Higher Education Authority

Review of the Fund for   
Students with Disabilities

Appendices – Part 3 – October 2017

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# Appendix L: Stakeholder Consultation Summary

## One-to-One and Telephone consultations

Table 1:1: Stakeholder Consultations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Organisation | Consultee |
| Department of Education and Skills – Funder of FSD | Julie Smyth |
| Department of Education and Skills - ESF/co funder of FSD | Michael Kelleher and Therese Callery |
| HEA - National Access Policy Office | Catriona Ryan, Orla Christie & Jane Sweetman |
| HEA – System Funding | Sheena Duffy |
| HEA – Skills Policy Engagement | Alan McGrath  David Sheils |
| HEA – Erasmus | Gerry O’Sullivan |
| IUA re: DARE & HEAR | Grace Edge  Kieran Houlihan |
| National Council for Special Education | Ray Jordan |
| Union of Students in Ireland (USI) | Siona Cahill (by email) |
| Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) | Ann Heelan |
| National Learning Network | Suzanne McCarthy |
| Killester College of Further Education | Rory O’Sullivan – Principal |
| Dyslexia Association of Ireland | Donald Ewing |
| National Disability Authority | Donie O’Shea |
| State Examinations Commission | Andrea Feeney |

Invitations to participate in the consultation were also issued to SOLAS and National Educational Psychological Service.

## Disability Sector Focus Group

Representatives of organisations in the disability sector were invited to a focus group to contribute to the review. Participants included:

Table 1:2: Disability Sector Focus Group Participants

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Organisation | Consultee |
| Aontas | Katie O'Rourke (Communications Officer) |
| Dyslexia Association of Ireland | Donald Ewing (Head of Psychological and Educational Services) |
| Irish Deaf Society | Elaine Grehan (Manager of the advocacy department) |

## Stakeholder Workshop – 14 October 2016

As part of the final stage of the review process, HEA invited representatives from HEIs, FE Colleges and ETBs to participate in a workshop to consider emerging recommendations from the review and to provide an opportunity to input into the recommendations.

The table below sets out the list of participants that registered to attend the workshop along with the organisation they belong to and, where known, their role. The table below lists 46 people who registered to attend (including 2 from DES and 5 from HEA). It must be noted that not all those that registered and are listed in the table below participated in the workshop, furthermore not all those that participated in the workshop registered and therefore are not included in the table below. In total, 61 people attended the workshop.

Table 1:3: Stakeholder Workshop - Participants

| Role / Organisation | Consultee |
| --- | --- |
| **HE Sector – Universities and IoTs** | |
| DCU | Anne O’Connor |
| TCD | Declan Treanor |
| TCD | Caroline Morgan |
| UCD | Fiona Sweeney |
| UCD | Julie Tonge |
| Disability and Inclusion Officer - National College of Ireland | Karen Mooney |
| Athlone Institute of Technology | Bernie Langtry |
| Disability and Student Experience Officer , Dundalk IT | Ciara O Shea |
| Disability Officer , LYIT | Roisin Mc Cormack |
| DIT | Julie Bernard |
| Head of Disability Support Service, DIT | Bob O’Mhurchu |
| Institute of Technology Tallaght | Colm Downes |
| Institute of Technology Tralee | Valerie Moore |
| Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown | Celine Carey |
| Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown | Patricia Doyle |
| Limerick Institute of Technology | Broze O'Donovan |
| **Colleges, ETBs, etc.** | |
| Blackrock College of Further Ed | Odette Lawlor |
| Bray Institute of Further Education | Bernie Walsh |
| Cavan Institute | Maureen Lynch |
| Cavan Institute | Faela Heavin |
| CEO, KWETB | Sean Ash |
| Director, Monaghan Institute, Armagh | Fiona McGrath |
| Colaiste Stiofian Naofa, Tramore Road, Cork. | Karen McGrath |
| Cork College of Commerce | Susan Holland |
| Templemore College | Noel Colleran |
| Errigal College | Charlie Cannon |
| Kerry College of Further Education | Celia O'Neill |
| Kinsale College | Fran McMorran |
| Liberties College | Damien Wedge |
| PLC Coordinator LWETB | Maura Greene Casey |
| MIE | Eilish O'Connor |
| Moate Business College | Deirdre O'Connor / Bernie Henry |
| National Learning Network and Dublin ETB | Eileen Daly |
| Roscrea Community College | Liam O'Brien |
| Sallynoggin College of Further Education | Antoinette Murphy |
| St Johns College Cork | Gretta Looney |
| Waterford College of Further Education | Orla Bannon |
| NCAD | Finola McTernan |
| Ormond College | Olive Keyes |
| **DES and HEA** | |
| Department of Education and Skills | Julie Smyth |
| Department of Education and Skills | Tony Gaynor |
| HEA | Caitriona Ryan |
| HEA | Orla Christle |
| HEA | Jane Sweetman |
| HEA | Sheena Duffy |
| HEA | Modesta Mawarire |

# Appendix M: Stakeholder Consultation – Disability Sector Focus group

## Awareness of and need for the FSD

|  |
| --- |
| Awareness of and need for the FSD   * What is your awareness of the FSD? * Have any of your members availed of support from the FSD? * Do you believe the FSD is effectively targeting those most in need of support?  If not what more could be done? * Is there a continuing need for the FSD? |

## Support available through the fund

|  |
| --- |
| Support available through the fund   * Do you believe the FSD provides sufficient support for students with disabilities * Do you believe the FSD provides appropriate supports for students with disabilities |

## Impacts of the FSD

|  |
| --- |
| **Impacts of the FSD**   * **To what extent is the FSD addressing the needs of students with a disability to enter and remain in higher education?** * **What is your view on the key trends in uptake of the fund – past, present and future** * **The FSD was intended to achieve the following, to what extent do you think it is achieving these:** * increased the participation of people with a disability in higher education * increased the retention of people with a disability in higher education * effectively supported students with disabilities to learn more independently * effectively helping students to access the labour market or progress to further study * **What benefits / impacts are you aware of as a result of the FSD?** |

## Other Services

|  |
| --- |
| **Other Services**   * **How does the FSD compliment (or duplicate) other forms of support within the sector?** * **Is there scope for greater harmonisation / integration of supports?** |

## Looking Ahead

|  |
| --- |
| **Looking Ahead**   * **What is working well in relation to the FSD / what areas could be improved upon (e.g. policies, guidelines, allocation approaches, eligibility criteria, nature of support provided, etc.)** * **What elements need to be retained for the future (e.g. Learning Support to students with Dyslexia, which need to be maintained to address the particular needs of these students)** * **Areas for development in relation to remit and scope (e.g. greater flexibility to support high needs students)** * **What more could HEA do to support HEIs access and deliver the FSD?** * What do you see as being key to maximising impact in the longer term (e.g. a universal design approach to learning?) |

# Appendix N: Student Focus Group Findings

## Introduction

As part of the review, PACEC completed a survey of students that had benefitted from the FSD (see section 4). This provided an opportunity for students to express an interest to participate in focus groups to further explore the topics within the survey including possible locations, timing (during the day) and time of year. Analysis of the responses was undertaken to identify the most suitable locations.

Arrangements were made with institutions to make a room available for focus groups and PACEC then distributed an email invitation to those students that had expressed an interest in a focus group to register for specific focus groups. These were scheduled at University College Cork, University of Limerick, National University of Ireland Galway, Dublin Institute of Technology and University College Dublin. In addition, a reminder email was issued the day before each focus group to those who confirmed that they would be attending. A profile of focus groups and attendees is outlined in the next section.

All focus groups were facilitated by a representative from PACEC. Feedback against the broad areas covered in the discussion guide is summarised in Section 3.4.

## Number of focus groups and participants

Overall 21 students attended the focus groups, as shown below – whilst some registered to attend the group at UCC, no-one attended.

Table 3:1: Profile of Student Focus Groups

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location | Date | Start Time | Numbers registered to attend | Numbers attending | % attending |
| University College Cork | Tuesday 14th June 2016 | 4:30pm | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| University of Limerick | Wednesday 15th June 2016 | 10:00am | 6 | 3 | 14.3% |
| National University of Ireland, Galway | Wednesday 15th June 2016 | 2:00pm | 6 | 5 | 23.8% |
| Dublin Institute of Technology | Tuesday 21st June 2016 | 9:30am | 7 | 5 | 23.8% |
| University College Dublin | Tuesday 21st June 2016 | 12:30pm | 12 | 8 | 38.1% |
| **Total** |  |  | **34** | **21** | **100** |

## Profile of Students who attended

The majority of focus group attendees were honours degree students (67%) studying an Arts course (33%) and were in their first or second year (67%). Attendees were from a range of disability categories however a higher percentage reported Specific Learning Difficulties (23%).

## Feedback from Students

This section sets out the findings from the student focus groups and the section is structured around the key headings within the topic guide.

## Awareness of Support for Students with Disabilities

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * Are you aware of support available for students with disabilities in your college? * Specifically, are you aware of the Fund for Students with Disabilities? * How and when (before or since enrolling in FE/HE) did you find out these supports – and if aware, how and when did you find out about the FSD? * How easy is it to find out about supports for students with disabilities and the type of support that is available? * Considering information available about support available for students with disabilities in your college: Is there sufficient information? Is the information available easy to understand? * Do you know who to speak to about accessing support in your college? |

All students that attended the focus groups indicated that they had no awareness of the FSD and while most were aware that there was support available from the university disability service / support office, they were not aware of how this was funded. Attendees noted that they would like to know more about the FSD in relation to the processes involved, how assessments are carried out and what type of support the FSD provides.

There were mixed views on how easy it was to find out about support for students with a disability; while the majority of students indicated that they were provided with details on what was available to them a small number (n=10) indicated that there was insufficient information on what types of support was available and as a result they had found it difficult to know what to ask for and in some cases had only found out the supports available to them in their last semester. In addition, some students stated that they needed to be ‘proactive’ and find out what support was available for themselves, particularly those with a mental health illness as support was not automatically offered to them (n=4). Students that indicated they were aware of what support was available on entry to university / college were mainly those that had come through the DARE process / ACCESS programme.

The need to improve communication between disability support staff and teaching staff was highlighted by all students in all of the focus groups. It was suggested that the disconnect between these two groups meant teaching staff were not fully aware of the needs of their students or how best to support these, meaning students felt they were not getting the correct support at the outset. In addition, where students noted that lecturers were aware of their disability they did not know what support they needed (e.g. for an acquired brain injury).

### Processes / Administration

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * Thinking about processes to access supports for students with disabilities in your college: * Is the process for accessing support clear? * Are the eligibility criteria clear? * Are the timescales reasonable – between applying for and receiving support? And the time of year when you apply for support? * Does your college provide assistance in accessing the support? Is this sufficient? * Thinking about the Fund for Students with Disabilities in particular * Were you provided with sufficient information on the FSD? If not what further information would you like to have received? * In relation to the information you had to provide to your institution for them to complete funding request for the HEA: Assessment of Need – *does this reflect you requirements?* * Evidence of Disability – is the information requested appropriate? Explore issues re: cost * Eligibility Criteria – are these appropriate (e.g. type of disability, nationality, residency, immigration, types of courses, specific institutions etc.) is there any need to amend / adapt (e.g. inclusion of part-time courses / international students)? * What help / support did your institution provide you with to provide the evidence required? How useful was this / what additional support (if any) is needed? * Are the closing dates for the Fund appropriate (e.g. the initial closing date c. Oct and late closing date c. Dec each year) or would other dates be more appropriate? When? * Are the timescales from providing the evidence requested to receiving support appropriate? * What are the barriers & enablers to students with disabilities seeking support from the FSD?   Note: due to the students’ limited knowledge of the FSD it was not possible to explore all of the areas outlined above |

All of the students in each focus group stated that the process for accessing supports within their college / university was not clear and they did not know what processes staff went through to either assess them or decide what support they needed. Some students also believed that their needs had not been properly assessed (n=7), either due to a lack of time spend by disability service staff or they were not aware of any needs assessment being carried out. For those that stated they had a needs assessment conducted, one student highlighted that the evidence required for their mental health illness was a deterrent as it was time consuming and costly.

Similar to information on the supports available, students noted a lack of information on eligibility and what supports they be eligible to apply for, no students knew what the eligibility criteria for the FSD were. While no students were aware of the timescales for support from the FSD, one student noted that they were not able to avail of support as they were informed that the deadline for support had passed.

### Support Offered

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * What type of support have you been provided with by your college - and which of these has been funded by the FSD (if you know)? For example: * assistive technology equipment and software (such as adaptive keyboards) * personal assistance (such as a personal assistant to provide help with personal care requirements) * academic / learning support (such as note-takers, sign language interpreters or Speedtext) or * transport / travel costs. * Were you provided with the support you needed / was it at the right level? If not what support would you like to have received? * How many years have you received support (and how many years have you received support from FSD (if known))? - i.e. is this the first year you have received support / how many years have you received support) * Did you require support from when you first started university / FE college, or did you only require support at a later date? * Did you require support prior to joining university / FE College? If yes: * What support did you receive? * How did accessing this support compare with the support provided by the FSD? * Do you believe the information you had previously provided should be easily transferred / updated on arrival at your institution, or is it more appropriate to carry out a new assessment? |

Focus group attendees had availed of a range of supports including assistive technology (e.g. laptops with specialist software to meet their needs), academic/learning support (e.g. note-takers and Speedtext), personal assistants and other support such as additional exam time and printing credits.

Overall students provided positive feedback on the support they had received and believed that it had met their needs. Where this was not the case the time taken to receive support was highlighted as a key issue as some students felt while they got the correct support eventually, they would like to have received this sooner (n=6). In a small number of cases (n=5) support was noted as not meeting their needs or was inappropriate, for example one student with mental health needs was provided with a voice recorder however on many occasions he was unable to attend lectures and felt they were given a “generic package”. In addition, one student highlighted that while they received support for their mental health condition they did not then ‘qualify’ for support for their physical disability.

The number of years that students had received support for their disability varied (the number of years in receipt of FSD support was not known); with some (but not all) in receipt of support since secondary school[[1]](#footnote-1) (n=4), others on entry to third level education or during their college / university course due to an acquired disability. However there was a general consensus amongst student attendees that information on their needs should be updated on arrival at third level education due to changing needs and the possible new requirements of their chosen course. Students that had been receiving support at secondary level had limited knowledge of how information on their disability and detail on what support they had received was transferred.

### Impacts

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * Did the support provided by FSD impact on your decision to participate in HE/FE? * Did the support provided by FSD impact on your choice of course or institution? * Has the FSD support helped you to learn more independently/ impacted on your learning experience? * Has the FSD support impacted on your ability to complete your course? * Has the FSD support helped you to access the labour market or progress with further study? *Please provide details* * Has the FSD had any other impacts? * What would you have done in the absence of the FSD? |

Students did not give a lot of detail on this as mostly said that they could not have attended or stayed in higher education without the support, they would be e.g. been at home and more isolated etc.

Students in all focus groups stated that they would not have been able to enter third level education and / or remain in third level education in the absence of disability support, noting that they would have struggled with exams or would have become more isolated / less confident and that the support received has helped them to become more independent. Specifically one student highlighted that “the support I received not only helped me to stay in university it provided me with the ability to complete to the best of my ability”. In some cases, where students had been receiving support at secondary school, awareness of the support available at third level education influenced their choice of course / institution (n=3, all of which were from universities). These students noted that while they had received less support at university it had helped them to become more independent, with one student noting that “at secondary school received all the help you can get, at third level you are encouraged to get the help you need”.

### Learning

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * Do you believe the FSD is effectively targeting those most in need of support? If not what more could be done? * How best can your institution use the FSD to support those who need it most? * What is this institution doing well to support students with disabilities (universal design, inclusive learning, mainstreaming of services, etc.) that other institutions could learn from? * What else could this institution do to support students with disabilities (universal design, inclusive learning, mainstreaming of services, etc.?) * What other support could be provided by the FSD that is not provided currently? |

The other things suggested by attendees that institutions could be doing to support students with disabilities included:

* Increased communication – specifically it was suggested that there is a need for greater communication between disability support services and lecturers and a more open relationship that would facilitate the sharing of information on students’ disabilities and their corresponding needs;
* Staff training – it was suggested that it would be beneficial for lecturers / teaching staff to avail of awareness training so they are better equipped to support students with a disability; it was suggested in one focus group that this should be quality assured by disabled students;
* Peer support – students indicated that more peer support / group interactions would be beneficial as this would provide students with the opportunity to both discuss how they manage their disability / what supports they have as well as social support to discuss any issues they experience and to help them ‘get more out of the college experience’. It was suggested that a ‘peer buddy’ programme would be helpful or a dedicated room for people with disabilities to meet / study;
* Orientation – students in one focus group suggested that an orientation for students with a disability to promote the FSD and / or university disability support available would be useful, this could include talks / group discussions with students that have benefitted from disabilities services to encourage others to seek support. This could also outline the process for students on ‘what to do next’ as in some cases students were not aware that they needed to ‘take the next step’ rather than wait for the disability office to contact them;
* Promotion of supports available at higher education to students at secondary school – students felt that this would provide a better understanding of disability services in higher education at an earlier stage and what types of support that could be provided and therefore promote an early intervention approach;
* Mental health support – students highlighted that there was a particular lack of awareness and understanding of the needs of students with mental ill health amongst teaching staff, for example they may miss days from class and will require notes to compensate for this, or that they may require extra time. In some of these cases students felt they had to advocate for themselves directly with lecturers to receive accommodations and therefore highlighted the need to increase awareness of mental health issues and how best to address these amongst teaching staff;
* Learning support – in one institution students could only avail of this during class time and as a result it was impacting on their academic studies, it was suggested that if this could be provided outside of class time / college hours it would be even more beneficial;
* Mainstreaming – students in two focus groups suggested that services for disabled students could be mainstreamed / more widely available on campus, in relation to assistive technology it was suggested that this would benefit disabled students that do not have access to laptops / specialist software they need during specific times (e.g. during the summer months); and
* Alternative approaches – students suggested some alternative approaches to how disability support funding could be spent, this included:
* Time with Masters student instead of a notetaker – students in one focus group stated that the quality of the notetaker often varied and did not always contain the detail needed, therefore it was felt that time to engage with a Masters student would allow for a greater understanding of the topic/ issues raised; and
* Provision of financial support directly to the student / provision of vouchers for the student to identify what support would best meet their needs.

# Appendix O: Student Survey Findings

## Introduction

This section sets out the findings of the survey conducted with students with disabilities at Institutions across Ireland. This is structured around the key headings within the survey.

Full details of the methodology, response rate and a discussion on representativeness can be found in Appendix O – section 4.2 / 4.3. The baseline for the survey is 890 respondents, unless otherwise stated.

## Survey Methodology

### Approach

To contribute to the review, PACEC developed a questionnaire for students. Initial drafts of the questionnaire were developed based on topics set out in the proposal and further developed in collaboration with the Project Steering Group.

The final questionnaire included questions on:

* Profile of the Respondents
* Awareness of Supports for Students with Disabilities
* Process for Accessing Supports
* Support Accessed
* Impacts
* Strengths and Areas for Improvement
* Participating in Focus Groups

The questionnaire was signed-off by the Higher Education Authority in May 2016

The research team then uploaded the final questionnaire onto the online survey software SMARTSURVEY© ready for the pilot and full survey phases.

