The responses indicate improvements across all areas of academic engagement.

A further six questions were asked as part of the post-intervention CIAO measure. Responses to these questions are summarised below:

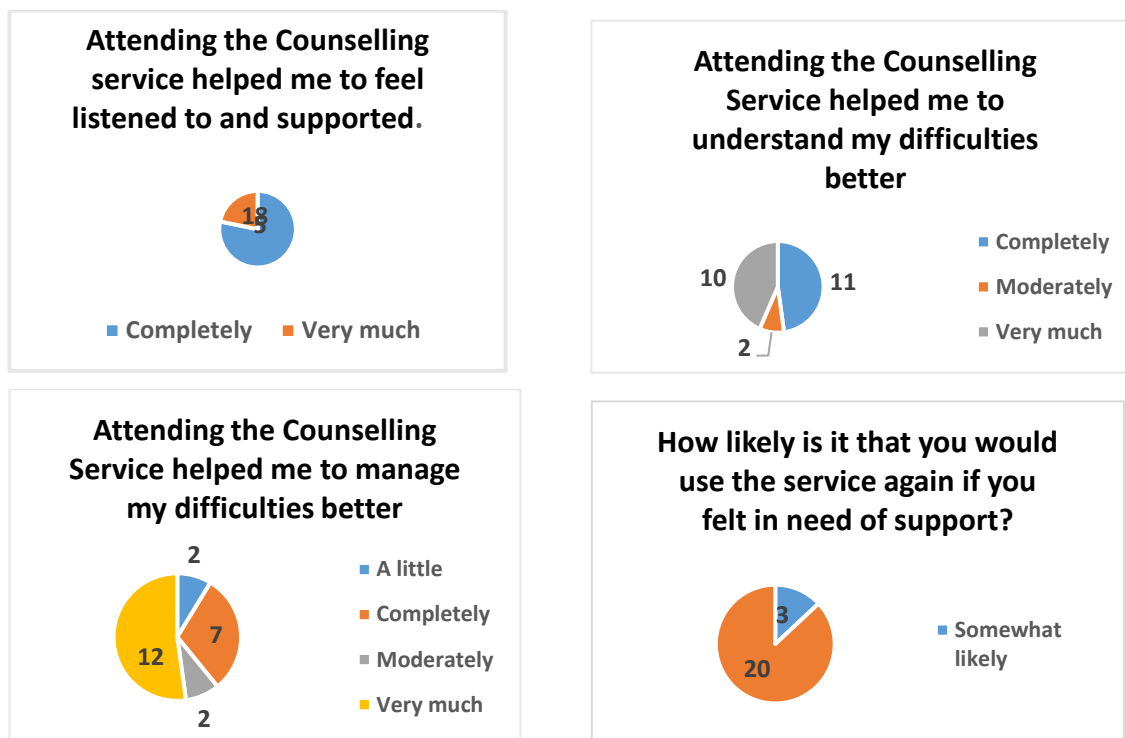
- 86% said that counselling helped them stay in college. For 15% it was an *important* or the *most significant* factor in helping them stay in college.
- 96% said it helped them do better in their academic work. For 21% it was an *important* or *most significant* factor in doing better at their academic work.
- 93% said it had improved their overall experience of college/university. For 21% it was an *important* or the *most significant* factor in helping them stay in improving their college experience.
- 96% said counselling has helped them develop skills that might be useful in obtaining future employment. For 34% it was an *important* or *most significant* factor.
- 96% said that counselling has improved their self-esteem. For 34% it was an *important* or *most significant* factor in improving their self - esteem.
- 94% said that counselling had helped them feel more positive about the future. For 28% this was an *important* or *most significant* factor in feeling more positive about the future.

These figures demonstrate the impact of counselling not just on well-being and self -esteem but on retention and their performance in college, both of which are key factors associated with longer term wellbeing as well as being key performance indicators for the Institute.

### Service Evaluation

In addition to the use of outcome measures to assess level of progress made by students in relation to presenting issues and impact of counselling on academic outcomes, the service uses feedback forms to gather data on service user experience. This year 23 students completed the service feedback form. This is a low response rate indicating a need for us to consider how this can be improved.

