

2019 Entrepreneurship Summer Camps Report

Introduction and policy background

The National Skills Strategy 2025 included as one of its objectives to pilot innovative summer camps to promote entrepreneurial thinking, STEM and design skills among students¹. In addition, the Action Plan for Education 2019 states the following;

A progressive and equitable education and training system has the power to transform lives - the transformation begins with the individual, and moves outward: to family, to community, to society. It brings important social and economic benefits in the form of self-confident and dynamic communities – communities which foster social stability, independence, creativity and entrepreneurial endeavours².

Building on the success of Entrepreneurship Camps provided nationally since 2017, the HEA provided a total allocation of €335,000 in 2019 to support summer camp initiatives in Entrepreneurship, Creativity, Design Skills and Innovation for second level students to be run by higher education institutions. As in previous years it was envisaged that that these camps would provide high quality programmes that would help participants develop creative confidence, entrepreneurial thinking and leadership skills.

Following a call for proposals in January 2019, twenty-four proposals were received from nineteen individual HEIs, including a joint proposal from two of the HEIs in Limerick. A total of 34 camps ran in 2019. Several camps were run multiple times and over different locations, NCAD ran additional camps in Ballymun and NUIG had a pop-up camp in Ballina, Co. Mayo which was supported by Mayo LEO. A further 2 camps are scheduled to run in Q1 2020.

Approved HEIs were requested to submit a report to the HEA providing information on the number of participants, a brief description of the camp and their learning objectives and how they viewed the provision of the summer camps as fitting into the institutions Entrepreneurship, Business or related subject-area programmes. The HEIs also provided feedback from participants in the camps, in addition to suggestions for improvements to the initiative were it to run again in 2020.

¹ Department of Education & Skills *National Skills Strategy* - p76.

(https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf)

² Department of Education & Skills *Action Plan for Education* – p6.

(<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/action-plan-for-education-2019.pdf>)

Numbers and Demographics:

Initially, funding was provided for 1,254 places; however, 1,169 second level students participated in camps to date³. Appendix A sets out the details on each of the camps.

Based on reports of the camps held to date, 52% of participants were male and 48% were female⁴. A small number of providers had a 50/50 male/female split. It is not clear in these cases if this was because of any proactive recruitment policy implemented by the providers. Some HEIs had less than 40% female participation but hoped that the participation rate for females could be improved if the camps were run again in 2020. It was also noted that in some HEI's the number of secondary schools participating in the camps had increased over 2019.

When camps commenced, DCU encouraged participants to self-form teams but insisted on a gender mix and feedback from students was that this was a very positive aspect of the camp. IADT reported that some consideration was needed for better integration of the participants as some students reported that students tended to stick closely to those that they knew.

Many of the providers adopted a policy of reaching out to students attending DEIS schools, students from the traveller community and students from other groups which are underrepresented in higher education. As recommended in the call document, fees were reduced/waived to students in these categories. UCC noted that due to their engagement with The Cork Migrant Centre, four students living in Direct Provision, attended the camp in UCC. Other HEIs stated that they met with other partner agencies such as Túsla and community organisations involved in refugee resettlement or disabilities to ensure that a wide diversity of young people had the opportunity to participate in the camps.

Several HEI's noted that participants reported medical conditions on their application forms. CIT said 10 young people reported medical conditions on their application forms. In one of ITC camps, where some participants had additional complicated needs such as autism and anxiety, the camp co-ordinator met with families to discuss the programme first which meant that the students themselves planned how best to meet their needs.

Common approaches to Camps

As reported the overall purpose of the camps was to provide practical experience to second level students of all the steps from the generation of an idea to the development of the product in a fun and interactive setting. TCD stated that its camp sought to "develop student agency, creativity and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship that will outlast the programme". In their report UCC referenced the Global

³ Three HEI's held/will hold camps in late 2019/early 2020 and will submit reports in Q1 2020. The numbers of participants as detailed in Appendix A may change and this will be reflected accordingly in the report.

⁴ The breakdown is based on the data submitted as part of the reports.

Entrepreneurship Monitor (2017) which states 1 in 6 people will aspire to start a new business in the next 3 years (20% of new business owners are aged 18-29) Therefore teaching entrepreneurship to senior cycle students is vitally important to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge for the journey in entrepreneurship. ITC stated that one of the goals of their camp was to respond to the challenges that modern digital communications causes young people in regard to mental health and wellbeing. TU Dublin (Tallaght Campus), Culinary Arts Summer Academy focused on the creative aspect of culinary arts and the current trend and need for a health and wellness approach.

Most of the camps were built around practical activities across a wide range of topics from green enterprise, electronic engineering, food development etc. DCU Camp participants developed individual “minimal viable product” robot prototypes based on LEGO Mindstorm. DKIT allowed camp participants to engage with modern technology (smart phones/tablets) to produce Vlogs on the theme of the camp. In TU Dublin City Campus (IDEA Camp) and GMIT (YEP Camp), participants were provided the opportunity to work with 3D technologies such as laser cutters and 3D printers to prototype their ideas.