An incentive – the opportunity to be included in a draw for €100 voucher – was included to boost responses.

### Launching the Surveys and Follow Up

The survey was launched via a number of different contact streams commencing 24th May 2016 – including emails requesting FEIs and HEIs to circulate the survey to students as well as to other contacts; the HEA also tweeted a link to the survey. The emails included background to the research, a link to the online survey and a request to distribute the survey through their contract streams to students that have made use of the Fund. A summary of the actions taken to promote the survey include the following:

* Email issued to AHEAD;
* Email issued to Union of Students in Ireland;
* Emails issued to Disability Officers or equivalent in institutions that have used the Fund, including:
* Universities (n=7);
* Institutes of Technology (n=14);
* Further Education Colleges (n=176); and
* Other Colleges (n=6)

The survey response rate was regularly monitored and due to high levels of interest, no further promotion or follow up was required. Due to high levels of interest in the survey, the deadline was extended from 8 June to 13 June 2016.

### Survey Close and Response Rate

The survey was closed on the 13th June 2016 with the total number of completed responses received by this date: 890. Therefore the baseline for the survey is 890, this is equivalent to 8.8% of all those who received support from the FSD.

Given the nature of the support provided by the FSD and the means by which it is provided, it is possible that students may benefit from it and not be aware of that fact. This is borne out by the limited awareness of the Fund (395 respondents to this survey (46%) indicated they were aware).

Therefore, whilst there are many beneficiaries of the Fund, it is not easy to identify those who may be regarded as “recipients”. Nonetheless, the survey sought to reach direct beneficiaries as it was clearly promoted as being open to those with experiences of the Fund and one of the main routes through which it was promoted was the Disability/Access officers in FEIs/HEIs who were asked to distribute to those who benefited from the Fund. Some exploratory analysis has been undertaken (Section 4.10) to investigate differences in students’ perceptions across a range of factors; this was inconclusive.

Table 4:1 Number of Students in Receipt of FSD and Number of Survey Responses

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Students in receipt of FSD (N) (2015/16)** | **Survey Respondents (N)** | **Survey respondents as % of all students in receipt of FSD** |
| 10,164 | 890 | 8.8% |

Source: PACEC and FSD Data – Numbers of Students by College and Year of Study (Received from HEA)

## Survey Representativeness

To assess representativeness, we compare the profile of individuals who responded to the survey to the overall profile of students in receipt of support from the FSD. We carry this comparison out in the following sections for students by year of study; by type of institution and by type of disability.

### Year of Study and Institution Type

Table 4:2 Profile of FSD Recipients at Irish Institutions and Survey Respondents – Year of Study and Institution Type

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Institution | Year of Study | Population in receipt of FSD | | Survey Respondents | |
| N | % | N | % |
| Further Education | Year 1 | 1,215 | 12.0% | 69 | 7.8% |
| Year 2 | 142 | 1.4% | 28 | 3.1% |
| Unknown | - | - | 12 | 1.3% |
| Sub-Total | 1,357 | 13.4% | 109 | 12.2% |
| Institute of Technology | Year 1 | 1,318 | 13.0% | 93 | 10.4% |
| Other Year of Study | 2,418 | 23.8% | 209 | 23.5% |
| Sub-Total | 3,736 | 36.8% | 302 | 33.9% |
| University | Year 1 | 1,400 | 13.8% | 161 | 18.1% |
| Other Year of Study | 3,278 | 32.3% | 298 | 33.5% |
| Sub-Total | 4,678 | 46.0% | 459 | 51.6% |
| Other Colleges | Year 1 | 114 | 1.1% | 4 | 0.4% |
| Other Year of Study | 279 | 2.7% | 16 | 1.8% |
| Sub-Total | 393 | 3.9% | 20 | 2.2% |
| Total | Year 1 | 4,047 | 39.8% | 327 | 36.7% |
| Other Year of Study | 6,117 | 60.2% | 563 | 63.3% |
| Total | 10,164 | 100.0% | 890 | 100.0% |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 and FSD Data – Numbers of Students by College and Year of Study

Considering the profile of survey respondents:

* by institution type, this is broadly representative of the profile of those benefiting from FSD in 2015/16.
* by year of study: the proportions of the population in receipt of FSD support at Irish institutions in ‘Year 1’ and ‘Other Year of Study’ is in line with the proportion of survey respondents in these categories, therefore representative of the profile of those benefitting from FSD
* by year of study and institution type: there is a slightly lower proportion of students in Year 1 in Further Education and Institutes of Technology and a slightly higher proportion of students from Year 1 University students compared to the profile of those benefiting from FSD overall.

### Type of Disability

Table 4:3 Profile of all FSD Recipients and Survey Respondents – Disability Type

| Year of Study | All FSD Recipients (2014/15) | | Survey Respondents | | Census (2011)[[2]](#footnote-2) | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| Autistic Spectrum Disorder (including Asperger’s syndrome) | 435 | 4.3% | 76 | 8.5% | - | - |
| Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder | 305 | 3.0% | 49 | 5.5% | - | - |
| Blind/Vision Impaired | 185 | 1.8% | 32 | 3.6% | 1,036 | 6.8% |
| Deaf/Hard of Hearing | 262 | 2.6% | 55 | 6.2% | 994 | 6.5% |
| Mental Health Condition[[3]](#footnote-3) | 884 | 8.8% | 173 | 19.4% | 3,424 | 22.4% |
| Neurological Condition (incl Brian Injury, Epilepsy, Speech & Language Disabilities) | - | - | 73 | 8.2% | - | - |
| Significant Ongoing Illness | 835 | 8.3% | 118 | 13.3% | - | - |
| Physical/mobility[[4]](#footnote-4) | 509 | 5.1% | 114 | 12.8% | 1,944 | 12.7% |
| Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia) | - | - | 113 | 12.7% | - | - |
| Specific Learning Difficulties | 5,097 | 50.7% | 293 | 32.9% | - | - |
| Multi-Disability | 1,049 | 10.4% | - | - | - | - |
| Other – Census 2011[[5]](#footnote-5) | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 7,884 | 51.6% |
| Other – FSD beneficiaries | 489 | 4.9% | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Other – survey responses[[6]](#footnote-6) | n/a | n/a | 89 | 10.0% | n/a | n/a |
| **Total** | **10,050** | **100%** | **890\*** | **100%** | **15,282** | **100%** |

Source: PACEC / FSD Data - Numbers of Students by Disability Category (2014/15) / Census 2011

\*Please note survey respondents could select more than one option, this is the total number of respondents to this question.

The table compares the proportion of respondents with each type of disability from the survey with the overall profile of FSD recipients in 2014/15 and Census 2011 data relating to students at school or college aged 19 years and over by category of disability.

Some variation is evident with a higher proportion of survey responses (compared to the proportion in receipt of FSD overall) from students with a mental health condition and from students with physical/mobility disabilities; and a notably lower proportion of survey responses (compared to the proportion in receipt of FSD overall) from students with specific learning disabilities. However when comparing the survey responses with Census 2011 data we can see that the response rate from people with mental health condition and people with physical/mobility disabilities is representative of the overall population of people with disabilities at school or college aged 19 years and over. When compared with Census 2011 data across similar categories the survey response rates against each category of disability are representative across the categories.

There are a number of factors that may explain the variations between the overall profile of students receiving FSD support and the profile of respondents to the survey, including:

* The categories of disability in the survey are different from those in the overall FSD data and in the Census therefore it is difficult to make direct comparisons;
* The survey did not have an option for ‘multi-disability’ but rather respondents could select as many categories as necessary. This may explain some of the variations observed between survey respondents and overall FSD recipient’s as the category of ‘multi-disability’ is the second largest category of disability under the FSD with over 10% of students in receipt of FSD falling under this category; and
* Data relating to the category of disability for students in receipt of FSD support was available for 2014/15 at the time of writing/analysis– data relating to 2015/16 would be more reflective of survey responses.

Given the reasons above and in particular the differing categories of disability that data was collected under it is unsurprising that there is variation between the profile of the overall FSD population and the profile of survey respondents.

## Profile of Respondents

In this section we provide profile information relating to respondents including course studies, level of qualification, year of study, type of institution and type of disability.

### Course Studied

The figure shows the course studied by respondents to the survey.

Table 4:4 Courses Studied by Respondents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course** | **N** | **%** |
| Arts and Humanities | 222 | 25.6% |
| Science | 133 | 15.3% |
| Business | 76 | 8.8% |
| Health Care | 75 | 8.7% |
| IT/Digital | 74 | 8.5% |
| Social care | 50 | 5.8% |
| Engineering | 42 | 4.8% |
| Education | 34 | 3.9% |
| Tourism and leisure | 27 | 3.1% |
| Law | 20 | 2.3% |
| Accounting/Finance | 12 | 1.4% |
| Other | 102 | 11.8% |
| **Total** | **867** | **100.0%** |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 1)

All respondents could answer this question. This question was in the form of qualitative responses, these responses were categorized under the headings in the table.

Base: 23 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 867

Just over a quarter of respondents (25.6%, n=222) study a course in Arts and Humanities while 15.3% study a Science based course. All other course types received a response rate of less than 10%.

### Level of Qualification

The figure shows the level of qualification respondents are studying for.

Figure 4:1 Level of Qualification Respondents are Studying for

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 2)

All respondents could answer this question

Base: 12 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 878

The figure shows that:

* the majority of respondents (63.9%, n=561) are studying for an Honours Degree – Level 8 qualification;
* just over 10% of respondents are studying for an Ordinary Degree – Level 7; and
* all other qualifications are being pursued by less than 10% of respondents.

### Year of Study

Figure 4:2 Year of Study of Survey Respondents

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 3)

Note: All respondents could answer this question

Base: 10 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 880

The above figure shows that:

* most respondents (37.2%, n=327) were in their first year of study;
* just over a quarter (25.8%, n=227) were in year 2;
* just over a fifth (20.9%, n=184) were in year 3; and
* of the four main year categories, least respondents (12.2%, n=107) were in year 4 of their studies.

35 respondents gave ‘other’ responses including eight respondents that have completed their studies, seven respondents in year 5 and two respondents in year 6.

### Type of Institution

This section discusses the type of institution attended by respondents as well as including a profile of the institutions attended under each type.

Figure 4:3 Type of Institution Attended by Respondents

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 4)

Note: All respondents could answer this question and an answer was required to this question

Base: 890, no respondents skipped this question.

Over half of respondents (51.6%, n=459) studied at a University in Ireland, while just over a third (33.9%, n=302) studied at an Institute of Technology. 12.2% of respondents (n=109) studied at Further Education Colleges while the least number of respondents (2.2%, n=20) studies at Other Colleges.

Table 4:5 Universities Attended by Respondents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| Dublin City University | 42 | 9.3% |
| National University of Ireland, Cork | 27 | 6.0% |
| National University of Ireland, Dublin | 78 | 17.3% |
| National University of Ireland, Galway | 82 | 18.2% |
| National University of Ireland, Maynooth | 95 | 21.1% |
| Trinity College Dublin | 37 | 8.2% |
| University of Limerick | 90 | 20.0% |
| **Total** | **451** | **100.0%** |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 5)

Note: Only those respondents that answered ‘University’ in Q4 could answer this question i.e. 459 respondents

Base: 8 respondents skipped this question therefore the base is 451

The table shows that the survey received a number of responses from all seven Irish Universities, with the most responses coming from NUI Maynooth (21.1%, n=95) followed by a fifth of respondents (n=90) attending the University of Limerick.

Table 4:6 Institutes of Technology Attended by Respondents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number | Percentage |
| Athlone Institute of Technology | 8 | 2.6% |
| Blanchardstown Institute of Technology | 6 | 2.0% |
| Institute of Technology, Carlow | 23 | 7.6% |
| Cork Institute of Technology | 29 | 9.6% |
| Dublin Institute of Technology | 87 | 28.8% |
| Dundalk Institute of Technology | 9 | 3.0% |
| Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology | 1 | 0.3% |
| Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology | 27 | 8.9% |
| Letterkenny Institute of Technology | 13 | 4.3% |
| Limerick Institute of Technology | 35 | 11.6% |
| Institute of Technology, Sligo | 20 | 6.6% |
| Institute of Technology, Tallaght | 7 | 2.3% |
| Institute of Technology, Tralee | 28 | 9.3% |
| Waterford Institute of Technology | 9 | 3.0% |
| **Total** | **302** | **100.0%** |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 5)Note: Only those respondents that answered ‘Institute of Technology’ in Q4 could answer this question i.e. 302

Base: No respondents skipped this question therefore the base is 302

The survey of students received a response from all Institutes of Technology in Ireland with the most responses coming from the Dublin Institute of Technology (28.8%, n=87) followed by the Limerick Institute of Technology (11.6%, n=35), all other Institutes represented less than 10% of responses from students belonging to Institutes of Technology with just one response coming from a student at the Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology.

Table 4:7 Other Colleges Attended by Respondents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| National College of Art & Design, Dublin | 9 | 52.9% |
| Mary Immaculate College, Limerick | 4 | 23.5% |
| St. Angela's College, Lough Gill, Sligo | 2 | 11.8% |
| St. Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra, Dublin | 1 | 5.9% |
| The Law Society of Ireland, Blackhall Place | 1 | 5.9% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 6)

Note: Only those respondents that answered ‘Other College (General and Specific Courses)’ in Q4 could answer this question i.e. 20

Base: 3 respondents skipped this question therefore the base is 17

As shown in the table a small number of responses came from students at other colleges with nine respondents coming from the National College of Art & Design, Dublin.

Table 4:8 Q8. Which of the following FE Colleges do you attend? Tick one

|  | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ballyfermot College of Further Education, Ballyfermot Rd, Dublin 10 | 17 | 16.2% |
| Blackrock Further Education Institute | 2 | 1.9% |
| Bray Inst of Further Education (St Thomas' Community College), Novara Ave, Bray, Co. Wicklow | 2 | 1.9% |
| Castlebar College of Further Education (Davitt College), Newtown, Castlebar, Co Mayo | 3 | 2.9% |
| Coláiste Dhulaigh, Clonshaugh Road, Coolock, Dublin 17 | 11 | 10.5% |
| Colaiste Ide, College of Further Studies, Cardiffsbridge Road, Finglas | 4 | 3.8% |
| Coláiste Mhuire, Castlemeadows, Thurles, Co. Tipperary | 2 | 1.9% |
| Coláiste Stiofain Naofa, Tramore Road, Cork | 6 | 5.7% |
| Cork College of Commerce, Morrison's Island, Cork | 2 | 1.9% |
| Davis College, Annabella, Mallow, Co. Cork | 1 | 1.0% |
| Dun Laoghaire Further Education Institute (DLFEI), Cumberland St, Co. Dublin | 2 | 1.9% |
| Inchicore College of Further Studies, Emmet Road, Dublin 8 | 6 | 5.7% |
| Killester College of Further Education, Collins Avenue, East, Dublin 5 | 3 | 2.9% |
| Kinsale College, Bandon Road, Kinsale | 1 | 1.0% |
| Liberties College, Bull Alley St. Liberties, Dublin 8 | 1 | 1.0% |
| Moate Business College (Community School), Moate, Co. Westmeath | 1 | 1.0% |
| Monaghan Institute of Further Education & Training (Beech Hill College), Monaghan | 1 | 1.0% |
| Pearse College Clogher Road Crumlin Dublin 12 | 1 | 1.0% |
| Rathmines College of Further Education, Town Hall, Dublin 6 | 3 | 2.9% |
| Sallynoggin College of Further, Pearse St, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin | 2 | 1.9% |
| Senior College, Eblana Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin | 1 | 1.0% |
| St John's Central College, Sawmill Street, Cork | 12 | 11.4% |
| St. Sheelan's College (Templemore CFE), Templemore, Co. Tipperary | 3 | 2.9% |
| Tralee Community College, Clash, Tralee, Co. Kerry | 2 | 1.9% |
| Whitehall College of Further Education, Swords Rd, Dublin 9 | 1 | 1.0% |
| Other\* | 15 | 14.3% |
| **Total** | **105** | **100.0%** |
| \*Other, please specify (n=15): | | |
| North Kerry College of Further Education (n=12) | | |
| Colaiste Dhulaigh, Raheny (n=1) | | |
| Colasite dhulaigh killbarrack Dublin 5 (n=1) | | |
| Kerry college further education (n=1) | | |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 8)

Note: Only those respondents that answered ‘Further Education College’ in Q4 could answer this question i.e. 109 respondents

Base: Four respondents skipped this question therefore the base is 105

Responses were received from 29 Further Education Colleges across Ireland with around half from 4 Colleges: 17 from Ballyfermot College of Further Education and 12 from each of: North Kerry College of Further Education and St John's Central College, Sawmill Street, Cork and 11 from Coláiste Dhulaigh, Clonshaugh Road, Coolock, Dublin 17

### Disability Type

Respondents were asked to indicate which disabilities they have from the list in the table below.

Table 4:9 Respondents’ Type of Disability

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| Autistic Spectrum Disorder (including Asperger’s syndrome) | 76 | 8.5% |
| Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder | 49 | 5.5% |
| Blind/Vision Impaired | 32 | 3.6% |
| Deaf/Hard of Hearing | 55 | 6.2% |
| Mental Health Condition | 173 | 19.4% |
| Neurological Condition (including Brian Injury, Epilepsy, Speech & Language Disabilities) | 73 | 8.2% |
| Significant Ongoing Illness | 118 | 13.3% |
| Physical/mobility | 114 | 12.8% |
| Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia) | 113 | 12.7% |
| Specific Learning Difficulties | 293 | 32.9% |
| Other | 87 | 9.8% |
| **Total respondents** | **890** | **100.0%** |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 9)

Note: All respondents could answer this question and respondents could choose more than one option.

Base: The base is 890

The table shows;

* just under a third of respondents (32.9%, n=293) have specific learning disabilities;
* just under a fifth of respondents (19.4%, n=173) have a mental health condition;
* 118 respondents (13.3%) have a significant ongoing illness; and
* 114 respondents (12.8%) have a physical/mobility disability.

The most common response from those 87 respondents that entered their own disability was dyslexia (n=41), all other responses in this category were mentioned by 2 or less respondents.

## Awareness of Supports for Students with Disabilities

This section contained five questions concerned with respondents’ awareness of supports for students with disabilities.

### Awareness of Support Available and the Fund for Students with Disabilities

Almost all respondents (96.7%, n=856, base=885)[[7]](#footnote-7) were aware of support available for students with disabilities in their college. Considering the small minority who were not aware of support 13 provided more detail to say that while they are somewhat aware of supports that they are not clear on all the support available to them with one respondents stating:

‘I know there are supports available, but I did not know what exactly was available nor the different supports until almost the end of year. I think there is definitely chance for improvement regarding the advertising and general knowledge of the supports available’.

Furthermore, 25 respondents that responded to say they were aware of supports went on to say they have good awareness regarding some of the supports but not all: ‘*I'm somewhat aware of the support available, however I do not think that I'm fully informed about available options and support for me.’*

Of the respondents that were aware of supports, just 46.3% (n=395, base=854)[[8]](#footnote-8) were aware of the Fund for Students with Disabilities with the remaining 459 respondents saying they were not aware of the Fund. Of the latter group, 137 of respondents provided further detail with many stating that they had not heard of the Fund and were not aware of the support available under the Fund until taking part in the survey. Twenty-nine respondents that had heard of the Fund were unclear on its function; ‘I am aware, but lack knowledge of specific details’.