Responses are outlined in the tables that follow:



## 5.3 Pastoral Care

A total of 190 students completed the general survey and below is a summary of the feedback:

125 students were aware of the Pastoral Care Service and 65 students were not. I feel that this is a good result. The Pastoral Care service has worked hard to increase the awareness of the service and to increase engagement.

Most students surveyed stated that they used the Pastoral Care service for advice and guidance (13) and also for events (15). 6 had stated they used the service for financial support. This would not be an accurate reflection of the quantity of students who used the service albeit it's worth mentioning only a small proportion student actually completed the survey.

Some suggestions about how to improve the service worth noting are increased advertising of the service and what exactly it is. More regular trips like hiking, tours etc. Holding workshops and wellbeing classes after 5pm for students who get little time off during the day. More talks on wellbeing and stress management.

## 5.4 Student Health Unit (SHU)

During this academic year the SHU invited service users to complete an online anonymous survey (MS Forms) to evaluate their overall experience of the service. These forms were collated and reviewed.

95% expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the overall treatment received in the SHU

97% positive experience with the nurse

86% positive experience with the doctor

97% would recommend this service to a friend

69% satisfaction with online virtual appointments

A number of students expressed dissatisfaction that the service provided was limited in its offering or not as comprehensive as in General Practice e.g.; requesting blood testing and also that the number of doctors hours on campus limited. In the recent end of year student services survey showed 68% of the overall student population attended the SHU and reported a high degree of satisfaction with the service provided. 8% were unaware that the service is free of charge

## 5.5 Sports and Societies

Feedback at the end of the academic year was very positive with 80% of those who completed the general student services surveying having engaged in sports and societies. Of these users most stated they joined to meet new friends and have fun. Of the 20% those who did not engage found that they either had too much college work, part time work or a lack of follow up from the club itself which is something we need to improve on. While we have tried to improve lunch time activities this is still something that came up in feedback so we are hoping to improve this also.

Qualitative feedback was received via Microsoft forms after sign up day, the sports and societies officer training event and at the end of the academic year. Participants for these surveys were recruited by



scanning a QR code on the day at the event or by scanning a QR code on posters located on campus. Scholarship students all completed a Microsoft form at the end of the academic year also. Quantitative data was received from sign up day via a Microsoft form and is used to monitor the number of sign-ups each year.

The results of the above forms indicated 1773 sign ups were completed in sign up day and the following two weeks after it. New sign ups were added to the clubs and societies weekly if needed (i.e., if they missed sign up day) as this was something that was highlighted in last year's feedback. This led to an additional 32 sign ups. This was slightly down on last year's figures.

<i>Sign up 2020</i>	<i>Sign Up 2021</i>	<i>Sign Up 2022</i>
1506	1575	2379

68 sports and society officers attended the office training day and found it very beneficial. Some highlighted a need for role specific training in the future for example social media training etc. for the PRO

Scholarship students (93 students) found the bi-annual meetings with staff very beneficial. From these meetings staff were able to provide additional support and also sign post students to additional services which students required such as the disability service, physiotherapy and careers support. As a result of this positive feedback, we also monitored the retention rate of scholarship students and found that the retention rates of scholarship students are higher than regular students. See below:

Progression Statistics	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total
2021/22	69%	78%	86%	86%	77%
2020/21	77%	85%	90%	82%	81%
2019/20	78%	88%	93%	89%	84%
2018/19	78%	83%	84%	92%	82%
2017/18	77.9%	82.8%	87.5%	91.3%	83%

At times this year the office was extremely busy however we ensured we kept our response time to students to be as efficient as possible but this can be challenging at peak times of the year with limited staff.

The sports and societies office were part of a national SAR with Student Sport Ireland. According to this report DkIT spends a lot less (current spend €37000) than other institutes on scholarships. DkIT also falls behind in terms of sports facilities in particular indoor facilities. It does however rank high in terms of outdoor sports facilities and gym facilities. The sports and societies office is currently operating with one full time staff member which can be challenging at times and when compared with other institutes across Ireland is a lot less with others such as TUD having 19 full time staff and Maynooth University having 7.

In terms of sports performances, DkIT offers a wide range of competitive sports teams and some of the highlights this year were: DkIT Freshers GAA team won Division 2, Ladies Gaelic team won Division 3,

Fiachra O Dhuill won the college handball open and Dearbhla Tinnelly won the National Colleges Boxing title. It was also great to see some sports teams competing which have not competed in recent years such as athletics, table tennis and fencing.