Feedback from participants indicated a preference for “hands on” practical activities over classroom-based lectures and talks. Activities allowed participants to design and develop marketable products, thereby introducing participants to entrepreneurial thinking, i.e. through the development of core business and other “soft skills”. In the UCD camp participants used the Design Thinking Process to identify new ways to improve the customer experience on Dublin Bus.

Future Jobs Ireland⁵ emphasises the importance of enhancing soft and transversal skills and states that opportunities to develop such skills are vital. All the summer camps incorporated several of the following transversal skills into the content of the programmes offered to the second level students;

- Teamwork and collaborative problem solving
- Planning, scheduling and organisation skills (using strategies such as the Business Model Canvas)
- Leadership and Communication skills
- Marketing/Digital Marketing
- Critical thinking
- R&D/Customer research

NUIG also referenced the development of characteristics such persistence and adaptability and competencies such as creativity as learning outcomes and linked this to research which states that these skills form a fundamental pillar for the LCVF and are recognised as a considerable challenge for students who aspire to engagement with third level institutions leading to professional practice.

⁵ Future Jobs Ireland 2019 – P 49.

<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Future-Jobs-Ireland-2019.pdf>

In addition, many of the camps were designed to incorporate the development of listening skills, empathy and social awareness. It was also very clear that the camps were designed to develop confidence and social skills in participants in terms of presenting their ideas not only to peers but also to industry representatives. The TU Dublin – Tallaght Campus Fashioning camp, worked closely with Fóroige to develop summer camps with the aim of empowering young people through STEM using the design thinking approach with the use of empathy to show how design is used to meet people’s needs.

A number of the camps have now included a daily “Reflections” segment which allows the participants take stock of the work they have completed and what they have learned each day.

In DCU participants delivered pitches to a Dragons Den style panel and this is considered to be a major asset to the camp. This year the external judges remained on afterwards and many of the students took the opportunity to talk to them about career options. ITS used the Dragons Den approach also and noted that the learning process is nothing without a learning outcome.

Some camps included current under-graduate’s students as mentors/ambassadors in the camps. In TCD student teams worked closely with undergraduate start-ups through Tangent and its accelerator programme LaunchBox gaining invaluable mentorship from students just a couple of years ahead. Participant noted this was one of their favourite parts of the camp experience. IT Tralee stated that their camp leaders also benefited from involvement in the camps and found opportunities for new projects and as a result of been involved in previous camps, the leaders took more ownership of the camp in 2019.

Camp fit with Institutional Entrepreneurship and related subject area programmes

In the TU Dublin Blanchardstown Campus, students were provided the opportunity for exposure to all the different learning environments on the campus including the creative digital media lab and the digital fabrication lab. AIT said that their camp was a taster for the institute’s new BA in Design, Technology and Innovation Programme. Similarly, MU stated that their camp was designed and delivered by several faculty members and therefore participants had an opportunity to learn from different lecturers and perspectives which served to provide a taste of programmes offered in the university. DKIT reported that although no direct tracking of students takes place after completion of the camp, it is known that a number of students from the first camp in 2017 are currently studying at DKIT.

NCAD “spotted a gap in the delivery of the second level enterprise module which does not have design thinking, design presentation and design for manufacture content. ... [The NCAD summer camp] will bridge the gap between second and third level programmes, particularly in design, business and engineering”. The TU Dublin – City Campus Culinary Camp added that the funding provided by the HEA for the camps provided a platform for the Schools most experiential insight into the courses being offered and represents a novel experience for the students.

Site Visits/Field trips

These were a feature in several of the camps. In the TU Dublin – Tallaght campus, participants from the culinary camp, did a shopping basket healthy food challenge in a local supermarket along with lunch time meal experience at a local restaurant to appreciate food innovation in menu design and presentation. MU organised a day visit to Amazon Web Services and the students enjoyed the outing and said afterwards that visiting an actual business premises brought more tangible insights.

The LIT/MIC camp reported that their visit to First Data was an inspirational session as the employees demystified data analytics and its application for the camp participants. In the IADT camp the students went on a field trip to Dun Laoghaire Shopping Centre where they were charged with the task of rejuvenating the shopping experience.

Feedback and recommendations for the future

There was an overwhelmingly positive reception to the initiative and all providers said they would be willing to participate in the initiative again. CIT want to develop strong links with South Africa and to link virtually with a similar youth enterprise camp in the Durban area. Other providers said they would provide multiple camps and increase the numbers of participants from DEIS schools in future camp provision. Providers also included commentary and testimonials from both participants and parents which was extremely positive.

It was noted that in some cases uptake was lower than original registrations. Several institutes have stated that they will continue to implement a small fee for registration in future years to increase commitment.

The following are some of the recommendations made:

1. The call and notification process should take place earlier in the year to allow for sufficient marketing and organisation of logistics and resources. (including Garda vetting). Early notification would allow for providers to reach out to students who had by that time finished school for the summer.
2. Multi-annual funding strategy to enable programmes to build and leverage the camp brand over a number of years.
3. Provision for longer camp duration to provide for more time for project and off-site tours.
4. Organise an annual event among the Summer Camp organisers to share experiences etc.
5. Centralised advertisement of schemes in national press,
6. To link the summer camp with the National Entrepreneurship competition organised by the LEOs.