Respondents were also asked when they found out about these supports: the findings are shown in the figure below.

Figure 4:4 When Respondents found out about Supports

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 12)

Note: Only those that answered ‘Yes’ in Q10 could answer this question i.e. 856 respondents

Base: 36 respondents skipped this question therefore the base is 820

Almost a third of respondents (32.6%, n=267) found out about the supports available before applying for a place or when they were considering where to apply compared to just over a quarter of respondents (25.6%, n=210) who found out about the supports only sometime after their course began. 23.0% (n=189) found out about supports when they enrolled or when their course began and the remaining 154 respondents (18.8%) found out after they had applied for a place or been awarded a place. Respondents that found out about support sometime after beginning their course provided more detail and of these;

* 18 respondents were not diagnosed until after starting college;
* 13 respondents only made their need for support known sometime after their course began;
* 7 respondents were referred to the service; and
* 23 respondents were not made aware of the support until sometime after their course began.

Table 4:10 How Respondents found out about Supports

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| Individual Meeting with Disability Service / Access Office | 489 | 57.1% |
| Through the college’s website | 245 | 28.6% |
| Information provided to prospective students | 160 | 18.7% |
| Specific / Early Orientation | 120 | 14.0% |
| Other | 117 | 13.7% |
| Email List | 95 | 11.1% |
| Through disability events | 76 | 8.9% |
| Flyers/Brochures distributed to students | 74 | 8.6% |
| Through general college events | 55 | 6.4% |
| None | 28 | 3.3% |
| **Total Respondents** | **856** |  |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 13)

Note: Only those that answered ‘Yes’ in Q10 could answer this question and respondents could select more than one answer

Base: 856 respondents

Most respondents (57.1%, n=489) found out about the supports available to student with disabilities through individual meetings with Disability Service / Access Office, the next most popular way students found out about supports was through the college’s website (28.6%, n=245), followed by information provided to prospective students (18.7%, n=160). A breakdown of the most common of the 117 other responses is as follows;

* 25 respondents described finding out about supports at different stages of college;
* 22 found out about supports through their secondary school;
* 25 through family or friends
* 12 through health care professional
* 9 found out about the support after enquiring at their college themselves.

### Availability of information about support for students with disabilities

The majority of respondents (59.5%, n=525) thought that there was enough information available about the support available for students with disabilities in their college, however some of these respondents (n=14) went on to say that more information and better advertising would be beneficial; *‘while there is information available, I think it should be highlighted more, even among the general student population’.*

Of those that thought there was not enough information available (40.5%, n=358) 160 provided more detail, the main themes (mentioned by at least 4 respondents) from this include;

* Not enough information available relating to what supports are available (n=19);
* Not enough information available relating to eligibility (n=13); and
* Information is not presented in a clear way (n=4).

## Process for Accessing Support

The figure below shows how respondents rated various aspects of the process for accessing support.

Figure 4:5 Respondents’ Rating of Aspects of the Process for Accessing Support

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016 (Question 15)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Part a – 11 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 879  Part b – 15 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 875  Part c – 16 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 874  Part d – 17 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 876 | Part e – 14 respondents skipped this question therefore the base is 876  Part f – 13 respondents skipped this question therefore the base is 877  Part g – 15 respondents skipped this question therefore the base is 875  Part h - 10 respondents skipped this question therefore the base is 880 |

The figure above shows that 90.2% (n=791) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they know who to speak to in their college to access support in connection with their disability. Over 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all other statements relating to the process for accessing support. The statement with the highest proportion of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing is that the eligibility criteria for accessing support are clear with 18.6% (n=163) of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, this statement also had the lowest proportion of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing (63.2%, n=554).

## Support Accessed

### Type of Support Accessed

Figure 4:6 Type of Support Accessed by Respondents

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016

Note: All respondents could answer this question and respondents could select more than one option

Base: 890 respondents

The figure shows that exam support is the most common type of support accessed by survey respondents with just under three quarters (74.7%, n=665) of respondents having accessed this. Other popular categories of support include;

* Assistive equipment for personal use (37.0%, n=329);
* Assistive software for personal use (29.9%, 266); and
* Study skills support (23.9%, n=213).

Under five percent of respondents accessed support for travel costs (n=30, 3.4%), speedtext (n=12, 1.3%) or Irish sign language interpreters (1.2%, n=11).

Of the 116 ‘other’ responses, most respondents described accessing printing support (n=26) or further described exam and coursework supports (n=26), this was followed by 11 respondents that have accessed counselling services. Thirteen respondents stated they did not receive any support.

### How long respondents have required and received support

Figure 4:7 How long respondents have required support for and how long they have been receiving support for

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016

Note: All respondents could answer these questions

\*Base: 24 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 866

\*\* Base: 26 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 864

The figure shows that the majority of respondents (88%, n=760) have an existing disability/required support when first joining the college and that a similar proportion (86%, n=743) have been receiving support since first joining college indicating that in most cases those students that required support from first joining college received it.

Furthermore, of the 106 respondents that ‘acquired disability / support received since joining the college’, 63 went on to say that this is because they were diagnosed with their disability after starting college while a further 12 respondents said that they did not require the support until after joining the college, *‘I always knew I had Dyslexia but I said I would try the first year without asking for support. I asked at the end of 1st year’.*

### Support received now compared to support in the past

Just under three quarters (72.8%, n=633) of respondents said that the support they receive is “about right”. 8.5% (n=74) of respondents stated that they receive “more support than they require” compared to 18.7% (n=163) of respondents that receive support that is “insufficient to adequately meet their needs”. 102 respondents that did not receive the level of support they require provided more details, highlighting particular areas in which support was insufficient including the following which are the most common responses (mentioned by at least 4 respondents):

* Insufficient assistive technology (n=11)
* Access to support (n=10)
* Under qualified note takers (n=6)
* Timing of support (n=5)
* Mental health support (n=4)

A collection of quotes from respondents that did not receive the level of support they require include;

* ‘It just is not to the level it needs to be. I rarely call upon these supports because they are not sufficient. They need to check in with students and see how they are doing’
* ‘Not enough support for having a mental illness, more physical disabilities and intellectual’
* ‘The funding to help me with subjects I was struggling with got cut and this was a huge disadvantage to me as I depended on this resource’
* ‘I have more complex needs not being met’

The majority (63.0%, n=553) of respondents had been receiving support prior to attending their college, these respondents went on to compare the support they receive now with the support they received in the past with;

* most of these respondents (45.8%, n=253) saying that support they receive now is ‘about the same’ as the support they received before;
* just under a third (31.7%, 175) saying that support they receive now is more than the support they received before; and
* just under a quarter (22.5%, n=124) saying that support is less than what they received before.

Of the respondents that receive less support now than they had before university 58 provided reasoning behind this. The most common reasons include:

* The support is not as personalised as it was before attending college (n=13) – ‘In school I felt had access to support all the time while in college I have to see someone at a specific time and while the learning support tutor was very helpful my time with her was limited to a set timetable’.
* The respondent no longer requires the same level of support they did before college (n=9) – ‘I don't feel that I need as much support now as I did in school, and so I haven't had to receive much help from the disability service’

## Impacts

The figure below shows the influence that the availability of support for students with disabilities has had.

Influence of availability of supports for students with disabilities

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Part a – 21 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 869  Part b – 19 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 871  Part c – 17 respondents kipped this question, therefore the base is 873  Part d – 20 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 870 | Part e – 22 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 868  Part f – 16 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 874  Part g – 13 respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 877 |

The figure above shows that respondents stated the availability of support had the strongest influence on;

* their progression to access further education (55.9%, n=487 saying strong influence or some influence);
* the development of their independent learning and transferable skills (55.0%, n=480 saying strong influence or some influence); and
* their decision to remain in higher education i.e. to complete their course rather than dropping out (51.4%, n=447 saying strong influence or some influence).

## Strengths and Areas for Improvement

### Areas of Strength

Respondents were asked to identify three areas in which their college is doing well to support students with disabilities that other institutions could learn from. Overall 711 respondents identified a strength against area 1, 601 against area 2, and 477 a third area of strength totalling 1,789 comments from respondents regarding areas of strength. The responses have been categorised and the key areas as well as the number of comments received regarding this area are outlined below.

* **Exam Support (n=264)** - 124 comments highlighted the usefulness of exam support at their institution.
* **Disability Staff (n=185) –** 185 comments noted staff as a key strength. Respondents found staff to be comfortable to talk to and always willing to help when the student needs them.
* **Communication between disability service/staff and the student (n=177**) – 177 comments identified the level of communication the service has with students as a key strength including meetings with disability staff, communication through emails and the 1-to-1 support offered.
* **The provision of assistive technology (n=151) –** 151 respondents identified assistive technology as a key area of strength at their institution;
* **Learning support (n=146) –** 146 comments identified the learning support offered by their institution to students with disabilities as one of the key strengths.
* **Access to and availability of support (n=112) –** 112 comments highlighted the ease of access to support and the availability of support as a key area of strength at their institution;

While these were the main areas of strength identified by respondents’ comments, there were a number of other areas highlighted by respondents including; the provision of areas or spaces specifically for those with disabilities as a strength (n=67), the level of information provided by the disability services at their institution (n=62) and the personalised nature of support (n=52).

### Areas of Improvement

Respondents were asked to identify three areas in which their college could be doing something else to support students with disabilities. Overall 576 comments were received against area 1, 378 against area 2 and 257 against area 3, totalling 1,211 comments from respondents across the three areas of weakness. The responses have been categorised and the results of this are outlined below.

* **Learning support –** 109 respondents called for more assistance with learning including more one to one support;
* **Higher level of support –** 103 respondents called for a higher level of support from their institution in general;
* **Information –** 101 respondents called for more information in relation to the funding available for students with disabilities saying they were unclear on all the supports available to them. 55 further comments related to the need for improved marketing to increase the awareness of the supports available to students with disabilities.
* **Communication with students (n=90) –** 90 respondents identified staff involvement/communication with students as an area for improvement. These respondents felt that disability staff did not communicate with them as frequently or effectively as they should, these students identified more meetings with disability staff and the need for regular check-ups with students with disabilities by staff.
* **Support with lecturers and other University staff (non-disability staff) (n=72) –** 72 respondents identified the need for better supports when dealing with non-disability university staff, particularly lecturers. Respondents called for greater linkages between the disability service and University staff.

While these were the main areas of improvement identified by respondents’ comments, there were a number of other areas highlighted by respondents including; increased exam support (n=59), more disability events, groups and social support (n=55), and the need for dedicated spaces/venues for students with disabilities (n=47).

## Exploratory Analysis

#### Introduction

This section compares findings across the following categories;

* Institution Type;
* Year of Study; and
* Type of Disability.

The key findings related to each group are outlined in the following sections.

#### Key

Table 4:11: Key

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 5 percentage points or more higher than the overall |  |
| 5 percentage points or more less than the overall |  |

Source: PACEC

### Institution Type

We analysed the differences between the responses of respondents at differing Institution Types. The types of institutions are;

* University (n=459);
* Institute of Technology (n=302);
* Further Education College (n=109); and
* Other College (n=20).

Due to the low response rates against ‘Other College’ compared to the other categories we have excluded this institution type from the analysis.

#### Awareness

Table 4:12: Proportion of respondents aware of the FSD

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Total** | | **University** | | **Further Education College** | | **Institute of Technology** | |
| N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Yes | 395 | 46.3% | 177 | 39.8% | 51 | 53.1% | 155 | 52.9% |
| No | 459 | 53.7% | 268 | 60.2% | 45 | 46.9% | 138 | 47.1% |
| Total | 854 | 100.0% | 445 | 100.0% | 96 | 100.0% | 293 | 100.0% |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016

Students at Universities had a lower awareness of the FSD than students at all other institution types with 13.3 percentage points less of students at university being aware of the fund than those at IoT.

#### Support received

A lower proportion of respondents from Further Education Colleges found the support ‘about right’ at 64.4% compared to 72.8% overall, as a result of this a higher proportion of students at Further Education Colleges found support to be more than they require (12.9% against overall of 8.5%) and a higher proportion than overall found the supports to be insufficient to meet their needs (22.8% against overall of 18.7%). This suggests a larger variation in the level of support provided across Further Education Colleges compared to Universities and Institutes of Technology whose proportions were close to the overall values.

#### Information regarding Supports

23.5% of respondents at Further Education Colleges disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that information about supports available for students with disabilities is widely available at their institution, this is compared to just 16.4% of University respondents and 17.5% of respondents overall.

#### Support for Students with Disabilities Influence on Respondents

The table below shows the proportion of students that said the support had a strong or some influence on the elements in the first column.

Table 4:13: Proportion of respondents that felt support had a strong or some influence on their time in college

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Overall | University | Further Education College | Institute of Technology |
| Decision to participate in higher education | 47.4% | 39.6% | 62.6% | 54.8% |
| Decision to remain in higher education | 51.4% | 45.4% | 66.3% | 55.8% |
| Development of independent learning and transferable skills | 55.0% | 50.9% | 62.1% | 58.6% |
| Progression to access further study | 55.0% | 50.2% | 74.7% | 58.3% |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016

A lower proportion of respondents from university felt supports for students with disabilities had a strong or some influence on all of the elements listed in the table than the overall proportions. Conversely, respondents from further education colleges tended to feel the influence of supports in a higher proportion than overall with 19.7 percentage points more of students from FE colleges stating that the support they received influenced their progression to further study strongly or somewhat.

### Year of Study

We analysed the differences between the responses of respondents in differing years of study. The year groups are;

* Year 1 (n=327);
* Year 2 (n=227);
* Year 3 (n=184); and
* Year 4 (n=107).

The key findings from this analysis are outlined in the next section – though overall there appears to be little variation by Year Group.

#### Awareness

Year 4 students were the most aware of support available under the fund with 10.4 percentage points more students in this year being aware of the FSD than the overall proportions. Awareness within other year groups was in line with the overall proportions.

#### Process for Accessing Support

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement against the statements in first column of the table below. The table shows the proportion of respondents in each category that either strongly agreed or agreed with each statement.

Table 4:14: Proportion of respondents from each year group strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statements

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Overall** | **Year 1** | **Year 2** | **Year 3** | **Year 4** |
| Information about supports available for students with disabilities is widely available | 65.9% | 69.0% | 67.8% | 60.9% | 63.6% |
| I know who to speak to in my college to access support in connection with my disability | 90.2% | 89.7% | 90.7% | 89.1% | 91.5% |
| The process for applying for support is clear | 68.7% | 70.7% | 64.4% | 68.3% | 69.5% |
| The level of support available for students with disabilities is adequate | 67.6% | 67.9% | 70.8% | 63.0% | 69.8% |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016

Feedback from the different year groups is broadly the same across the elements outlined above with the exception of a lower proportion of Year 3 respondents agreeing that information about supports available for students with disabilities is widely available.

### Disability Type

We analysed the differences between the responses of respondents with differing disabilities. The types of disabilities we have looked at are;

* Specific Learning Disabilities (N=293);
* Mental Health Condition (n=173);
* Significant Ongoing Illness (n=118);
* Physical/mobility (n=114).

The key findings from this analysis are outlined in the next section.

#### Awareness of FSD

Table 4:15: Proportion of respondents aware of the FSD

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Overall** | | **Specific Learning Difficulties** | | **Mental Health Condition** | | **Significant Ongoing Illness** | | **Physical/ mobility** | |
|  | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Yes | 395 | 46.3% | 117 | 41.5% | 67 | 39.6% | 56 | 49.1% | 64 | 57.7% |
| No | 459 | 53.7% | 165 | 58.5% | 102 | 60.4% | 58 | 50.9% | 47 | 42.3% |
| Total | 854 | 100.0% | 282 | 100.0% | 169 | 100.0% | 114 | 100.0% | 111 | 100.0% |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016

As the table shows there was varying awareness when it comes to the FSD. Respondents with mental health conditions had the lowest level of awareness of the Fund with 6.7 percentage points less of respondents in this category being aware of the Fund than overall. Conversely respondents with physical/mobility disabilities had a larger than overall proportion of respondents aware of the FSD at 57.7% (11.4 percentage points higher than the overall).

#### Process for Accessing Support

Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement against the statements in first column of the table below, the table shows the proportion of respondents in each category that either strongly agreed or agreed with each statement.

Table 4:16: Proportion of respondents from each year group strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statements

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Overall** | **Specific Learning Difficulties** | **Mental Health Condition** | **Significant Ongoing Illness** | **Physical/ mobility** |
| Information about supports available for students with disabilities is widely available | 65.9% | 60.4% | 62.4% | 64.4% | 62.8% |
| I know who to speak to in my college to access support in connection with my disability | 90.2% | 89.1% | 89.5% | 91.5% | 92.0% |
| The process for applying for support is clear | 68.7% | 64.4% | 64.1% | 70.1% | 67.3% |
| The level of support available for students with disabilities is adequate | 67.6% | 63.6% | 61.4% | 67.8% | 61.1% |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of Students, PACEC 2016

Responses were fairly consistent across categories with a few exceptions;

* A lower than overall proportion of respondents with specific learning difficulties agreed or strongly agreed that information about supports available for students with disabilities is widely available;
* A lower than overall proportion of respondents with mental health conditions and respondents with physical/mobility disabilities agreed or strongly agreed that the level of support available for students with disabilities is adequate

# Appendix P: Site Visits Findings

## Introduction

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with staff who have some role in how the fund supports students from five institutions that have received support from the FSD during June 2016 (Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Moate Business College, Waterford Institute of Technology, University College Cork and Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB). Collated findings from four of the site visits are presented in Section 8.2; as the experiences in the ETB sector are markedly different, the findings from this visit are reported separately in Section 8.3.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather feedback on experiences of the Fund in relation to:

* roles and resources associated with FSD;
* processes / administration associated with the FSD
* demand for FSD / drivers of demand;
* impacts of the FSD;
* other services or support provided by your institution for students with disabilities / interaction with FSD; and
* areas that are working well / areas that could be improved.

## Site Visits x 4 – Summary of Staff Interviews

### Introduction

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with staff (10) who have some role in how the fund supports students from four institutions that have received support from the FSD during June 2016 (Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Moate Business College, Waterford Institute of Technology, University College Cork).

### Profile Information

The table below provides a profile of the institutions visited in relation to number of beneficiaries and funding allocated from the FSD for the current academic year (2015/16).