## 5.6 Careers and Employability (CES)

CEC uses annual GOS, feedback from employer events (via MS FORMs surveys), and feedback from students on careers appointments, workshops and events to inform career engagement action plans. Placement Office also uses feedback from surveys with students and employers to inform placement support and development. Placement Officers are invited to sit on Programme Boards / Placement Working Groups within academic departments.

### End of Year Student Service Survey 2023/'24- Careers & Employability:

The survey outlines that there is a reasonable level of student awareness of the service, however, engagement is just over a third of the student body, which leaves much room for improvement.

- 41% outlined they did use the Careers Service, and the reason for not using the service including; lack of awareness, did not feel I needed the support, too early in my studies
- The top 3 resources that students are availing of include;
  - Careers Fairs, Careers Workshops, Careers Hub on Moodle
- Of those who did use the Careers Service 91% were either very satisfied (55%) or satisfied (36%) with their experience
- The top 3 benefits identified by students using the service include: Gained more information/awareness on my career/study options", "Gained practical skills/knowledge on careers tools including CV, interviews, etc.", "Felt more prepared to achieve career goals".

### Careers 1-to-1 Appointments:

- 100% agreed scheduling their appointment was easy, (matching previous 2 years 2022/23; 2021/22)
- 100% agreed their Careers Advisor paid attention to their query (an increase of 4% on previous)
- 100% agreed their Careers Advisor was knowledgeable and 95% stated their expectations were met based on their conversation with their career advisor
- 70% agreed they were able to identify what their next steps would be, which is a minor decrease of 4% on previous year. Again 100% took action based on the conversation with their careers advisor which has been maintained from previous year.
- 100% agreed that talking to Careers Advisor was valuable and would return if further assistance was required, retaining this from previous year.

## **CIBYL SURVEY**

This is a national Student and Graduate Survey of all Higher Education Careers Services in Ireland and UK. For 2024, the research was conducted between September 2023 - January 2024, with 13,895 total responses, 789 of which were DkIT respondents [Cibyl Graduate Research IRE 2024 - DKIT - Partner Report.pdf](#)

DKIT participate in this survey, as part of national benchmarking and as a student feedback mechanism specific to our service. See below some of the key points:

### Engagement

2 in 3 students expressed that they are confident that they know where to go for careers advice. Interestingly, those who haven't used careers a slightly more confident, indicating that this cohort are aware of services, and this is not a barrier for engagement.

- 56% of your students have used their careers service, when they have engaged, they are most likely to have attended a careers event.
- 44% have not used the career service, a significantly higher proportion of students when compared to the national average.
- Reasons cited for non-engagement include being it being too early in their studies or them being too busy, a trend that has increased since 2023.

#### Service Satisfaction:

Overall student satisfaction with the careers service has increased by 6% this year, with 61% indicating satisfaction (2023 55% 2022 54%, 2021 44%, 2020 74%).

- First-years are your most satisfied cohort, final year students are the most likely to select neutral.
- Among various service aspects, your students express the highest satisfaction with the usefulness and availability of face-to-face appointment - more so than the national average.
- Similarly, to the national average, virtual career fairs received the lowest satisfaction ratings from your students

DkIT Student Feedback on how to persuade students to engage with the Careers Service

The personalisation and specific targeting of student groups, alongside embedding career learning into the curriculum is the recurring theme on how best to engage students.

#### DkIT Placement Office Feedback:

The Placement Office survey student and host sites each year via MS Forms.

See some feedback from the various student and employers for 2023/'24.

#### Host Sites

- "We highly recommended the DKIT Placement Programme. It is very well run and organised by the faculty. The students are skilled, hardworking and creative. They have made a valuable contribution to the organisation and have fit in well with the team at Photo Museum Ireland."
- "We are delighted to have developed a strong link with DKIT in relation to their work placement student programme. The students are always very motivated, keen to learn and make a positive contribution to the programmes they assist in delivering. We look forward to further develop this link in the future." Monaghan GAA Coaching & Games Dept.
- "All students we've had to date from DkIT across two courses have been first class. We've had placement students from Ulster University/St Mary's College/Stranmillis/SRC and the DkIT students we've had are as good as any we've had over the last number of years. Healthy Kidz