Table 5:1: Institution Profile (2015/16) –FSD

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Institution** | **Number of Beneficiaries** | **Funding Allocated** |
| Letterkenny Institute of Technology | 155 | €333,075 |
| Waterford Institute of Technology | 340 | €268,482 |
| University College Cork | 813 | €588,266 |
| Moate Business College (Community School), Moate, Co. Westmeath | 46 | €163,355 |

Source: FSD Data - Numbers of Students by College and Year of Study and FSD Funding Allocated- 2012-13 to 2015-16 (to March 2016) (provided by HEA to PACEC June 2016)

### Demand for FSD

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * What are the key factors driving demand for the FSD in your institution e.g.: * greater promotion by HEA / your institution; * more information and guidance available from HEA / your organisation on how to apply to the FSD or the support that is available; * increased number of people with a disability progressing to higher education; and * increased demand relating to particular types of disability. * Are there any groups where there is lower participation (e.g. disability type)? Why do you think this is the case? * Do you believe the FSD is effectively targeting those most in need of support? If not what more could be done? * Are the rules for allocating funding appropriate to meet the needs of all students with all types of disabilities? E.g. some supports are only available to students with a specific type of disability although other students might benefit from these. * Do you believe if students had previously accessed support at post-primary level this information should be easily transferred / updated on arrival at your institution, or is it more appropriate to carry out a new assessment? |

Interviewees highlighted that there has been an increased demand for support in the last 3 – 4 years however this is not in line with the increase in the student population generally as an increased number of the student population were presenting with a disability. The key factors driving demand identified by interviewees included:

* Increase in secondary school education facilitating student with special needs;
* Students and families being more open to acknowledging a disability;
* Legislation (Disability Act), has meant the students that may not have previously succeeded at higher education are now proceeded to higher education);
* Vocational training demanded by employers; and
* Greater awareness of the accommodations available and look for these supports.

Interviewees suggested that there had been a particular increase in:

* Students on the Autism spectrum;
* Students with mental health condition;
* Dyslexia;
* Those with co-existing disabilities (however other institutions reported a decrease in students with multiple disabilities); and
* Deaf students (however other institutions reported a decrease in students with a sensory disability).

Views on groups with lower participation varied and included:

* Sensory disability (as they could go elsewhere to, for example, a specialist school);
* Physical disabilities; and
* Multiple disabilities.

While interviewees suggested that the FSD has effectively supported students it was also suggested that there are students that could benefit from support who are not currently eligible, for example part time students. It was suggested that the Fund should be extended to include part time students who may apply to part time courses in the first instance before progressing to full time courses.

Mainstreaming of support to make this available to any student with a disability / all students was evident in one institution (University College Cork) however this was not widespread practice

Table 5:2: Mainstreaming Case Study

| Mainstreaming Case Study |
| --- |
| University College Cork has invested in mainstreaming supports for students with disabilities which means that those who do not benefit from the Fund can use them and in doing so aims to provide a holistic approach to promoting independent learning, wellbeing, academic success and employability. The supports provided include:   * Pre Entry/Outreach Programme * Educational Supports * Technological Supports * Personal Supports * Sports & Leisure * Occupational Therapy Programme * Careers Advice & Employability Skills * Mentoring Support Programme   A key element of the support provided is the Assistive Technology Outreach Programme which enables prospective students to become both IT and AT literate before progressing to 3rd level.  It aims to enhance access and transition to third level education for students with disabilities/learning difficulties by[[9]](#footnote-9):   * Increasing awareness of the role of AT in enabling students to maximised their potential; and * Providing the hands-on training and support to students, parents and educators making use of AT in school/homework.   As a consequence entrants with disabilities then embrace the new learning environment with skills to manage their studies. On arrival at third level assistive technology is further promoted through the use of Panopto[[10]](#footnote-10), a lecture capturing option which is mainstreamed in most lecture venues. Assistive Technology is also built into the mirror image on all PCs so that students can access specialised software in all computer labs. |

Each institution uses information on students that is available from their secondary school where provided. However amongst the staff consulted as part of these 4 site visits there was a strong view that a separate needs assessment is required on entry to third level education as their needs may have changed or developed and that the needs assessment should be in the context of the degree they are pursuing as needs may vary depending on the nature of the course.

### Resources associated with FSD in your institution

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * Approximately how much time per annum is spent managing and administering the FSD? * Who does this? * How many people are involved? How many FTE? * What do they do? * What other resources does your institution allocate to ensure that the FSD support is delivered? (finance, physical, information/advice/guidance, other, etc.) * Do you feel the resources spent on management and administration are proportionate to the level of support received? How could this be more effective? Is the balance between resources allocated to administering the Fund and resources allocated to providing support right? * Given the increasing demand on the Fund (rising costs and increased number of people applying) how can the Fund be more effective and ensure that the maximum level of support is provided to the maximum number of students. * Do you feel that your institution is equipped /aware of obligations to fulfil legal requirements in respect of students with disabilities? To what extent does the Fund facilitate this? Are there gaps / support required that resources available through the Fund cannot meet? |

The number of people involved in the management and administration of the FSD ranged between 2 – 6 people however the roles of those involved varied depending on the type of institution, for example staff within Moate Business College completed this as part of their overall role while within higher education institutions there are dedicated staff to manage and administer the FSD, for example within Letterkenny Institute of Technology or the Universities there are staff to support assistive technology as well as disability advisors, financial administrators etc.

The range and differing roles / levels of support within each institution was highlighted by one interviewee as possibly impacting on the equality and equity of provision (e.g. while some institutions have an occupational therapist and / or support workers others do not) and it was suggested that there should be a consistency in the roles / levels of staff at each institution. All staff found it difficult to estimate the amount of time spent per annum managing and administering the FSD and it was suggested that the Fund should provide some allocation for administration.

To be more effective, staff feedback indicated that the Fund is currently reactive as it provides support based on the people that present with a disability and more proactive work (e.g. with secondary schools) should be considered. It was also suggested by staff at University College Cork that mainstreaming supports allows this institution to use these in the first instance before applying to the FSD.

Staff suggested that the FSD is helping them to meet obligations around reasonable accommodation however highlighted that the overall support provided by the university disability support service also contributed to meeting these obligations.

### Process / Administration

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * In relation to the HEA / FSD policies and guidelines, what is working well? What areas could be improved? * Annual Service Delivery Plan (produced by each institution); * Summary Request Form (produced by each institution); * Assessment of Need (developed with individual students) * Evidence of Disability (for individual students) - & also consistency or otherwise with other schemes such as DARE * Eligibility Criteria - appropriateness and whether any need to amend / adapt (e.g. inclusion of part-time courses etc.) * Is the process for developing and submitting the Funding Request Form easy to understand / navigate? If no how could it be improved? * Are you provided with sufficient guidance on what information is required as part of a Funding Request Form? * Do you believe the system and metrics for allocating FSD funds is appropriate / fit for purpose (e.g. it is clear how annual allocations are calculated etc.?) * Do you believe timescales for the allocation of funding are adequate? If not how could they be revised; e.g.: * notifications of decisions provided sooner? * more opportunities for institutions if students come forward later in year? * would a three year allocation model work better? * Do you believe the HEA data collection and reporting processes are appropriate (e.g. is there a need for increased data gathering / analysis / reporting) * How do processes associated with FSD integrate with your own college’s systems and processes – what issues arise? How could this be improved? * What is working well /areas for improvement in relation to HEI/FEI internal processes for administering and allocating FSD? * Engagement with students: raising awareness of the FSD * Processing applications from students and disbursing payments * Processing applications and claims (to HEA) * Resources and capacity, Timescales * Monitoring/reporting |

Overall interviewees indicated that the HEA / FSD policies worked well and the process for developing and submitting the Funding Request Form was easy to understand and there was sufficient guidance provided. However specific in relation to policies and guidelines included:

* Annual Service Delivery Plans - There is a lack of consistency in the format of the Annual Service Delivery Plans and one institution stated that they do not have one
* Summary request form- All institutions completed the same summary request form however interviewees noted that this required too much detail and suggested the ‘optional’ fields could be removed.
* Evidence of disability – feedback from staff highlighted that the requirement of a letter from the psychologist is a significant barrier for students with mental heath in part due to the evolving nature of how young people with mental health are treated (e.g. some people are under the care of Community Mental Health Teams or GPs). In addition, it was suggested that students with Dyslexia often cannot afford to pay for a psychological assessment However new DARE guidelines (which have also been conditionally agreed for FSD for 2017) states that:
* DARE will no longer require a full psycho-educational report dated within the previous three years of application for students applying on the basis of a specific learning difficulty (SLD)[[11]](#footnote-11); and
* Where an applicant has difficulty accessing the appropriate professional to complete the Section C Evidence of Disability, their General Practitioner (GP) may in certain circumstances be in a position to complete the form.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Nevertheless, this may still be an issue for those students that do not reach third level education through the DARE route.

* Eligibility criteria – staff feedback suggested that the eligibility criteria should be removed to:
* take into account the older student cohort
* include part time students

However not all interviewees were clear on how the annual allocations were calculated. Whilst those staff engaged with the FSD for a number of years were aware of this process, newer members of staff suggested that guidance or information on this would be helpful.

All staff highlighted that the timescales for applying to the FSD were difficult to meet, in particular the initial deadline as staff are conducting needs assessment for a high number of entrants at the same time. In addition, the timescales were highlighted as detrimental for students as students often identify late / after January and then need to wait to following year. The current timescales also provide the following difficulties for staff:

* It is difficult to get psychological assessments completed in time and it was suggested that some should be able to be submitted as “pending”;
* The budget allocation is not known until February each year and this causes difficulties in purchasing etc.

Staff feedback on areas for improvement includes:

* Greater flexibility for the Fund to adapted to the local context, for example, one interviewee noted that the sourcing of Irish Sign Language interpreters or the provision of Speedtext Operators in the area was very limited and costly (includes travel costs due to location) and the provision of note-takers would be a more suitable option however the FSD does not allow for an ‘allocation’ for this support as a specified support.
* It was suggested that the FSD could provide more effective support by institutions knowing in advance / sooner what allocation of funding they will be receiving so they can plan accordingly
* All staff stated that the needs assessments and monitoring / reporting processes were very time consuming and it was suggested that bi-annual reporting would be more beneficial than quarterly reporting.

### Impact of the FSD

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * Has the FSD increased the participation of people with a disability in your institution? * Has the FSD increased the retention of people with a disability in your institution? * Has the FSD effectively supported students with disabilities to learn more independently? * Is the FSD effectively helping students to access the labour market or progress to further study? * Overall, does the FSD help your institution to meet its obligations with regards to equality, performance compact (metrics regarding improving access), etc. |

All staff believed that the FSD had helped student retention and it was suggested that the FSD had supported students, particularly high needs students, to work and learn more independently. However there were mixed views on whether it had helped support participation due to its reactionary approach (i.e. supporting those that present with a disability at higher education).

Other impacts highlighted by staff included:

* Greater acceptance and a greater expectation of students with disabilities from collage staff, other students and students with disabilities;
* Increased demand on tutors;
* Improvements in college resources; and
* Increase in knowledge of issues pertaining to disabilities and measures that can help overcome these issues.

However it was also noted that the FSD was having limited impact for some groups, for example those with mental health illness as their needs are less clear and possibly more complex. It was also noted that such needs may be different than the FSD was originally set up to address.

### Other Services

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * What other internal supports do you provide to students with disabilities in your institution? * Do you source any other external supports for students with a disability * Do you think there are appropriate supports provided in your institution for students with disabilities? If not what further supports should be provided that currently are not * Is there any scope for greater integration of FSD support with other services? * What is this institution doing well to support students with disabilities that other institutions could learn from? Is there any evidence of the impact of this on students? * Are there any other institutions who are doing well to support students with disabilities that others could learn from? What are they doing / is there any evidence of the impact of this on students? |

All interviewees referred to additional supports provided by their institution for students with a disability, these included:

* Physical resources (e.g. computer rooms, ‘chill out’ rooms) – for example the Academic Skills Centre (ASC) for students with disabilities in Waterford Institute of Technology and dedicated computer rooms for students in Letterkenny Institute of Technology;.
* Interactive social activities specifically designed for students with ASD (however not exclusively and other students can attend);
* Workshops in relation to student welfare and student finance (not exclusive to students with a disability);
* Specialised progression support services, visits to higher education colleges and liaising with admission services in various HE colleges;
* Health and welfare assistance;
* Physical alterations to buildings where necessary; and
* Timetabling accommodations.

Other supports specifically highlighted by the University College Cork included:

* Panopto[[13]](#footnote-13)
* Electronic Readers
* Enhancing employability workshops
* Assistive Technology Outreach Programme
* Occupational Therapy Programmme
* Integrated Physical Activity Programme

In relation to what staff felt institution were doing well, the following was highlighted:

* Streamlining of services and resources e.g. introducing college note takers / recording pens for more severe dyslexia (while these involve a greater cost at the outset they are more cost-effective in the longer term)
* Mainstreaming of services: the University College Cork has mainstreamed a number of support for its students with a disability and staff have suggested that this allowed it to focus FSD funding on very specific supports.

### Looking Ahead

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * What is working well in relation to the FSD? * What elements need to be retained for the future (e.g. Learning Support to students with Dyslexia, which need to be maintained to address the particular needs of these students) * What could be improved upon in relation to the FSD? * Areas for development in relation to remit and scope (e.g. greater flexibility to support high needs students) * What more could HEA do to support HEIs access and deliver the FSD? * How best can your institution use the FSD to support those who need it most? |

Staff highlighted that the following was working well in relation to the FSD:

* Needs assessments on entry to third level education – it was highlighted that educational needs are different at different stages of education / learning requirements change and therefore an updated assessment is required
* Communications with the HEA – it was felt that there were clear guidelines and procedures to be followed and any questions or queries were satisfactorily answered

Staff highlighted the following areas for improvement:

* More funding
* Need to extend to part time students – staff highlighted that for some students it is only practical for them to come to college on a part time basis;
* General learning disability – it was suggested that this is not sufficiently catered for;
* Mainstreaming – it was suggested that more supports could be mainstreamed (e.g. Read and Write Gold) as they would benefit a range of students and make these supports more easily accessible;
* Equipment – it is understood that any equipment funded by the FSD is returned on leaving the institution and feedback from staff suggests that this could be amended as the equipment is often not re-used by any other students due to the software updates required and would still be of benefit to the student. Therefore a process to sell or donate equipment or guidance on equipment funded by the FSD at the end of a student’s time in education would be beneficial;
* Staff training – it would be beneficial if FSD funding could be provided for teaching staff to raise awareness of the range of disabilities and how they could support students;
* Timescales / timing – the late allocation of the Fund can prohibit early intervention and as a number of student present late they are not represented in the Fund allocation, interviewees suggested that there should be 3 / 4 opportunities for submission each year (i.e. greater flexibility of application deadlines for the Fund);
* Application form – it was highlighted that this does not allow for complex and dual disabilities to be explained and should be amend to allow greater detail / explanation to be added;
* Follow-up – it was suggested that funding for follow-up of students could be a condition of future funding as it would provide outcomes data for FSD recipients that could then be provided to HEA by the HEIs. This help inform the development of the FSD and provide evidence of its impact (e.g. on progression to employment, however it was noted that unless support is given to Disability Services in the form of funding there would be no time to gather this otherwise); and
* Funding for innovation – it was suggested that annual funding should be provided for innovation in the support for students at a national level.

## Site Visits – Focus Group – DDLETB

### Introduction

A focus group was held in June 2016 with staff who play a role in how the FSD supports students in institutions which fall under the auspices of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB. Those attending are detailed in the table below.

Table 5:3: DDLETB Focus Group Participants – Review of FSD

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Role** | **Organisation/College** |
| Lucy Tierney | Deputy Principal | Blackrock Further Education Institute (BFEI) |
| Bridget Blake | Principal | Dundrum College of Further Education |
| Cecilia Munro | Principal | Dún Laoghaire Further Education Institute |
| Tom Taylor | Principal | Sallynoggin College of Further Education |
| Kevin Harrington | Principal | Stillorgan College of Further Education |
| Dr Fionnuala Anderson | Acting Education Officer | Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board |
| Tina Jordan | Finance | Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board |
| Martin Clohessy | Principal Finance Officer | Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board |

### Profile Information

The table below provides a profile of the number of beneficiaries and funding allocated from the FSD for the current academic year (2015/16) for those institutions under the auspices of DDLETB.

Table 5:4: Students Supported by FSD (2015/16)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School/PLC Centre** | **Students Supported by FSD** | | | |
| One Year Course | Two Year course (Yr 1) | Two Year course (Yr 2) | Total |
| Blackrock Further Education Institute (BFEI) | 23 | 25 | 12 | 60 |
| Dun Laoghaire College of Further Education (DLFEI) | 14 | 36 | 18 | 68 |
| Greenhills College | 14 | - | - | 14 |
| Sallynoggin College of Further | 11 | 5 | 4 | 20 |
| Grange Community College | 6 | - | - | 6 |
| Total – DDLETB | 68 | 66 | 34 | 168 |

Source: FSD Data - Numbers of Students by College and Year of Study (provided by HEA to PACEC June 2016)

Table 5:5: FSD Funding Allocated to DDLETB

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Academic Year** | **Total Allocated** |
| 2012-13 | €259,254 |
| 2013-14 | €324,123 |
| 2014-15 | €341,197 |
| 2015-16 | €189,237 |

Source: FSD Data - FSD Funding Allocated- 2012-13 to 2015-16 (to March 2016) (provided by HEA to PACEC June 2016)

### Demand for FSD

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * What are the key factors driving demand for the FSD in your institution e.g.: * greater promotion by HEA / your institution; * more information and guidance available from HEA / your organisation on how to apply to the FSD or the support that is available; * increased number of people with a disability progressing to higher education; and * increased demand relating to particular types of disability. * Are there any groups where there is lower participation (e.g. disability type)? Why do you think this is the case? * Do you believe the FSD is effectively targeting those most in need of support? If not what more could be done? * Are the rules for allocating funding appropriate to meet the needs of all students with all types of disabilities? E.g. some supports are only available to students with a specific type of disability although other students might benefit from these. * Do you believe if students had previously accessed support at post-primary level this information should be easily transferred / updated on arrival at your institution, or is it more appropriate to carry out a new assessment? |

The situation in colleges under the auspices of DDLETB is as follows: the level of demand is very variable and depends on the profile of students registering each year and the nature of any disabilities: some of these might have relatively low levels of support needs whereas a small number might have a very high level of need e.g.: where a student requires a personal assistant – this would cost in the region of €30-40K per annum.

Colleges do not feel they get the level of funding required to support the needs identified and have to prioritise so that the high level students are supported and the remaining funding is allocated across all other students.

### Resources associated with FSD in your institution

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * Approximately how much time per annum is spent managing and administering the FSD? * Who does this? * How many people are involved? How many FTE? * What do they do? * What other resources does your institution allocate to ensure that the FSD support is delivered? (finance, physical, information/advice/guidance, other, etc.) * Do you feel the resources spent on management and administration are proportionate to the level of support received? How could this be more effective? Is the balance between resources allocated to administering the Fund and resources allocated to providing support right? * Given the increasing demand on the Fund (rising costs and increased number of people applying) how can the Fund be more effective and ensure that the maximum level of support is provided to the maximum number of students. * Do you feel that your institution is equipped /aware of obligations to fulfil legal requirements in respect of students with disabilities? To what extent does the Fund facilitate this? Are there gaps / support required that resources available through the Fund cannot meet? |

The situation in colleges under the auspices of DDLETB is as follows: none of the colleges have dedicated resources (e.g. Access Officers/ Support Staff) allocated to the management and administration of the FSD. The workload associated with this is taken on by existing staff members for example:

* Staff in colleges:
* Career Guidance and Counselling staff – role in assessing need when students are registering;
* Other staff including principals and deputy principals and office/admin staff - role in collating information for securing funding, management, monitoring, reporting on FSD as well as allocating support to individual students. Staff also have a role in procuring support services to address the needs identified and associated contract management of these providers. This can be a range of different providers offering different supports for students and may be more than 1 provider for 1 student (depending on needs). There is also a role in overseeing / securing support for example if support is a technology solution, the FE College needs to have the necessary (IT or other) support in place to maintain that.
* Staff in ETBs
* Finance / Admin staff have a role in liaising with HEA, administering finance and submitting claims, etc. on behalf of colleges.

Staff in the DDLETB colleges have a wealth of experience in supporting students with disabilities to access FE. It was difficult to estimate the amount of time spent per annum managing and administering the FSD and it was suggested that the Fund should provide some allocation for administration. Staff highlighted the following areas for improvement:

* Additional resources in colleges to support accessing FSD – both operational and management level.
* Level of funding/support available through FSD relative to time spent accessing this and process is disproportionate:
* Staff time on management/administration given the relatively small amounts provided
* Process/paperwork is very onerous

Staff in the DDLETB colleges felt that the FSD helped them to meet their obligations to fulfil legal requirements in respect of students with disabilities. However the FSD alone was not sufficient to do this and they needed to contribute own resources in some instances to avoid being in breach of the legislation. Meeting their legal obligations was significant concern for the colleges and the fear of a case being taken against them.

### Process / Administration

| Key areas that were explored: |
| --- |
| * In relation to the HEA / FSD policies and guidelines, what is working well? What areas could be improved? * Annual Service Delivery Plan (produced by each institution); * Summary Request Form (produced by each institution); * Assessment of Need (developed with individual students) * Evidence of Disability (for individual students) - & also consistency or otherwise with other schemes such as DARE * Eligibility Criteria - appropriateness and whether any need to amend / adapt (e.g. inclusion of part-time courses etc.) * Is the process for developing and submitting the Funding Request Form easy to understand / navigate? If no how could it be improved? * Are you provided with sufficient guidance on what information is required as part of a Funding Request Form? * Do you believe the system and metrics for allocating FSD funds is appropriate / fit for purpose (e.g. it is clear how annual allocations are calculated etc.?) * Do you believe timescales for the allocation of funding are adequate? If not how could they be revised; e.g.: * notifications of decisions provided sooner? * more opportunities for institutions if students come forward later in year? * would a three year allocation model work better? * Do you believe the HEA data collection and reporting processes are appropriate (e.g. is there a need for increased data gathering / analysis / reporting) * How do processes associated with FSD integrate with your own college’s systems and processes – what issues arise? How could this be improved? * What is working well /areas for improvement in relation to HEI/FEI internal processes for administering and allocating FSD? * Engagement with students: raising awareness of the FSD * Processing applications from students and disbursing payments * Processing applications and claims (to HEA) * Resources and capacity, Timescales * Monitoring/reporting |

In colleges under the auspices of DDLETB, staff highlighted that the following was working well in relation to the FSD: provides a means to support students with disabilities and ensure access to FE – without the Fund, this would not be possible.

In the colleges under the auspices of DDLETB, HEA allocates an overall pot of funding to ETB based on the needs identified by the individual colleges. However, HEA does not share the breakdown/allocation per student in need of support so each college has to take the total allocated to it and do this breakdown for themselves. The colleges would welcome HEA sharing this information through understand it may not be shared in order to provide greater flexibility to the colleges.

Finance staff in the DDLETB manage the FSD funds on behalf of the colleges. However in some instances, the colleges have felt unable to use funds and have had to return these to the HEA. For example in the case of FSD funding allocated to a college for a student identified to be in need of support is ring-fenced for that student. If that student leaves the college early, the college has to return the funding. So although there may be other students who present with needs later (or have a support need that is not fully funded), the college is bound to return the funding, although it could have been used for other purposes (related to supporting other students with a disability). A related issue arises if the support (tied to that student and which is no longer required) is provided by a third party under contract; contractual issues may arise.

In DDLETB, the timing of the allocation process is as follows:

* Career Guidance and Counselling Staff assess needs / complete application for FSD around Feb/Mar;
* A collated summary of need goes to HEA (David) who can provide an indicative yes or no to whether the student can be supported (though this is not the definitive final allocation);
* funding is provided on financial year basis (not academic year) so there is some ability to accrue funds to kick start support in the new academic year (in September).

In colleges under the auspices of DDLETB, staff highlighted the following areas for improvement relating to processes:

* Complexity of process/forms etc. from HEA - these could be clearer/better guidance provided
* Some of the psychological reports assessing a disability and setting out supports required are vague and raise expectations e.g.: in the case of mild dyslexia a recommendation that the student should have supports is difficult for the college to interpret and the level of support at 3rd level is also likely to be lesser than at 2nd level
* Timing / identifying when student needs support
* Support cannot be applied for til after student has registered
* Students who are not diagnosed early in the year are completely disadvantaged by the current timescales for accessing FSD (colleges have to support these from own resources)
* Students who have no documentation (evidence) of disability cannot access support from FSD (colleges have to support these from own resources) – for example some students may not be identified at the outset and (learning) disability becomes evident after the academic year has begun and may not have any documentary evidence of disability
* Greater flexibility in how FSD is used – so for example some could be allocated to training or if a student leaves that funding can be used to support another student.

### Impact of the FSD

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * Has the FSD increased the participation of people with a disability in your institution? * Has the FSD increased the retention of people with a disability in your institution? * Has the FSD effectively supported students with disabilities to learn more independently? * Is the FSD effectively helping students to access the labour market or progress to further study? * Overall, does the FSD help your institution to meet its obligations with regards to equality, performance compact (metrics regarding improving access), etc. |

In the discussion with staff from DDLETB, staff consulted believe that the “fifth” sector is not appropriately recognised and has a hugely important and successful role in supporting students with disabilities to access education and attain qualifications.

The FSD provides a means to support students with disabilities and ensure access to FE – without the Fund, this would not be possible. There is felt to be a positive impact in a range of areas – including participation and retention in FE, although this is anecdotal.

### Other Services

| Key areas that were explored: |
| --- |
| * What other internal supports do you provide to students with disabilities in your institution? * Do you source any other external supports for students with a disability * Do you think there are appropriate supports provided in your institution for students with disabilities? If not what further supports should be provided that currently are not * Is there any scope for greater integration of FSD support with other services? * What is this institution doing well to support students with disabilities that other institutions could learn from? Is there any evidence of the impact of this on students? * Are there any other institutions who are doing well to support students with disabilities that others could learn from? What are they doing / is there any evidence of the impact of this on students? |

In colleges under the auspices of DDLETB, staff highlighted that resources are constrained. They did however recognise that there is a wide range of experience across colleges/ETBs making best use of finite resources and they would be keen to look for opportunities to share expertise across colleges / across ETBs – for example a Disability Officer in ETBs?

### Looking Ahead

|  |
| --- |
| Key areas that were explored:   * What is working well in relation to the FSD? * What elements need to be retained for the future (e.g. Learning Support to students with Dyslexia, which need to be maintained to address the particular needs of these students) * What could be improved upon in relation to the FSD? * Areas for development in relation to remit and scope (e.g. greater flexibility to support high needs students) * What more could HEA do to support HEIs access and deliver the FSD? * How best can your institution use the FSD to support those who need it most? |

In colleges under the auspices of DDLETB, staff highlighted that the following was working well in relation to the FSD:

* Provides a means to support students with disabilities and ensure access to FE and to help to meet legal obligations – without the Fund, this would not be possible;
* Wealth of experience in colleges/ETBs in supporting students with disabilities
* Positive impact in a range of areas – participation and retention in FE

In colleges under the auspices of DDLETB, staff highlighted the following areas for improvement:

* Requirement for additional resources in colleges to support accessing FSD – both operational and management level.
* Level of funding/support available through FSD relative to time spent accessing this and process is disproportionate:
* Staff time on management/administration given the relatively small amounts provided
* Process/paperwork is very onerous
* Managing expectations of students with disability
* Students are accustomed to a level of support /resources at second level education
* An anomaly exists with the level of support available in colleges being much less
* Timing / identifying when student needs support
* Support cannot be applied for til after student has registered
* Students who are not diagnosed early in the year are completely disadvantaged by the current timescales for accessing FSD (colleges have to support these from own resources)
* Students who have no documentation (evidence) of disability cannot access support from FSD (colleges have to support these from own resources) – for example some students may not be identified at the outset and (learning) disability becomes evident after the academic year has begun and may not have any documentary evidence of disability
* Disclosure of disability / students who do not declare
* This group presents significant problems for the FE sector
* Students who do not declare a disability cannot be supported (though need may be apparent later in the year)
* Colleges’ own resources used to support these students as too late to access FSD
* There is an anomaly in that guidance counsellors may advise students not to declare a disability at application/registration as this might affect application. However this has an adverse effect on access to support for the student.
* Complexity of process/forms etc. from HEA - these could be clearer/better guidance provided
* Some colleges cannot accommodate students with physical disabilities (premises unsuitable)
* Some of the psychological reports assessing a disability and setting out supports required are vague and raise expectations e.g.: in the case of mild dyslexia a recommendation that the student should have supports is difficult for the college to interpret and the level of support at 3rd level is also likely to be lesser than at 2nd level
* Disability Passport – the concept was favoured in that it would avoid the need to for students to be re-assessed. However, there was also a recognition that some students might want to adopt a more independent approach and use different coping strategies in 3rd level education (and avail of lower levels of support than in 2nd level).
* Training
* for teaching staff – for example in engaging with deaf students (who may have a PA with sign language)
* for teaching staff and the general student population – to raise awareness/educate in relation to mental health issues, interacting with people with disabilities
* Cost of AHEAD online training (disability awareness €450) felt to be prohibitive
* Greater flexibility in how FSD is used – so for example some could be allocated to training or if a student leaves that funding can be used to support another student.
* Extending scope of FSD
* to support other students such as those on specific courses such as: Back to Education, night school, apprenticeships, part time students
* to pay for assessment reports for students – relatively small amount (approx. €600) but would identify needs at the outset and allow appropriate supports to be put in place at the earliest opportunity;
* Recognise range of experience across colleges/ETBs – look for opportunities to share expertise across colleges / across ETBs – for example a Disability Officer in ETBs?
* Broaden DARE / HEAR to include FETs

# Appendix Q: Staff Survey Findings

## Introduction

This section sets out the findings of the survey conducted with staff at Further[[14]](#footnote-14) and Higher[[15]](#footnote-15) Education Institutions across Ireland.

The baseline for the survey is 50 respondents, unless otherwise stated.

## Survey Methodology

### Approach

To contribute to the review, PACEC developed a questionnaire for representatives of Higher and Further Education Institutions (HEIs and FEIs). Initial drafts of the questionnaire were developed based on topics set out in the proposal and further developed in collaboration with the Project Steering Group.

The final questionnaire included questions on:

* Profile of the Respondents;
* Demand For the Fund for Students with Disabilities;
* Resources Associated with FSD within your Institution;
* Ease of Understanding and Satisfaction with the FSD;
* Impacts of the FSD;
* Additionality;
* Other Services / Supports for Students with Disabilities in your Institution;
* Good Practice;
* Looking Ahead.

The questionnaire was signed-off by the Higher Education Authority in August 2016

The research team then uploaded the final questionnaire onto the online survey software SMARTSURVEY© ready for the pilot and full survey phases.

### Launching the Surveys and Follow Up

The survey was launched via a number of different contact streams commencing 31 August 2016 – including emails requesting FEI and HEI representatives. The emails included background to the research, a link to the online survey and a request for appropriate Institution representatives to complete the survey. A summary of the actions taken to promote the survey include the following:

* Emails issued to Disability Officers and/or equivalent in institutions that have used the Fund, including emails to representatives at:
* Universities (n=7);
* Institutes of Technology (n=14);
* Further Education Colleges (n=176); and
* Other Colleges (n=6).

The survey response rate was regularly monitored and a reminder email was issued to all institutions as well as calls placed to all Universities and Institutes of Technology to encourage completion of the survey. Due requests from disability staff and institutions the survey was kept open for an extra day to allow institutions that had partially completed the survey to finish - therefore the survey closed on the morning of 15th September 2016.

### Survey Close and Response Rate

The survey was closed on the morning of 15th September 2016 with the total number of completed responses received by this date: 50. Therefore the baseline for the survey is 50. The 50 responses represent 49 unique institutions out of a total of 210 (i.e. 23.3%).

## Survey Representativeness

To assess representativeness we compare the profile of institution representatives who responded to the survey to the overall profile of Higher and Further Education Institutions in Ireland. We carry this comparison out in the following section.

### Type of Institution

The survey received a response from:

* Six of the seven Universities in Ireland;
* Ten of the 14 Institutes of Technology;
* Two of the 6 Other Colleges[[16]](#footnote-16); and
* 31 of the 176 Further Education Colleges.

To give a better idea of representativeness, the number of students that are FSD beneficiaries in each institution type is set out in the table as well as the FSD allocation (€) to each institution type for 2015/16.

Table 6:1 Profile of institutions, FSD recipients and funding, survey respondents by institution type

|  | **Overall Institutions** | | **All FSD Recipients (2015/16)** | | **Allocation to Irish Institutions (2015/16)** | | **Survey Respondents** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **€** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| University | 7 | 3.3% | 4,678 | 46.0% | €3,182,720 | 31.8% | 7 (6 unique) | 14.0% |
| Institute of Technology | 14 | 6.7% | 3,736 | 36.8% | €3,924,456 | 39.3% | 10 (10 unique) | 20.0% |
| Other College (General and Specific Courses) [[17]](#footnote-17) | 13 | 6.2% | 393 | 3.9% | €486,730 | 4.9% | 2 (2 unique) | 4.0% |
| Further Education College | 176 | 83.8% | 1,357 | 13.4% | €2,400,272 | 24.0% | 31 (31 unique) | 62.0% |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% | 10,164 | 100.0% | €9,994,178 | 100.0% | 50 | 100.0% |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs (PACEC, 2016), supplemented with: FSD Data – Numbers of Students by College and Year of Study and FSD Data – Funding Allocated

This shows that while two of the 13 Other Colleges (15.4%) responded to the survey this sector represents just 3.9% of overall FSD recipients and 4.9% of overall FSD allocation. Furthermore 31 of 176 Further Education Institutions (17.6%) responded to the survey, again when looking at the number of FSD recipients this sector represents just 13.4% of students benefitting from the Fund and 24.0% of FSD allocation.

Comparatively the number of FSD recipients at University (46.0%) and Institutes of Technology (36.8%) is much higher than that of Further Education Institutions and Other Colleges with Institutes of Technology receiving the highest proportion of funds (39.3%), followed by Universities (31.8%) – the survey received a response from 6 out of 7 universities (85.7%) and 10 out of 14 Institutes of Technology (71.4%).

## Profile of Respondents

This section provides respondent profile information including job role, type and name of institution respondents belong to.

### Job Title

The table below details the job title / role provided by respondents.

Table 6:2: Respondent Job Title / Role

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Response (Grouped) | Number of Respondents | % of Respondents |
| Disability Officer / Disability Manager | 19 | 38.8% |
| Principal | 9 | 18.4% |
| Student Services | 6 | 12.2% |
| Learning Support | 5 | 10.2% |
| Guidance Counsellor | 4 | 8.2% |
| PLC Coordinator | 3 | 6.1% |
| Access Officer | 1 | 2.0% |
| Director of Adult Education | 1 | 2.0% |
| Processing HEA Applications | 1 | 2.0% |
| **Total** | **49** | **100.0%** |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 1). One respondent skipped this question therefore the base is 49.

Note: This was an open question and responses have been grouped into the categories above

The highest proportion of respondents were disability officers or managers of their institution’s disability service (n=19, 38.8%); the next most common responses were principals (n=9, 18.4%), student services staff (n=6, 12.2%) and learning support staff (N=5, 10.2%). One respondent described their role as ‘processing HEA applications’.

### Type of Institution

The figure below illustrates the type of institution the respondents belonged to.

Figure 6:1 Type of Institution Respondents belong to

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 2)

Most respondents belong to Further Education Colleges (n=31, 62.0%), followed by Institutes of Technology (n=10, 20.0%). This is not unexpected given the make-up of the FE and HE sector.

### Respondents’ Institution

In most, but not all cases, there was one response per institution. An invitation to complete the survey was sent to: Universities (n=7); Institutes of Technology (n=14); Further Education Colleges (n=176); and Other Colleges (n=6). Of these institutions, survey responses were received from:

* Six of the seven Universities in Ireland;
* Ten of the 14 Institutes of Technology;
* Two of the 6 Other Colleges[[18]](#footnote-18); and
* 31 of the 176 Further Education Colleges in 13 of the 18 Education & Training Boards[[19]](#footnote-19).

The Institutions listed in the table below provided a response to the survey.

Table 6:3 Institutions that responded to the survey

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Universities (n=6) | |
| * Dublin City University * National University of Ireland, Cork * National University of Ireland, Dublin | * National University of Ireland, Galway * National University of Ireland, Maynooth * Trinity College Dublin |
| Institutes of Technology (n=10) | |
| * Athlone Institute of Technology * Institute of Technology, Carlow * Dundalk Institute of Technology * Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology * Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology | * Letterkenny Institute of Technology * Limerick Institute of Technology * Institute of Technology, Tallaght * Institute of Technology, Tralee * Waterford Institute of Technology |
| Other Colleges (general and specific courses) (n=2) | |
| * St. Angela's College, Sligo | * Mary Immaculate College, Limerick |
| Further Education Colleges (n=31) | |
| * Ballinode College, Sligo * Ballsbridge College of Further Education, Dublin 4 * Ballyfermot College of Further Education, Dublin 10 * Blackrock Further Education Institute * Bray Inst of Further Education (St Thomas' Community College), Co. Wicklow * Carlow Institute of Further Education, Carlow * Cavan Institute, County Cavan * Coláiste Mhuire, Castlemeadows, Co. Tipperary * Coláiste Stiofain Naofa, Cork * Davis College, Co. Cork * Gairmscoil Mhuire, Co. Galway * Greenhills College, Dublin 12 * Kilkenny City Vocational School (Ormonde CFE), Kilkenny * Killester College of Further Education, Dublin 5 * Limerick College of Further Education, Limerick | * Marino College, Dublin 3 * Moate Business College, Co. Westmeath * Monaghan Institute of Further Education & Training (Beech Hill College), Monaghan * Pearse College, Dublin 12 * Ramsgrange Community School, Co Wexford * Rathmines College of Further Education, Dublin 6 * Sallynoggin College of Further, Co. Dublin * St John's Central College, Cork * St. Conleth's Community College, Co. Kildare. * St. Paul's Community College, Waterford City * St. Peter's College, Co. Meath * St. Sheelan's College (Templemore CFE), Co. Tipperary * Temple Michael College, Longford * Tralee Community College, Co. Kerry * Vocational School, Co. Tipperary * Waterford College of Further Education, Waterford |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs (PACEC, 2016)

## Demand for FSD

### Promotion / Awareness of FSD

Respondents were asked how they promote the supports available through the FSD.

Figure 6:2 How respondents promote the FSD

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016

Note: All respondents could answer this question and respondents could select more than one option. One respondent skipped this question, therefore the base is 49.

The figure shows that the most popular methods of promotion include:

* Providing information to prospective students (n=44, 89.8%);
* Individual meeting with Disability Service / Access Office (n=37, 75.5%);
* Through the institution’s website (n=34, 69.4%); and
* Flyers/brochures distributed to students (n=26, 53.1%).