#### Students

- "My work placement experience was extremely positive. It was something I was excited and nervous about. In the first 2 or 3 days I was extremely nervous but before the end of the first week I was fully settled in. Seeing people be enthusiastic to have me around and be willing to teach me was a very encouraging thing for me." - 3<sup>rd</sup> year Audio & Music Production student
- "My placement at The Pet Hospital in Waterford City couldn't have been better. I was supported and helped every day and gently encouraged to learn new skills under supervision. The staff clearly love their job and were so good at teaching/helping me as well. It was a pleasure to work with people who love their job." - 1<sup>st</sup> year Veterinary Nursing
- "I greatly enjoyed my time working with the Careers & Employability team, [...the team] were very supportive. Any ideas I had were backed and I was allowed to run with them. If changes were needed during my time, we had a meeting to discuss and adjustments made efficiently and effectively. I look forward to utilising their services while deciding on next steps for September and returning for 4th year!" - 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Business and Tech

## 6. Staff, Training and Professional Development

Service	Staffing
Access	Eileen Lynch, full-time Access Officer Mary Reilly, SAF and ICT support officer (f/t)
Disability	Geraldine Kneel, Disability Officer (f/t) Paula Keane, Assistive Technology Officer (p/t) Two part-time Learning Support tutors covering full week
Student Counselling Service (SCS)	Dr Emma Carroll, Head of Counselling (Clinical Psychologist)- Full-time Sarah Traynor, Student Counsellor (Counsellor/Psychotherapist) - 3 days per week Melissa Mackin, Student Counsellor and Frameworks Manager (Counsellor/Psychotherapist) - 4 days per week from Lorna Marie Browne, Student Counsellor (Counsellor/Psychotherapist) - 3 days per week
Careers & Employability	Catherine Staunton - Careers & Employability Officer Claire Fallon - Employability Adviser Elaine Cunneffee - Placement Development Coordinator Angela Foley - Placement Officer Caroline Mc Gee - Placement Officer Tracey Whately - Placement Officer Jacqueline Conlon - Administrator (f/t)
Pastoral Care	Alan Conlan - Pastoral Care Co-Ordinator
Student Health Unit	Patricia Smith - Nurse (full-time) Judith Bradley - Nurse (term-time) Mark Finnegan - Mental Health Nurse Advisor (f/t) - appointed January 2023 Administrator - shared with Counselling Service
Sports & Societies	Bronagh Mc Grane - Sports and Societies Officer (full-time) GAA Development Officer (part-time) Administrator (full-time)
Student Information Desk	Turlach Cotter, Administrator (f/t)