Furthermore 12 respondents provided details of ‘other’ methods of promotion, of these the most frequently citied were promotion to students during induction, orientation or registrations (n=5), though the institution’s notice board (n=4), during the interview / application process (n=2), and on institution open days (n=2).

Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of each of these methods (from ‘Very Effective’ to ‘Very Ineffective’) as shown in the table below.

Table 6:4 Effectiveness of methods of promotion

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Very Effective / Effective** | | **Neither / Nor** | | **Ineffective / Very Ineffective** | | **Total** |
| N | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| Individual meeting with Disability Service / Access Office | 43 | 91.5% | 4 | 8.5% | 0 | 0.0% | 47 |
| Information provided to prospective students | 39 | 84.8% | 6 | 13.0% | 1 | 2.2% | 46 |
| Through the institution’s website | 37 | 82.2% | 5 | 11.1% | 3 | 6.7% | 45 |
| Specific / Early orientation | 34 | 89.5% | 4 | 10.5% | 0 | 0.0% | 38 |
| Flyers/Brochures distributed to students | 29 | 72.5% | 5 | 12.5% | 6 | 15.0% | 40 |
| Through general college events | 23 | 63.9% | 10 | 27.8% | 3 | 8.3% | 36 |
| Through disability events | 21 | 65.6% | 11 | 34.4% | 0 | 0.0% | 32 |
| Email list | 15 | 55.6% | 8 | 29.6% | 4 | 14.8% | 27 |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 8)

Note: Those that selected an option other than ‘none’ in question 7 (n=49) could answer this question. Not all respondents answered every part of the question therefore the total respondents per row varies.

Over 90% of respondents said that individual meetings with Disability Service / Access Office (n=43, 91.5%) was an effective or very effective method of promoting the FSD, followed by information provided to prospective students (n=39, 84.8%) and promotion through the institution’s website (n=37, 82.2%). For each method over half of respondents stated that this was either effective or very effective.

The methods with the highest proportion of respondents stating that they were ineffective or very ineffective were flyers / brochures distributed to students (n=6, 15.0%) and email lists (n=4, 14.8%).

### Trends – last 3 years

#### Changes in the number and categories of support

80% of respondents stated that over the last three years the number of students supported by FSD in their institution has increased (n=40, 80.0%) while 20% (n=10) said the numbers have stayed the same. No respondents said that the numbers had decreased[[20]](#footnote-20). Just over half of those that said the numbers had increased stated that this change was proportionate to the change in students attending their college (n=21, 53.8%) while the remaining respondents said this change was disproportionate (n=18, 46.2%)[[21]](#footnote-21).

Respondents were asked to detail the categories of disabilities that have increased or decreased, as shown in the table below.

Table 6:5 Categories of Disabilities that have changed

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Response | Number of Respondents | % of Respondents |
| Autistic Spectrum Disorder (including Asperger’s syndrome) | 33 | 84.6% |
| Mental Health Condition | 33 | 84.6% |
| Specific Learning Difficulties | 23 | 59.0% |
| Neurological Condition (including Brian Injury, Epilepsy, Speech & Language Disabilities) | 16 | 41.0% |
| Significant Ongoing Illness | 14 | 35.9% |
| Physical/mobility | 13 | 33.3% |
| Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia) | 13 | 33.3% |
| Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder | 12 | 30.8% |
| Blind/Vision Impaired | 7 | 17.9% |
| Deaf/Hard of Hearing | 6 | 15.4% |
| Other | 2 | 5.1% |
| **Total** | **39** | **-** |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 11)

Note: Only those that answered ‘Increased’ or ‘Decreased’ to Q9 (n=40) could answer this question and one respondent skipped this question, therefore the base is 39. Respondents could select more than one response therefore the total does not add to 100%.

The category of disability that respondents state have increased most is **Autistic Spectrum Disorder** (84.6%, n=33) and **Mental Health Condition** (84.6%, n=33), followed by **Specific Learning Disabilities** (59.0%, n=23). Two respondents provided ‘other’ disabilities as a response; both stated that they had seen an increase in the number of students with **multiple disabilities** accessing support.

Of those respondents that stated there had been an increase in the demand for FSD, 71.8% (n=28) said there has been a particular change in the level of demand for **study skills support**, while just under two thirds (61.5%, n=24) noted an increase in demand for **personal assistants**. This was followed by **subject-specific tutorials** (51.3%, n=20), **travel costs** (46.2%, n=18), **note-takers** (43.6%, n=17) and **Irish sign language interpreters** (17.9%, n=7).

#### Key factors contributing to the change

Respondents were asked what the key factors contributing to this change in demand were.

Figure 6:3 Key factors contributing to the change in FSD demand

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 12)

Note: Only those that answered ‘Increased’ or ‘Decreased’ to Q9 (n=40) could answer this question and respondents could select more than one option. One respondent skipped this question, therefore the base is 39.

Two thirds of respondents believe that a key factor contributing to this change was information on support available through the FSD provided by their institution (66.7%, n=26). Over half of respondents said that this was due to awareness amongst students of the support available through the FSD due to the level of pre-entry activity undertaken by their HEI / FEI (56.4%, n=22), followed closely by the availability of guidance for students on how to apply to the FSD provided by their institution (53.8%, n=21).

Fourteen respondents provided other reasons; the most common of these were;

* An increase in the number of students progressing to higher levels of education and requiring this support (n=8);
* Raised awareness and support of disabilities in general (n=3); and
* High levels of support in secondary education (n=2).

#### Challenges due to change in demand

The reported increase in demand for support from the FSD has led to a number of challenges in respondents’ institutions including;

* Increased administration time (n=36, 92.3%);
* Increased demand on organisation finance (colleges have to make up the shortfall) (n=24, 61.5%);
* Requirement for more staff (n=22, 56.4%);
* Reduction in the support available to each individual student (n=22, 56.4%); and
* Students in need of support are not being supported (n= 10, 25.6%).

Other challenges stated by respondents include that resources are now being “stretched” (n=3) and there is a large demand from students that are not eligible for FSD support but still require support from the disability office (n=2).

### Trends – next 3 years

Over the next 3 years no respondents expect the number of students seeking support from FSD in their institution to decrease. The majority of respondents (85.4%, n=41) expect the number to increase, with the remaining respondents (14.6%, n=7) expecting this to stay the same.

Of those that think the numbers will increase; just over three quarters said this change will be between 0% and 35% (76.9%, n=30), 17.9% believed it would increase by 36 to 70% and the remaining 5% (n=2) felt there would be an increase of over 100% in the number of students seeking support from FSD.

## Resources Associated with FSD within your Institution

### Funding available through FSD

Respondents were asked if they believe the level of funding awarded to their institution is too high, about right, or too low and the responses are shown in the figure below.

Figure 6:4 Level of funding awarded to respondents institutions

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016

Note: All respondents could answer this question. Two respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 48.

The majority of respondents believe that the level of funding awarded to their institution is too low (58.3%, n=28), highlighting the increase in students with high level needs. Qualitative feedback from respondents includes:

* ‘More funding for assisted technology required, this swallows a significant amount of funding, spectrum of specific difficulties leads to a lot more individual tutoring and support being required but not possible with limited resources’; and
* ‘Some students have complex needs and this has a great demand on funding in our college when you apply the universal model’

While the remaining respondents believe the level of support is ‘about right’ (41.7%, n=20), three of these respondents had concerns over whether the level of funding in the future would be adequate while three respondents stated that they have carefully managed the funding awarded through FSD to ensure it is adequate. A selection of quotes from those that think the funding is ‘about right’ include:

* ‘We have tried to mainstream supports over last 3 years’;
* ‘We have found the funding awarded to be generally sufficient, except in regard to supports for deaf students’;
* ‘The flexibility to move funding across eligible students facilitates the provision of support’.

Figure 6:5 Sufficiency of Support

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Is sufficient funding provided to meet the needs of each student eligible to be supported under the different categories of disability within FSD? [[22]](#footnote-22) | Have there been any instances of your institution having insufficient funds to support all those who applied for and were eligible for support through FSD?[[23]](#footnote-23) |
|  | |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 18 and 19)

Two thirds of respondents did not agree that sufficient funding is provided to meet the needs of each student eligible to be supported. Of these, 11 respondents described certain categories of disabilities not receiving adequate support including: Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD), Mental Health conditions, deaf students, blind students, physical disabilities, autistic spectrum disorder and Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder. Eleven respondents also described the type of support that were not supported including learning/academic support, assistive technology, sign language interpreters, Personal Assistants (PA) and transport.

Just under half of respondents (47%, n=23) said there had been instances in their institution in which they had insufficient funds to support all those eligible for support through FSD. Qualitative feedback from these respondents includes:

* ‘Learning support is not sufficient to support the increasing numbers of students who have SPLDS, Students with Autism also may have very high support requirements and require extra learning support’;
* ‘Not all students would have got the level of support they might have needed. The amount received was divided among those who were eligible and that was all we could use’;
* ‘I had enough to provide mentoring etc. but was restricted on being innovative. I wanted to buy an interactive PC to help with presentation skills and social skills of students’; and
* ‘We routinely record significant overspends on supports for deaf students. This then impacts on supports available for other students. Otherwise, the Fund has been sufficient to support our student requirements’.

### Carrying Over of Funds

Just under half of respondents (49.0%, n=24) said that there had been instances of unspent FSD funding being carried over by their institution from the previous year. The most common reasons for this include that:

* Changing needs of students (n=10) – ‘we received funding for provision of PA, not all of which was needed. In one year the person allocated the PA decided to cancel the PA service in January, in another year the person requiring the PA spent a lot of time in hospital, and so no work for the PA. In both cases there was a significant sum of money leftover’
* Funding was allocated too late (n=9) – ‘Fund was not granted/accessed in time to provide all hours granted’; and
* Careful management of the fund / mainstreaming of supports (n=2) – ‘We have made every effort to encourage students to use technologies to enhance independence and consequently become independent learners. This has saved on expenditure.’

Respondents provided suggestions as to how this approach could be improved including;

* Earlier allocation / sanction of the Fund (n=5);
* Clarity / transparency over how funds are allocated (n=4);
* Longer allocation period (n=2); and
* Increase the focus on mainstreaming of supports (n=2).

### Capping of Allocation

Over two thirds of respondents (67.3%, n=33) stated that the capping of allocation has had a negative impact on support for those with disabilities within their institution while just over a half (54.3%, n=25) said that there has been instances in which their institution has received less funding than it applied for. Respondents were asked what impact this had on the services / support they were able to provide - responses are shown in the table below.

Table 6:6 Impact of Institutions receiving less funding than applied for

| **Response** | **Number of Respondents** | **% of Respondents** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Students are receiving less support than they require | 19 | 76.0% |
| The institution is not able to offer the necessary level of support to students | 15 | 60.0% |
| The institution is no longer able to offer supports that were previously in place | 8 | 32.0% |
| Increased demand on organisation finance (colleges have to make up the shortfall) | 8 | 32.0% |
| Fewer students are being supported | 6 | 24.0% |
| **Total** | **25** | **-** |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 25)

Note: Only those that answered ‘Yes’ to Q24 (n=25) could answer this question and respondents could select more than one option. No respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 25.

The main impact cited by over three quarters of respondents was that students are receiving less support than they require (76.0%, n=19) and that institutions are not able to offer the necessary level of support to students (60.0%, n=15). Respondents also stated that they can no longer offer supports that were previously in place (32.0%, n=8) and some also indicated that there has been an increased demand on organisation finance (32.0%, n=8).

Respondents suggested this approach could be improved by:

* Allocation earlier in the year (n=6) – ‘We do not apply for a specific amount per student anymore, so we have no idea what our allocation will be, and cannot work it out. This is the crux of the problem. We are usually informed of our funding just before Christmas, and may or may not get an increase. Hence it is very difficult to plan’;
* Clearer allocation process (n=4) – ‘A transparent format and criteria for all HEI to calculate their funding via the FSD. A transparent audit of each allocations’;
* Increasing funding (n=4) – ‘More support would enable students to progress at an improved rate’

Other suggestions include per student allocation (n=3) and reviewing trends in the current student population (n=2).

### Resources allocated to administering FSD by your organisation

The majority of respondents’ organisations employ staff dedicated to manage / administer the FSD (63.3%, n=31).

Respondents were asked to estimate, on average, how long it takes to process a single application. Considering all 28 responses, the time to process a single application ranged from 1 hour to 1,000 hours (with the majority of these in the range 1 to 6 hours). Removing the eight responses of 40+ hours[[24]](#footnote-24), an average time to process a single application was calculated as: 5.7 hours.

Respondents described other resources that their institution provides to support the FSD and the most frequently mentioned resources are shown in the table below.

Table 6:7 Other resources provided by institutions to support FSD (e.g. funding to complement, training, equipment, etc.)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Resource | Number of Respondents[[25]](#footnote-25) | Respondents providing approx. annual cost[[26]](#footnote-26) | Min Annual Cost (€) | Median Annual Cost (€) | Max Annual Cost (€) | Sum of Approximate Annual Cost (€) | Average Approximate Annual Cost (€) |
| Assistive Technology Equipment and Software | 28 | 16[[27]](#footnote-27) | €42 | €3,750 | €25,000 | €123,158 | €7,697 |
| Training | 20 | 10[[28]](#footnote-28) | €60 | €1,000 | €4,000 | €12,560 | €1,256 |
| Staff | 14 | 8[[29]](#footnote-29) | €1,000 | €15,000 | €160,000 | €259,000 | €32,375 |
| Learning Support | 6 | 4[[30]](#footnote-30) | €1,000 | €30,000 | €50,000 | €111,000 | €27,750 |
| Disability Centre | 5 | 3[[31]](#footnote-31) | €1,000 | €10,000 | €175,000 | €186,000 | €62,000 |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 29).

Note: Thirteen respondents did not answer this question while the remaining 37 respondents provided 99 descriptions of a variety of resources.

As shown in the table most respondents mentioned assistive technology (equipment and software) as another resource provided by their institution to support FSD. Many also mentioned training (n=20) and staff (n=14). Not all of those who responded provided indicative annual costs. However some respondents did provide some information on costs. From this, it is clear that cost per category of resource is very variable (e.g. 16 respondents provided information about the cost of assistive technology though this ranged from €42 to €25,000). From responses provided, assistive technology was estimated to incur average annual costs of €7,697. The resource with the highest average annual cost was the disability centres / support rooms at €62,000 though this category had very few responses (n=3) and a wide range of costs too (from €1,000 to €175,000).

## Ease of Understanding and Satisfaction with the FSD

The following section details respondents’ views on their understanding and satisfaction with the FSD.

The figure below shows how easy respondents found it to understand certain aspects of the fund

Table 6:8: Understanding of FSD processes

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 30). Note: All respondents could answer this question, not all respondents answered each part of the question therefore the following bases apply;

Part a) and Part b) Two skipped this therefore the base is 48

Part c) and Part d) One skipped this therefore the base is 49

The figure shows that most respondents found most aspects of the processes associated with FSD very easy or easy to understand:

* Over three quarters found the eligibility criteria for FSD easy or very easy to understand (77.1%, n=37);
* Three quarters found the HEA guidelines on FSD to be easy or very easy to understand (75.5%, n=37); and
* Over half found HEA policies on FSD easy or very easy to understand (57.1%, n=28).

However, one aspect of the process was viewed differently: the majority found the metrics used by HEA to allocate funding to be difficult or very difficult (62.5%, n=30) to understand.

The figure below shows how easy respondents found it to provide the required documentation relating to FSD.

Figure 6:6 Ease with which respondents could provide documentation

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 31) Note: All respondents could answer this question.

Part a) and Part b) Two skipped this therefore the base is 48

Part c) and Part d) One skipped this therefore the base is 49

Overall respondents stated that most documentation was easy to provide, specifically over 40% of respondents stated that the following was easy or very easy to provide:

* the assessment of need (51.0%, n=25);
* the summary request form (45.8%, n=22); and
* the evidence of disability for individual students (42.9%, n=21).

However 43.8% (n=21) stated that the annual Service Plan was difficult to provide.

The figure below shows how satisfied respondents were with the timescales associated with FSD.

Figure 6:7 Satisfaction with timescales associated with FSD

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 32). Note: All respondents could answer this question.

Part a), Part b) and Part c) Two skipped this therefore the base is 48

Overall respondents were dissatisfied with timescales, specifically over 50% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with:

* The time taken for notification by HEA of allocation to the institution (68.8%, n=33); and
* The initial closing date for institution to submit Summary Request Form to HEA (52.1%, n=25)

However half of respondents (50.0%, n=24) were satisfied or very satisfied with the final closing date for institution to submit Summary Request Form to HEA.

The figure below shows how easy respondents found complying with reporting requirements.

Figure 6:8 Complying with reporting requirements

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 33). Note: All respondents could answer this question.

Part a), d), g) Seven skipped this therefore the base is 43

Part b), c) Six skipped this therefore the base is 44

Part e), f) Eight skipped this therefore the base is 42

The majority of respondents found it very easy or easy to comply with “Retention of the source documentation” (n=27, 62.8%) though one in five (20.9%) responded “neither/nor” on this issue.

Many respondents said they found the reporting requirements neither difficult nor easy with between 45% and 65% providing this response regarding compliance with all of the other issues.

However, between 30% and 43% of respondents reported the following easy or very easy:

* ESF Publicity requirements (n=19, 43.2%);
* Quarterly returns (n=15, 34.1%); and
* Separate bank account for administering monies received for the Fund (n=13, 30.2%).

The element respondents found most difficult was the annual ESF financial return (21.4%, n=9).

Figure 6:9 Extent to which respondents agree with statements relating to the Fund

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 34).

Note: Two respondents skipped all parts of this question therefore the base is 48

The figure shows to what degree respondents agreed with statements relating to the FSD. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following;

* The process for applying for support is clear (n=40, 83.3%);
* Students know who to speak to access support in connection with their disability (31, 64.6%);
* The eligibility criteria for accessing support are clear (n=30, 62.5%);
* Information about supports for students with disabilities is widely available (n=28, 58.3%); and
* Information about supports available for students with disabilities is easy to understand (n=25, 52.1%).

However the majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following;

* The timescales between applying for and receiving support are satisfactory (n=27, 56.3%)
* The level of support available for students with disabilities is adequate (n=25, 52.1%

## Impacts of FSD

### Effectiveness of institutions in fulfilling key principles of FSD

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree that their institution has been able to fulfil the key principles of the FSD.

Figure 6:10 Extent to which respondents agree that they have been able to fulfil the key principles of FSD

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 35).

Note: All respondents could answer this question. One respondent skipped each of the question parts (a) to (d) therefore the base for these questions is 48 while two respondents skipped part (e) therefore the base for this part of the question is 47.

The majority of respondents said that they have been able to fulfil the principles of independent learning (85.4%, n=41), inclusive education (85.4%, n=41), local, responsive approach (75.0%, n=36), commitment to evaluation (54.2%, n=26), and complementarity (48.9%, n=23).

Respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with any of the statements also provided details on how their organisation has fulfilled these principles.

**Independent Learning**

Respondents stated that they had been able to fulfil this principle through;

* Providing assistive technology (n=11) – ‘Students are encouraged to use available technologies wherever possible and provided with workshops re same’.
* Providing learning support (n=10) – ‘Our college encourages independent learning and puts the onus on the learner to take responsibility for themselves in terms of doing their own work. Learning support staff are trained to advise, encourage and direct learners, but not to do work for them’.
* Reducing / mainstreaming of supports (n=6) – ‘We frontload supports in first year and reduce input over time’

**Inclusive Education**

Respondents stated that they had been able to fulfil this principle through;

* Promoting integration / inclusion of students with disabilities (n=9) – ‘We ensure that students with disabilities are included in all activities both academic and social’.
* Accommodating students with disabilities to allow for an inclusive environment (n=7) – ‘We encourage all academics to put their notes online’.
* Staff training, lectures and events (n=4) – ‘Staff have received training on teaching methodologies and classroom techniques that support inclusivity, with FSD learners integrated and supported in classes’.

**Local, Responsive Approach**

Respondents stated that they had been able to fulfil this principle through;

* Personalised / tailored support (n=7) – ‘Our approach is based on the individual assessment of need and tailored to the requirements of each student’.
* Involvement of teaching staff (n=5) – ‘There is on-going communication and evaluation with course co-ordinators, teachers and learning support staff’.

**Commitment to Evaluation**

Respondents stated that they had been able to fulfil this principle through continuing evaluation / review of the service and students needs including the use of meetings and surveys, for example: ‘Students are offered review meetings each semester and are surveyed on their satisfaction each academic year’.

**Complementarity**

Respondents stated that they had been able to fulfil this principle through the linking of services (n=7) particularly with mainstreamed supports, for example: ‘There is a strong emphasis on mainstreamed inclusive academic supports and students with disabilities are guided/ supported to access these services’.

#### Enablers of developing key principles

Respondents were asked what has enabled their institution to deliver on these key principles and the main responses include;

* Disability staff (n=19) – Respondents refer to the experiences, skills and dedication of staff as a key enabler to delivering on the key principles.
* Other staff (n=12) – The dedication and support from other, non-disability, staff was also highlighted by respondents including teaching and management personnel.
* Student centred approach (n=9) – Taking a student centred approach with regular correspondence and input from the students to be supported.
* Promoting inclusivity (n=7) – Respondents also highlighted the importance of a college ethos of inclusivity in enabling participation from students with disabilities.
* Disability centre / space (n=7) – The existence of a disability centre / space for students was highlighted by respondents as enabling the fulfilment of key principles.
* Providing assistive technology/accommodations (n=7) – Respondents noted the importance of providing assistive technology to students with disabilities.

Other enablers include collaboration with external organisations (n=6), funding availability (n=6), training (n=5) and awareness (n=4).

#### Barriers to delivering key principles

The main barriers to delivering on the key principles identified by respondents include;

* Insufficient funding (n=14) – ‘Not enough funding to meet the needs of students with disabilities’.
* Lack of qualified staff (n=10) – ‘Need for a full time Disability Officer/Access Officer in the Further Education Structure’
* Timing of allocation (n=9) – ‘The main barrier to providing support at the appropriate time to students is the significant delay in receiving notification of an allocation of funding from the HEA’.
* Time Constraints (n=9) – ‘Time management with minimum resources provided to the disability office’.
* Training (n=7) – Including disability awareness training and training in assistive technologies for staff, ‘Lack of compulsory training for academic staff’.

Other barriers include administration time (n=6) and awareness of staff and students in relation to the Fund (n=6).

### Impact of the FSD

Respondents were asked to rate the impact that the FSD has had and the results of this are shown in the figure below.

Figure 6:11 Influence of FSD on students with disabilities

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 39).

Note: All respondents could answer this question. One respondent skipped part a) and b) therefore the base for this part of the question is 49. Two respondents skipped part c) to e) therefore the base or this part of the question is 48.

The FSD was found to have an influence on all the aspects listed and in order of strongest influence (i.e. respondents rated either some or strong influence) these are;

* Participation in further and higher education (100.0%, n=49);
* Retention and completion in further and higher education (100.0%, n=49);
* Progression to access further study (97.9%, n=47);
* Development of independent learning and transferable skills (93.8%, n=45); and
* Progression of access the labour market (68.8%, n=33).

Respondents were asked to provide evidence of the impacts due to FSD against each of these. Responses have been categorised and the most common evidence is described below:

* Participation in further and higher education - there has been an increase in the number of students with disabilities accessing higher/further education (n=9) as well as an increase in the number of students with disabilities participating (n=9) with increased confidence, ability and knowledge of their disability being cited as reasons for increased participation. Furthermore 14 respondents discussed the retention of students in connection with participation.
* Retention and completion in further and higher education - an increased number of students progressing and remaining in their studies (n=24).
* Development of independent learning and transferable skills - the use of assistive technologies by students (n=8) and the provision of learning support (n=5).
* Progression to access further study - the number of students progressing to further study as a result of support from FSD has increased (n=16)
* Progression to access the labour market - the number of students that have successfully entered the labour market (n=5) or undertaken work experience (n=2).

Just under half of respondents (47.2%, n=17) said that the FSD has had other impacts, these include:

* Increased confidence of students with disabilities (n=3);
* Increased number of students being successful in their studies (n=4); and
* Greater social interaction for students with disabilities (n=3).

Other impacts include increased awareness of people with disabilities (n=2), inclusivity (n=2) and promotion of equality (n=2).

### Ring-fencing

The majority of respondents (59.0%, n=23) said that ring-fencing the per-capita allocation to students with specific needs (such as students with sensory and physical disability) has been successful in addressing their needs while the remaining respondents (41.0%, n=16) said it had not.

Respondents that said yes noted that this ensures the needs of these groups are met, for example one respondent noted that ‘This is really important as the challenges for inclusion can be much greater and equipment/resources to facilitate that is extremely expensive. Also where PAs are required this is extremely expensive and slow processes’.

Respondents that said this has not been successful in addressing their needs highlighted that the allocation was insufficient to fully support these students (n=2) and also emphasised that the needs of these students tends to vary (n=2).

Furthermore 60% of respondents stated that ring-fencing the allocation to specific groups has impacted on other groups, specifically it was suggested that it has reduced the resources available to students with lower levels of need (n=17) with one respondent stating ‘where a student with a physical disability may require a lot of supports there is less funding left to support students with disabilities such as dyslexia etc.’ Two respondents were unsure whether ring-fencing the allocation to specific groups has impacted on other groups while the remaining 14 respondents to this question (35.0%) said ring-fencing had not impacted on other groups.

## Additionality

Respondents were asked if the FSD funding had not been available would they have achieved the same impacts. Responses are shown in the figure below.

Figure 6:12 Impacts achieved by respondents if FSD funding had not been available

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 44).

Note: All respondents could answer this question. Three respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 47.

The figure shows that just over half of respondents (51.1%, n=24) probably would not have achieved these impacts while 44.7% (n=21) said they definitely would not have achieved these impacts.

While 4.3% (n=2) of respondents stated that in the absence of the FSD they would have achieved the same impacts this would have been over a longer timescale and on a smaller scale. One respondent stated that this would have been achieved through ‘the teacher allocation, local adult literacy services, a designated room and hard graft’.

Respondents were also asked what would have prevented them achieving these impacts in the absence of FSD and the results are shown in the table below.

Table 6:9: What would have prevented respondents from achieving these impacts in the absence of FSD

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Response** | **Number of Respondents** | **% of Respondents** |
| Lack of appropriate levels of funding | 45 | 95.7% |
| Lack of knowledge or access to information regarding disabilities for the institution | 21 | 44.7% |
| Lack of guidance or direction for the institution | 16 | 34.0% |
| **Total** | **47** | **-** |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 46).

Note: Respondents could select more than one response option. All respondents could answer this question and three skipped this, therefore the base is 47.

The majority of respondents stated that a lack of funding would have prevented them from achieving the same impacts in the absence of FSD (95.7%, n=45).

## Other Services / Supports for Students with Disabilities in Respondents’ Organisation

### Planning services / supports for students with disabilities

Respondents were asked to rate how important the Annual Service Plan is to their institution and its commitment to students with disabilities.

Figure 6:13 Importance of the Annual Service Plan

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 47)

Note: All respondents could answer this question. Two respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 48.

64.6% (n=31) of respondents rated the Annual Service Plan as being important or very important compared to 6.3% (n=3) rating this as unimportant or very unimportant. However almost one third of respondents (29.2%) stated it was “neither / nor”.

Furthermore, almost three quarters of respondents (74.4%, n=32) said that the Annual Service Plan helps them deliver services for students with disabilities, with qualitative responses including that the plan helped them to ‘focus on the needs of students and plan to deliver for those needs’ and that it ‘offers a framework of coordination of resources and services both internal and external to the Institute to allow the most effective service provision possible and better outcomes for students with disabilities’.

### Other internal services/supports for students with disabilities (not FSD)

Respondents were asked how else their institution supports students with disabilities. The most commonly mentioned supports are shown in the figure below.

Figure 6:14 Other supports / policies / ethos in Institutions

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 49). All respondents could answer this question and the base for each part of the question is in the text below.

The figure shows that a large proportion of institutions support students through:

* Inclusive learning (90.9%, n=40, base=44);
* Targeting of support needs (90.2%, n=37, base=41);
* Measures to enhance the accessibility of buildings, such as wheelchair lifts (88.4%, n=38, base=43);
* Universal design (81.1%, n=30, base=37);
* Mainstreaming of services (80.0%, n=32, base=40);
* Disability service with dedicated disability support staff (75.0%, n=33, base=44); and
* Tailored induction programmes (68.3%, n=28, base=41);
* Non-standard admissions procedures (62.8%, n=27, base=43); and
* Regional collaboration (50.0%, n=16, base=32).

Less than half of respondents said that institutions support students through:

* Specialised mental health services for students with mental health difficulties (45.9%, n=17, base=37);
* Psycho-educational assessment for students experiencing problems associated with specific learning difficulties/dyslexic (n=11, 28.9%, base=38); and
* Access to student accommodation units (on campus or otherwise) reserved specifically for students with disabilities (23.5%, n=8, base=34).

Other responses given by respondents include that they provide counselling services (n=3), staff training in disability awareness and universal design (n=1) and referral to local mental health services for students with mental health difficulties (n=1).

### Other internal services / supports for students with disabilities – Resources

The table below shows staff resources used by institutions as well as the average percentage of time spent providing supports/services for students with disabilities. The table also shows whether the support for students with disabilities is a dedicated role or incorporated into an existing role.

Table 6:10 Other staff resources used in supporting students with disabilities

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Respondents** | **Respondents providing approx. % of time** | **Approx. % of time spent** | | | **Avg. % of time** | **Is this a dedicated resource or incorporated into an existing role?** | |
| Min | Median | Max | Dedicated | Incorporated |
| Disability Staff | 14 | 9[[32]](#footnote-32) | 20% | 80% | 100% | 74% | 50% | 50% |
| Academic / Learning Staff | 10 | 4[[33]](#footnote-33) | 30% | 70% | 100% | 68% | 33% | 67% |
| Health and Wellbeing Staff | 7 | 4[[34]](#footnote-34) | 15% | 35% | 70% | 39% | 0% | 100% |
| Assistants (PA / SNA / ESW) | 6 | 5[[35]](#footnote-35) | 10% | 100% | 100% | 72% | 80% | 20% |
| Admin | 6 | 4[[36]](#footnote-36) | 20% | 23% | 80% | 37% | 0% | 100% |
| Assistive Technology | 4 | 3[[37]](#footnote-37) | 2% | 90% | 100% | 64% | 50% | 50% |
| Student Services | 5 | 2[[38]](#footnote-38) | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 0% | 100% |
| Principal | 3 | 2[[39]](#footnote-39) | 10% | 18% | 25% | 18% | 0% | 100% |
| Finance Staff | 2 | 2[[40]](#footnote-40) | 25% | 28% | 30% | 28% | 50% | 50% |
| IT Staff | 3 | 1[[41]](#footnote-41) | 50% | 50% | 50% | 50% | 33% | 67% |
| Careers Staff | 2 | 1[[42]](#footnote-42) | 50% | 50% | 50% | 50% | - | - |
| Exam Staff (Officer / Accommodations) | 2 | 1[[43]](#footnote-43) | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | - | - |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 50)

Note: All respondents could answer this question. 73 resources were outlined by respondents and these were categorized into the groups shown in the table however 9 responses could not be categorized or were not relevant to the question, therefore the base is 64 responses from 26 respondents.

The table shows that across the institutions surveyed, there is a wide range of roles involved in supporting students with disabilities and that there is a wide variety of approaches in terms of having these supports within a dedicated resource or incorporated into an existing role. Not all of those who responded provided approximate percentage of time spent supporting students with disabilities or whether this was integrated or dedicated. However some respondents did provide this information.

The most frequently mentioned staff resources include:

* **Disability staff** (including Disability / Access Officer, specific disabilities officers and Special Education Needs (SEN) co-ordinators) – mentioned by 14 (53.8%) of respondents – these spent the largest proportion of their time on providing supports / services to staff with disabilities (74%), with half of these being a dedicated role.
* **Assistants** (including Special Needs Assistants (SNA), Personal Assistants (PA) and Educational Support Workers (ESW) – mentioned by 6 (23.1%) of respondents – these spent 72% of their time providing support to students with 80% of these roles being dedicated.
* **Academic and learning staff** – mentioned by 10 (38.5%) of respondents – these spent 68% of their time supporting students with disabilities with one third being a dedicated role.
* **Health and wellbeing staff** (including counsellors, occupational therapy and nursing) – mentioned by 7 (26.9%) of respondents – these are all incorporated roles with roughly 39% focus on supporting student with disabilities.
* **Assistive technology staff** (Including Assistive Technology Officers (n=2) and trainers (n=2) – mentioned by 4 (15.4%) of respondents – these spend 64% of their time supporting students with disabilities with half of these roles being dedicated (i.e. both officers are dedicated roles while the trainers are incorporated).

The table below summarises other resources that institutions use to provide support for students with disabilities.

Table 6:11 Other resources providing support to students with disabilities

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Resource | Number of Respondents | Number approximating annual cost | Approx. Annual Cost (€) | | | Average Approx. Annual Cost (€) |
| **Min** | **Median** | **Max** |
| Centre | 8 | 5[[44]](#footnote-44) | €1,000 | €20,000 | €200,000 | €62,832 |
| Software | 5 | 2[[45]](#footnote-45) | €5,000 | €5,000 | €5,000 | €5,000 |
| Exam / Assessment Support | 3 | 0 | - | - | - | - |
| Personal Assistants | 3 | 2[[46]](#footnote-46) | €15,796 | €19,878 | €23,960 | €19,878 |
| Assistive Technologies (excl. Software) | 3 | 0 | - | - | - | - |
| Transport | 1 | 1 | €667 | €667 | €667 | €667 |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 51).

Note: All respondents could answer this question. 30 qualitative responses were provided and these were categorized into the groups in the table above, 7 responses could not be categorized and did not provide an approximate annual cost and therefore have not been included, therefore the base is 23 responses.

While the table in Section 2.4.4 covers the resources an organisation uses in administering FSD and Table 2.8.3 covers the staff resources provided to support student with disabilities, this table describes the other (non staff) resources provided to support students with disabilities.

As shown in the table most respondents described the centres / areas they have available for students with disabilities including: access centre, learning centre and computer/resource labs. Respondents also discussed software, exam/assessment support, personal assistants, assistive technologies (excl. software and transport. Not all of those who responded provided indicative annual costs. However some respondents did provide some information on costs. From this, it is clear that cost per category of resource is quite variable (e.g. 5 respondents provided information about the cost of centres and this ranged from €1,000 to €200,000). Centres were found to have the highest cost with an average annual approximate cost of €62,832. This was followed by assistive software provided by institutions (at an annual average cost of €5,000) however this category only had 2 responses.

### Other external services / supports for students with disabilities (not FSD)

Under half of respondents (45.8%, n=22) said that their institutions access external resources from organisations other than HEA to support students with disabilities. The figure below shows the organisations that respondents’ institutions access resources from.

Figure 6:15 Organisations that institutions access resources from

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 53)

Note: Only those that answered ‘Yes’ to Q52 (n=22) could answer this question therefore the base is 22. Respondents could select more than one response option.

The figure shows that the organisations that institutions access most commonly for resources are AHEAD, DARE, Dyslexia Association, National Learning Network, the National Council for the Blind, Student Finance and Deaf Hear.

Respondents described the resources that they access from these organisations and respondents could provide more than one resource per organisation that they mentioned therefore the numbers below may not correspond with the numbers in the chart above i.e. 18 respondents mentioned AHEAD as a source of resources, 10 of these mentioned information and advice, 9 mentioned training;

* **AHEAD –** Information and advice (n=10) and training (n=9);
* **DARE –** Take part in the DARE scheme (n=2), Information (n=5), application support (n=3);
* **National Council for the Blind –** Advice regarding assistive technologies (n=4), training in the use of assistive technologies (n=4), Information and advice (n=3);
* **Dyslexia Association –** Information and advice (n=7), psych-educational assessments (n=3), training (n=2);
* **National Learning Network –** Student referrals (n=3), provide the disability support services (n=3);
* **Student Finance –** Information regarding grants for students (n=4); and
* **Deaf Hear –** Information and advice regarding assistive technologies (n=5).

Just over a quarter of respondents’ institutions (27.7%, n=13) access external resources from other educational institutions (none mentioned by any more than 4 respondents) including:

* National University of Ireland, Cork (n=4);
* University of Limerick (n=4);
* Trinity College Dublin (n=3);
* Dublin City University (n=2);
* National University of Ireland, Dublin (n=2);
* Athlone Institute of Technology (n=2);
* Cork Institute of Technology (n=2);
* Dundalk Institute of Technology (n=2);
* Institute of Technology, Tralee (n=2);
* Cavan Institute, County Cavan (n=2);
* National University of Ireland, Galway (n=1);
* Blanchardstown Institute of Technology (n=1);
* Institute of Technology Carlow (n=1);
* Dublin Institute of Technology (n=1);
* Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology (n=1);
* Waterford Institute of Technology (n=1);
* Pontifical University of Maynooth (n=1);
* National College of Ireland, Dublin (n=1);
* Limerick College of Further Education, Limerick (n=1);
* Ramsgrange Community School, Co Wexford (n=1);
* St John's Central College, Cork (n=1);
* St. Peter's College, Co. Meath (n=1); and
* Tralee Community College, Co. Kerry (n=1).

Resources that respondents access from these institutions include: assistive technology information and training (n=5) as well as students being assessed through other institutions disability assessment centres (n=3), occupational therapy service (n=1). For example,

* ‘Strong collaborative links through DAWN (The Disability Advisors Working Network). A national policy on exam accommodations has been agreed nationally and guidelines on the provision of reasonable accommodations are in a pilot phase. We also share information on good practice in relation to supports and initiatives in our HEIs e.g. registration process, lecture capture, placement planning, models of AT provision etc.’
* ‘Assistive Technology Assessment Centre, UL, provides AT needs assessment and training’

Furthermore just over a third of respondents’ institutions (34.8%, n=16) take part in regional collaboration to provide services / supports to students with disabilities including:

* Other educational institutions (n=7);
* Disability groups / networks (n=7) including The Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN), Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD) and Men Ending Domestic Abuse (MEND);
* Institution staff (n=4); and
* Employers (n=1).