This section details staff training during the reporting period 2023/2024

Service	Training
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer Learning Forum TUD March 2024</li> <li>• Access Seminars TUD May 2024</li> <li>• HEA Progression conference Feb 2024</li> <li>• Student Affairs Ireland Seminar June 2024.</li> </ul>
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Member of the Disability Advisory Workers Network (DAWN).</li> <li>• Member of DARE Review and Appeals Panel</li> </ul>
Pastoral Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completed a three-month course in Coaching with Neuroscience</li> <li>• completed a Level Certification in Breathwork Teacher Training.</li> <li>• <i>Completed Shadow Work Course</i></li> </ul>
Student Counselling Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Day 'Ecotherapy Training' attended by all members of the team</li> <li>• 'Certificate in Adolescent Studies' completed by 2 members of the team</li> <li>• 'Mindfulness for Emerging Adults' (MIEA) Teacher Training Programme completed by 1 member of the team</li> <li>• CAMS (Clinical Assessment and Management of Suicidality) Training completed by 3 members of the team, meaning all members of the team are trained in this approach.</li> <li>• Suicide Post-vention Workshop attended by Head of Counselling</li> <li>• 'Cultural Awareness' Training attended by one member of the team</li> <li>• 'Disclosure Training' attended by one member of the team</li> <li>• 'Safetalk - Suicide Awareness' Training attended by one member of the team</li> <li>• Understanding Self - Harm' Training attended by one member of the team</li> </ul> <p><u>Conferences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PCHEI 2 - day Training Conference (Cultural Humility and Attachment in Therapeutic Relationships) attended by 4 members of the team.</li> <li>• 'A Whole Institute Approach to Wellbeing' - HEA Healthy Campus Conference attended by Head of Service</li> <li>• Framework Manager attended the 'National Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Conference'</li> <li>• Framework Manager attended the 'UCD Dignity and Respect Conference'</li> <li>• <i>- Building Capacity to Provide Support in Irish Higher Education</i></li> </ul> <p>Members of the team participate in 'Communities of Practice' to support best practice in relation to the implementation of CAMS, The Body Project and Togetherall.</p>
Careers & Employability Service	<p>CEC staff availed of approximately 25 separate Training and CPD opportunities in 2023/24 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team attendance and contribution to AHECS CPD Training events</li> <li>• Regular lunch and learn events, Careers Practitioners</li> <li>• Empowering Futures: Solutions-Oriented Discussions for Career Professionals and AHECS Awards Showcase RCSI 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024</li> <li>• BNY Mellon Outreach Event - May 2024</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women in Stem Event Croke Park Mar 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024</li> <li>• CEC staff encouraged to avail of DCM learning and LinkedIn learning online opportunities.</li> <li>• Attended DkIT Diversity Week sessions, February 2024.</li> <li>• Head of Careers &amp; Employability accepted on to the HE Advance Fellowship Programme, funded by N-Tutorr. This will be completed in 2024/'25</li> </ul>
<b>Health Unit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Sepsis Management for Adults including Maternity</li> <li>• HSE Cyber Security Awareness</li> <li>• Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Talking about Overweight and Obesity</li> <li>• LGBT + Awareness Training: the basics</li> <li>• Trist in Care- An Introduction</li> <li>• Fundamentals of Care: Pressure Ulcers</li> <li>• AMRIC Hand Hygiene</li> <li>• Dignity at Work (Revised 2022)</li> <li>• Amric Basics of Infection Prevention and Control</li> <li>• Cyber Security Awareness</li> <li>• Making Conversations Easier</li> <li>• An Introduction to Childrens First</li> <li>• Wound Care Updates for GP Nurses</li> <li>• Sexual Violence Awareness and Disclosure Training</li> <li>• Working Sensitively with Victims of Rape and Sexual Assault</li> <li>• Contraception Updates for GP Nurses</li> <li>• An Overview of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) including Testing Approaches</li> <li>• SafeTALK</li> <li>• Minding autistic minds conference - Mark</li> </ul>
<b>Sports and Societies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand Up and Speak Out Training (provided by N-tutorr) to assist in public speaking at events</li> <li>• Excel tips and tricks (provided by N-tutorr) to assist with keeping up to date order records</li> <li>• Currently a member of the healthy campus working group</li> <li>• Currently chair of the physical activity sub-group</li> <li>• Currently a member of the ending sexual violence working group</li> <li>• Was a member of the student experience sub-group as part of the wider DkIT strategic Planning group.</li> <li>• Chair of the LGFA National Strategic Plan (launched in 2024)</li> <li>• Was a member of the Louth Local Sports Partnership for the last year</li> <li>• Currently a member of the stadium funding working group with Louth GAA</li> <li>• Currently a Gaelic 4 Teens Ambassador with the LGFA</li> <li>• Presented at the Women in Sport Day in Malahide hosted by the LGFA (Feb 24).</li> <li>• A member of Student Sport Ireland and was a member of the Self-Assessment Review Working Group which launched their report this year.</li> </ul>

## 7 Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

### 7.1 Areas of Concern

In preparing for the upcoming year, several areas of concern have been identified that require attention and improvement to enhance overall service delivery and student satisfaction. These include:

#### **Increasing Student Awareness of Services:**

A key priority is to enhance student awareness of Services, including their supports, resources, and relevance throughout the student lifecycle.

#### **Increasing Engagement by Student Groups:**

It is essential to expand direct engagement efforts with all student groups, particularly during critical transition periods. Tailored communication strategies and targeted outreach are needed to enhance inclusivity in engagement.

#### **Effectively Recording and Analysing Feedback and Data:**

There is a need to improve the processes for collecting, recording, and analysing feedback from students, employers, and academic colleagues. Enhanced data management will provide valuable insights for refining services and identifying areas for growth.

#### **Staffing Concerns Across Services:**

Adequate staffing is a general concern across various services, impacting their ability to deliver quality support to students. The Disability Service and Sports and Societies Office and Pastoral Care are currently operated by a single full-time staff member, which is not feasible during busy semester periods. These services are experiencing strain due to insufficient staffing levels.