### Integration – FSD and other supports

Respondents were asked how well the FSD integrates with the other services and supports available to students with disabilities and the results are shown in the figure below.

Figure 6:16 How well FSD integrates with other services/supports for students with disabilities

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 60)

Note: All respondents could answer this question. Two respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 48.

Over half of respondents (56.3%, n=27) believed the FSD integrates quite or very well with over services/supports for students with disabilities compared to just one respondent (2.1%) that thinks this is not at all well integrated.

Respondents provided suggestions as to how the FSD could be better integrated as follows:

* **Better integration with post-primary education (n=3) –** ‘A whole of education funding model - primary, post-primary, FE and HE - would ensure smoother transitions and a more consistent level of support throughout the educational journey. Even within HE, funding is not well integrated i.e. Erasmus funding for students with disabilities and the FSD’;
* **Increased signposting to services (n=2) –** ‘by having a list of specialised resources e.g. note takers, interpreters for areas. A lot of time is spent trying to research suitable specialist resources when needed’;
* **Broaden the eligibility criteria (n=2) –** ‘It would be important that we can integrate with the part-time service to help students with disabilities. Currently part-time students are not funded which is extremely difficult for some students. They go the part-time route owing to their disability and then find they have no support’
* **Increased communication with service providers (n=2) –** ‘Regional collaboration of FSD with other service and support providers to audit / design easily accessible and appropriate supports available to FE colleges’

## Good Practice

### Areas of good practice at institutions

Respondents were asked to identify up to three areas in which their college is doing well to support students with disabilities that other institutions could learn from.

Overall 41 respondents provided 99 comments regarding good practice in their institution. The responses have been categorised and the key areas as well as the number of comments received regarding each category are outlined below.

Provision of Assistive Technologies and other accommodations (n=17)

* ‘Training and use of assistive technology to increase independence’
* ‘Use of assistive technologies to support students’

Provision of learning support (n=12)

* ‘Centre for Education Teaching and Learning provides support which is useful for students with Maths and English difficulties’
* ‘Organising groups for learning support and encouraging peer to peer support’

Needs assessments (n=6)

* ‘Early Needs Assessments to identify need and support available’
* ‘A focus on resources towards high needs students and continuously assessing’

Tailored / personalised support (n=6)

* ‘Assisting them on a one to one basis’
* ‘We provide tailored academic support where necessary’

Promoting inclusivity (n=6)

* ‘Whole school inclusive approach’
* ‘Student union supporting social integration’

While these were the main areas of good practice identified by respondents’ comments, there were a number of other areas highlighted including: setting up of disability groups (n=5) and specific centres / areas for students with disabilities (n=5).

### Areas for improvement at institutions

Respondents were asked to identify up to three areas in which their college could be doing more to support students with disabilities.

Overall 33 respondents provided 60 comments regarding things that could be done differently in their institution. The responses have been categorised and the key areas as well as the number of comments received regarding each category are outlined below.

More time and support for students (n=10)

* ‘Ensure that the students have more hours available to them through the Disability Support Service’
* ‘More 1 to 1 tuition’

Increased staffing resources (n=7)

* ‘Full time disability officer to meet with students on a regular basis’
* ‘Appoint someone who specialises in assistive technology’
* ‘More hours given to the Disability Officer to provide a more caring and comprehensive service’

Universal Design for Learning Principles (n=4)

* ‘Promotion and incorporation of Universal design for learning principles’
* ‘Better uptake of UDL principles for all learners’

Training (for students n=3, for staff n=1)

* ‘we could provide more training on assistive technologies for students’
* ‘More staff training in the areas of disabilities’

While these were the main areas of improvement identified by respondents’ comments, there were a number of other areas highlighted including: awareness raising (n=3) and the providing a centre / space for students with disabilities (n=3).

### Good practice from other institutions

Respondents were asked to identify any other institutions that are doing well in supporting students with disabilities, the following institutions were identified by respondents:

* University College Cork (n=10)
* National University of Ireland, Maynooth (n=5)
* Trinity College Dublin (n=4)
* Dublin Institute of Technology (n=2)
* University of Limerick (n=2)
* Athlone IT (n=1)
* Blanchardstown IT (n=1)
* Cavan (n=1)
* Cavan Institute FE (n=1)
* Cork Institute of Technology (n=1)
* Dublin City University (n=1)
* Dun Laoghaire (n=1)
* National University of Ireland, Galway (n=1)
* University College Dublin (n=1)

Respondents that highlighted University College Cork as an example of good practice discussed this in relation to: the Panopto Service[[47]](#footnote-47), the outreach programme and the recording of lectures for students. Regarding NUI Maynooth the writing and math centre as well as the online registration offered by the institution were highlighted as good practice by respondents. The online resources and Unilink[[48]](#footnote-48) services at Trinity College Dublin were also highlighted.

## Looking Ahead

### Eligibility and Targeting

Respondents were asked about the appropriateness of eligibility and targeting criteria for the FSD; their responses are shown in the figure below.

Figure 6:17 Appropriateness of eligibility and targeting criteria

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 65). Note: All respondents could answer this question.

Part (e) – 4 skipped this therefore the base is 46

Part (c) – 4 skipped this therefore the base is 46

Part (a) – 18 skipped this therefore the base is 32

Part (d) – 8 skipped this therefore the base is 42

Part (b) – 8 skipped this therefore the base is 42

Overall the majority of respondents (i.e. at least 63%) think that each of the eligibility and targeting criteria are appropriate with the highest proportion of respondents saying that eligible institution requirements (84.4%, n=27), types of disability (81.0%, n=34), and criteria for evidencing a disability (71.7%, n=33) were appropriate. The nationality, residency and immigration criteria were said to be not appropriate by the largest proportion of respondents (37.0%, n=17).

Just over half of respondents (52.2%, n=24) think that there are aspects of the eligibility criteria that should be amended, these respondents went on to say that the criteria should be amended to include:

* **Part time students (n=7) –** Respondents stated that these should be eligible for funding under FSD;
* **Evidencing (n=6) –** Evidencing, particularly in relation to Mental Health Issues (n=5) and Specific Learning Disabilities (n=3) should be reviewed; and
* **Nationality (n=5) –** Respondents think that the nationality criteria should be reviewed to include international and Erasmus students.

Some respondents think that there are people that require support from the FSD that are not currently eligible including:

* Those with limited evidence (n=14) – specifically including mental health issues (n=6), those with specific learning disabilities (n=4), and mature students (n=2)
* Part-time students (n=9);
* International students (n=2); and
* Students with multiple disabilities (n=1).

The majority of respondents (63.0%, n=29) stated that the FSD is effectively targeting those most in need of support. Of the 37% that said the FSD was not effectively targeting those most in need, respondents highlighted that the following groups should be targeted:

* **Part-time students (n=5) –** ‘There are many people with disabilities unable to study full time and these people are excluded from the FSD’;
* **Those with Mental Health Issues (n=3) –** ‘The increase in numbers with mental health and specific mental health difficulties should be addressed’; and
* **Those without evidence (n=3) –** ‘I have met many students in desperate need of support with obvious disability but who could not provide up to date assessments because they were on social welfare’.

Respondents were asked if they thought funding under the categories given in the table below were appropriate.

Table 6:12 Appropriateness of funding categories

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Yes | | No | | Total | |
| **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| a) Assistive technology equipment and software | 37 | 82.2% | 8 | 17.8% | 45 | 100.0% |
| b) Personal assistance | 33 | 71.7% | 13 | 28.3% | 46 | 100.0% |
| c) Academic/learning support | 27 | 61.4% | 17 | 38.6% | 44 | 100.0% |
| d) Transport | 38 | 82.6% | 8 | 17.4% | 46 | 100.0% |

Source: Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities – Survey of HEIs and FEIs, PACEC 2016 (Question 69)

Note: All respondents could answer this question however the total per row varies as not all respondents answered all part of this question.

Part (a): Five skipped this therefore the base is 45

Part (b) & Part (d): Four skipped this therefore the base is 46

Part (c): Six skipped this therefore the base is 44

Over 60% of respondents found the categories of funding to be appropriate. Those that responded ‘No’ were asked to explain their reasoning as summarised below:

* **Assistive technology equipment and software –** Respondents commented that there is no dedicated funding for this and often the amount allocated does not cover the costs of expensive equipment.
* **Personal Assistance –** Respondents stated that this is a high expense and sometimes funding for this is not sufficient and can take funding away from other supports, however one respondent commented that there should be a ‘push towards independence rather than dependence’.
* **Academic / learning support –** Respondents commented that there is no dedicated funding to this and more support is needed in this area, two respondents commented that learning support should be part of the institutions support system already and extra ‘specialist’ support given where necessary.
* **Transport –** Respondents discussed that the funding is not sufficient and often private taxis must be used.

### Areas of Strength

Respondents were asked to identify three aspects of the FSD that are working well.

Overall 40 respondents provided 82 comments regarding areas of strength. The responses have been categorised and the key areas as well as the number of comments received regarding this area are outlined below.

**Supporting students with disabilities (n=13)**

* ‘Provision of much needed specialised supports’
* ‘Students with high levels of need are well supported’

**Providing essential funding (n=10)**

* ‘Key source of revenue stream for the service’
* ‘Provision of funding to enable students to access support to help them succeed in education.’

**The application process (n=9)**

* ‘Application process is well structured’
* ‘Good support in application process’
* ‘The returns excel sheet is better than all the paper applications we use to submit but it is still quite time consuming’

**The flexibility in administration of the Fund (n=8)**

* ‘Reasonable flexibility in administering funds’
* ‘Flexibility to prioritise spend according to our own institutional strategic objectives’

**HEA Support (n=6)**

* ‘The support provided by HEA staff to centers when needed re completing FSD applications’
* ‘Communications with HEA works well’

While these were the main areas of strength identified by respondents, there were a number of other areas highlighted including: support relating to needs assessments (n=5), learning support (n=4), supporting of high needs students (n=4), transport funding (n=4), and PA/Note takers (n=3).

### Areas of Improvement

Respondents were asked to identify three aspects of the FSD which could be improved. Overall respondents provided 94 comments, the responses have been categorised and the results of this are outlined below.

**Timing of the allocation (n=18)**

* ‘Allocation of the budget to be earlier in the year’
* ‘Late allocation of the fund can prohibit early intervention’

**Availability of more funding (n=14)**

* ‘More funding for students with MH issues’
* ‘increased levels of funding are required’

**Clarity over allocation method/model (n=13)**

* ‘Please explain the model of allocation’
* ‘Transparent allocation model’
* ‘Greater transparency in reasoning and rationale of the HEA when allocating amounts to institutions, publishing of institutions funding needed for transparency and fairness.’

**Eligibility (n=12)**

* ‘Greater range of students could be supported, e.g. part time’
* ‘Widen eligibility criteria’

**Evidencing (n=7)**

* ‘The time frame for SLD's (Dyslexia), it should be longer than 5 years - this is difficulty that cannot be overcome merely in the space of five years’
* ‘Constraints of medical evidence’

While these were the main areas of improvement identified by respondents, there were a number of other areas highlighted including: funding for administration of the Fund (n=6), a simplified application process (n=4), increased focus on the mainstreaming of support (n=3), and sharing of good practice (n=2).

# Appendix R: Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for this review were drawn up following a consultation process with stakeholders. In addition to fulfilling these terms of reference, the review was also expected to address the more specific points made in the submissions to the consultation process.

## Financial provision of the FSD

1. Assess the current and projected financial provision of the Fund, including an analysis of trends in expenditure, student profile and projected demand and resource requirements to 2020 in light of transitions from second level education and targets in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019.

## HEA model and guidelines

2. Review the HEA model of allocating and reporting on the Fund and benchmark this against other models internationally. Assess the metrics used by the HEA to calculate the allocation of funding to institutions and by category of student disability. Review the allocation timeframe, data collection and reporting processes. Make recommendations for the development of the model.

3. Examine the current HEA guidelines for the Fund and make recommendations on how these can be improved. Also, compare the HEA guidelines to NCSE and SEC guidelines governing support for students with disabilities in second level education and criteria (e.g. HEAR) for admission to higher education. Make recommendations on the potential for harmonisation of these guidelines.

4. Assess the role of the HEA in allocating the FSD to students in Further Education and those studying in Northern Ireland or other EU countries. Examine categories of students or institutions that are not included within the scope of the Fund (e.g. part-time or international students). Make recommendations for future policy and identify the resource requirements of implementing these.

## Student experience of the fund

5. Evaluate the student experience of the Fund; including students’ experience of information, application and assessment processes and of the services and supports resourced through the Fund. Also, in consultation with students and those working with them, and with reference to HEA data, evaluate the impact of the Fund in supporting national equity of access policy in relation to participation, independent learning, retention and access to the labour market and further study.

## Educational institutions and the fund

6. Examine the interaction of the FSD with mainstream funding, services and supports for students in higher and further education. Identify good practice by institutions in universal design; inclusive learning; mainstreaming of services; regional collaboration and targeting of support needs. In view of best practice nationally and internationally, make recommendations on the future interface of the Fund with the overall infrastructure of support for students. Assess the role of the FSD in determining HEA core funding for higher education institutions.

7. Examine the efficiency with which the Fund is used within individual education institutions, based on a review of HEA student and financial data relating to the FSD. Review practice by institutions in the administration and allocation of the FSD, including consultation with education personnel to assess their experience of working with the Fund.

8. Identify models of good practice nationally and internationally and make recommendations for future practice in this regard.

## Output of the review

The output of this review will be a report that examines all of the issues as listed above and makes recommendations for future policies, guidelines and practice relating to the fund. Specifically, recommendations towards a new set of guidelines on the administration and allocation of the FSD will be made to the steering group by the reviewer.

# Appendix S: Steering Group Members

Ms. Ann Heelan, Executive Director, AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access and Disability)

Mr. Declan Treanor, Service Director, Trinity College Disability Service

Mr. Tony Gaynor, Principal Officer, Higher Education – Equity of Access and Qualifications, Department of Education and Skills

Ms. Maureen Conway, Principal, Ballyfermot College of Further Education

Ms. Sheena Duffy, Senior Manager, System Funding, Higher Education Authority

Mr. David Sheils, Skills and Engagement Section, Higher Education Authority

Ms Catherine McNelis, Access Officer, IT Sligo

Ms. Valerie Moore, Access Officer Student Services, IT Tralee

Ms Aoife Ní Shúilleabháin/ Ms Síona Cahill, Welfare Officer, Union of Students in Ireland

Ms. Caitríona Ryan (Chair), Head of Access Policy, Higher Education Authority

1. Whilst we recognise that it is important to get a sense of what proportion need/get continuity of support from school to FE/HE, it is important to state that these findings are based on qualitative research with a relatively small number of students. Given the nature of this strand of research, we would caution against placing too much weight on the findings and on the representativeness or otherwise of those participating in the focus groups. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Data relates to students at school or college aged 19 years and over. Further, the categories of type of disability in Census 2011 do not match those recorded in relation to FSD; as a result some census data has been included in the final ‘Other’ category. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Census 2011 data category ‘Psychological or emotional condition’ used as a proxy for Mental Health Condition [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Census 2011 data category ‘A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities’ used as a proxy for Physical/Mobility disability [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Note: categories of disability from Census 2011 data that could not be matched with the data gathered by FSD or our survey have been included in this row. For Census 2011 the categories this group covers are: An intellectual disability; Difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating; Other disability, including chronic illness; Difficulty in dressing, bathing or getting around inside the home; Difficulty in going outside home alone; Difficulty in working or attending school/college; and Difficulty in participating in other activities [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Note: The ‘Other’ category includes responses that did not fit under any of the categories listed in the table. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Question 10: Five respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 885 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Question 11: Two respondents skipped this question, therefore the base is 854 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. UCC Assistive Technology Outreach Programme: Year 3 Report 2014-15 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Video platform for training, teaching, and presenting [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. DARE (2016) Important Changes to DARE [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. DARE (2016) Important Changes to DARE [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Panopto is a video content management system for uploading, managing and sharing institutions video and audio files [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Survey sent to 176 FE Institutions [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Survey sent to 27 HE Institutions (7 Universities, 14 IoTs and 6 Other Colleges) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Note: While 6 ‘Other Colleges’ were sent the invitation email to complete the survey, FSD data suggests that overall there are 13 ‘Other’ Colleges accessing support from the FSD (Source: FSD Funding Allocated to March 2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Note: While 6 ‘Other Colleges’ were sent the invitation email to complete the survey, FSD data suggests that overall there are 13 ‘Other’ Colleges accessing support from the FSD (Source: FSD Funding Allocated to March 2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Note: While 6 Other Colleges were invited to complete the survey, FSD data suggests that overall there are 13 ‘Other’ Colleges accessing support from the FSD (Source: FSD Funding Allocated to March 2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Responses from colleges in City of Dublin ETB (n=9), Tipperary ETB (n=3), Cork ETB (n=3), Waterford & Wexford ETB (n=3), Kildare & Wicklow ETB (n=2), Kilkenny & Carlow ETB (n=2), Cavan & Monaghan ETB (n=2), Longford & Westmeath ETB (n=2), Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim ETB (n=1), Galway & Roscommon ETB (n=1), Limerick & Clare ETB (n=1), Louth & Meath ETB (n=1), Kerry ETB (n=1). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Question 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Question 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Note: All respondents could answer this question. One respondent skipped this question, so base is 49 (Question 18). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Note: All respondents could answer this question. One respondent skipped this question, so base is 49 (Question 19). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The 8 outliers removed were: 1,000 (x2); 350; 200; 150; 81; 50; 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The number of respondents that described this as an ‘other’ resource to support the FSD [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The number of respondents that provided an estimate of the annual cost of this resource [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. 6 respondents gave responses up to €1,000, 5 respondents in the range €1,000 to €10,000, two respondents said €15,000, two said €20,000 and one said €25,000 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. One respondent said €60, 3 said €500, 3 said €1,000, 2 said €2,000 and one said €4,000 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Two respondents gave responses up to €8,000, four gave responses in the range €10,000 and €20,000, one said €30,000 and one said €160,000 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Responses were: €1,000; €30,000; €30,000; and €50,000 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Responses were: €1,000; €10,000; and €175,000 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Respondents gave the following responses: 20%; 40%; 60%; 70%; 80%; 100%; 100%; 100%; and 100% [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Respondents gave the following responses: 30%; 40%; 100%; and 100% [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Respondents gave the following responses: 15%; 20%; 50%; and 70% [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Respondents gave the following responses: 10%; 50%; 100%; 100%; and 100% [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Respondents gave the following responses: 20%; 20%; 26%; and 80% [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Respondents gave the following responses: 2%; 90%; and 100% [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Respondents gave the following responses: 20%; and 20% [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Respondents gave the following responses: 10%; and 25% [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Respondents gave the following responses: 25%; and 30% [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Respondents gave the following responses: 50% [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Respondents gave the following responses: 50% [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Respondents gave the following responses: 20% [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Respondents provided the following responses: €1,000; €13,160; €20,000; €80,000; and €200,000 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Respondents provided the following responses: €5,000; and €5,000 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Respondents provided the following responses: €15,796; and €23,960 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The Panopto service is lecture recording software [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Unilink is an occupational therapy support service for students who may be experiencing mental health difficulties, and / or physical/sensory difficulties [↑](#footnote-ref-48)