#### **Facilities:**

Facilities require assessment and improvement to ensure they meet the needs of students and staff effectively. This includes evaluating the availability and quality of physical spaces for all of student services and of the accessibility of adequate quiet spaces for students.

Addressing these areas of concern will be crucial for enhancing student satisfaction, improving service accessibility, and ensuring efficient and effective operations moving forward.

## 7.2 Supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

This section describes quality assurance and enhancement activities for the upcoming reporting period 2023/2024 which are aligned to the institute's strategic objectives (<https://www.dkit.ie/strategicplan>). Actions/activities not completed in reporting period 2023/2024 are carried over to the next reporting period 2024/2025.

Goal 2: To provide accessible and inclusive approaches to Learning, Teaching and Assessment which ensures that all students can flourish and achieve their potential		
Relevant Objectives	Planned actions and indicators	Responsibility
Objective 4: To enhance student-centered practice-based and research informed inclusive approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment which ensures that all students can achieve their potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness of services</li> <li>• Develop marketing and communications plan.</li> <li>• Work with class representatives to grow student awareness and engagement</li> </ul>	All Services
Objective 5: To enhance strong graduate attributes within all our programmes thus fostering the development of globally-minded, work-ready graduates who can contribute sustainably to society.	Working with colleagues to support the implementation of the Healthy Campus Charter, ESVH Framework and the MHSP framework	All Services
	Progression of the Autism Friendly Action Plan	Disability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding employability in the curriculum, finding sustainable opportunities to engage within classroom delivery</li> <li>• Share the annual Graduate Outcomes Survey data with key internal stakeholder via the newly developed online Power Bi dashboard</li> </ul>	Careers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to embed Togetherall and Niteline as recognised aspects of the Student Counselling Service.</li> <li>• Continue to engage with students to participate in The Body Project and to undertake training as peer facilitators</li> <li>• Build resource library on Moodle to support neurodivergent students and increase accessibility to resources (e.g., ecotherapy workbook)</li> <li>• Broaden scope of awareness raising events to incorporate issues relating to addictive behaviours and to reach specific groups e.g., male students, international students</li> </ul>	Counselling Service
<b>Goal 3: To maintain a high-quality, inclusive and flexible student experience that supports all our students, holistically, and in their diversity, to achieve their potential</b>		
Relevant Objectives	Planned actions and indicators	Responsibility
Objective 6: Enhance the lives of our community members by offering a wide range of programmes, access routes and modes of delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an Equal Access and Participation Policy</li> <li>• Develop an Access Forum with community groups in the region</li> <li>• Contribute to the development of an Access Programme</li> </ul>	Access
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Reasonable Accommodations and support for DS students in Placement where placement is part of their programme in collaboration with Careers Centre.</li> <li>• Develop a Disability Policy</li> </ul>	Disability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working on supporting students registered with the Disability Service with their specific careers queries</li> <li>• Working on supporting international students with their specific careers queries</li> <li>• Provide suite of monthly bookable careers workshops which will support students at the various stages of the student lifecycle</li> </ul>	Careers & Employability

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the development and implementation of a healthy campus plan</li> <li>• Develop procedure for students who disclose a mental health diagnosis to meet with the MHNA</li> </ul>	Health Unit
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an Interfaith Centre</li> <li>• Facilitate more events for students to connect - launch DkIT Student Connect</li> </ul>	Pastoral Care
Objective 8: Empower students to develop transferable skills and to gain valuable experience for their future lives and careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance the activities which are on offer during lunchtimes for students</li> <li>• Support the start-up of a neurodivergent society for students</li> <li>• Install multi-purpose floor in DkIT Sports with sports capital funding.</li> </ul>	Sports & Societies
Goal 6: To strengthen DkIT as a valued partner for all stakeholders		
Relevant Objectives	Planned actions and indicators	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective 13: Strengthen relationships with external community partners to include employers, industry and the community</li> <li>• Objective 14: Enhanced support for employers and key stakeholders in the region for graduate employment and talent retention</li> <li>• Promote social responsibility and community involvement across staff and students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate on Alumni Mentoring Programme</li> <li>• Build our network of employers for placement and graduate opportunities.</li> </ul>	Careers