

**Higher Education Authority
(HEA) and National Disabled
Postgraduate Advisory
Committee (NDPAC):
Experiences of and Challenges
Faced by Disabled Postgraduate
Students**

Summary report of online event

23rd February 2023 (10:30 am – 1:00 pm)



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1

Introduction

In August 2022, the National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028 (NAP) was published. It sets ambitious targets for enhancing access to higher education, supporting student success and retention among all underrepresented students in higher education including students with disabilities. The previous National Access Plan (2015-2021) set a target of 8% for new entrants who are students with disabilities. This target was exceeded; in 2020/21, 12.4% of new entrants were students with disabilities. However, data from the same year shows that only 6% of those who indicated a disability were pursuing postgraduate study. The NAP 2022-2028 identified the importance of changing this statistic and significantly increasing the number of postgraduate disabled students in higher education. Implementation of the NAP will monitor postgraduate study among students with disabilities under Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 3. KPI 3 specifically focuses on the proportion of students with a disability undertaking postgraduate study.

With the objective of advancing progress under KPI 3 and to engage with the student voice in this work, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) partnered with the National Disabled Postgraduate Advisory Committee (NDPAC). The NDPAC is a HE Disabled Persons Organisation (DPO) made up of disabled postgraduates and early career researchers (ECRs) from across the country.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) aims to ensure that countries uphold the rights of persons with disabilities and facilitate their full societal participation. To achieve this, the CRPD, Article 4.3, asks countries to engage persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, Disabled Person's Organisations (DPOs), in CRPD implementation.

The partnership with NDPAC is key as the NDPAC acts as platform for the voices of disabled postgraduates and aims to build a dynamic relationship whereby disabled people are seen as partners in developing appropriate postgraduate education for disabled students.

On 23 February 2023, the HEA and NDPAC took the first step in progressing KPI 3 by coming together to provide an opportunity for reflection and discussion on the experiences and challenges faced by disabled students in postgraduate education. The aim of the information-sharing event was to examine the experience of postgraduate students with disabilities, highlight student perspectives to assist higher education institutions and research funders in planning their services to better meet the needs of disabled students in research postgraduate programmes and, ultimately, identify ways to enhance inclusivity and advance the goals of the National Access Plan.

The event was delivered remotely via Zoom with a total of 94 attendees. Participants were from Ireland and abroad and included representatives of access, disability and support services, HEI staff, research funding agencies, past, current, and future postgraduate disabled students, officials from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and HEA staff.

The event was divided into two sessions. The first session consisted of presentations by the Irish Research Council and NDPAC, followed by a student panel discussion. The second session involved a discussion of barriers and enablers in six breakout groups, and this was followed by a plenary session.

Presentation slides and conference bios are provided in the Appendices. A summary of the sessions is below and followed by personal reflections from disabled postgraduates.

2

Outline of the Event

2.1 Presentations

Irish Research Council (IRC)

The IRC funds research across all career stages, from postgraduate research to grants for established or career researchers, and, uniquely, across all disciplines.

Dr Louise Callinan (Former Interim Director, IRC) acknowledged within the presentation that a priority for the Irish Research Council over the last ten years has been improving gender equality. However, one of the main recommendations within the recent review of the IRC's Gender Strategy was that the IRC need to build on the successful targeted interventions and broaden the strategy to include wider equality, diversity, and inclusion measures. The IRC is committed to making progress across all inclusion measures.

National Disabled Postgraduate Advisory Committee (NDPAC)

NDPAC's presentation was delivered by Dr Vivian Rath, Dr Teresa Shiels and Dr Patricia McCarthy. NDPAC's presentation focused on the barriers that exist at all stages of the postgraduate journey for disabled students and the key areas where improvement is needed. The presentation shared the lived experiences of disabled postgraduate students and discussed the specific barriers and enablers that are faced.

Further detail on both presentations is available in the presentation slides in the Appendix B.

2.2 Student Panel

The session was chaired by Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh. The student panellists Catherine Gallagher (PhD student, DCU School of Communication), Amy Hassett (PhD student, UCD School of Medicine), Dr David Loughrey (post-doctoral researcher and neuroscientist based in TCD and DCU, holds a PhD from the School of Medicine, TCD) participated in the session and shared their experiences as postgraduate students with disabilities.

2.3 Breakout Groups

After the panel discussion, attendees were divided into breakout rooms to discuss key issues. The questions to be considered by the groups included the following:

- > What are the barriers faced by disabled students in postgraduate education?
- > What are the enablers?
- > What should happen next?

Section 3 provides a summary of the key themes that emerged from the discussions.

3

Key Themes

Throughout the event the following key themes arose surrounding the experiences and challenges facing postgraduate disabled students:

3.1 Financial challenges

- > Disabled postgraduate students are faced with **the cost of disability** when attending events or conferences due to additional requirements such as costs associated with personal assistants and travel. These extra hidden costs act as a barrier and have a negative impact on networking, research dissemination, building academic CVs, funding prospects and students' success.
- > It was proposed that **flexibility** is required in research funding terms and conditions. These might include funding extensions to cover extenuating circumstances that may arise due to barriers in the system or ill health. Evaluation criteria could be developed for measuring an inclusive assessment of the impact of initiatives.
- > **PhD stipends are regarded as insufficient** to meet disabled students' requirements and often do not meet current minimum wage standards. Income Disregard and a cost of disability subsidy should be considered in relation to any PhD stipend.
- > **Challenges in accessing personal assistance support were reported**, as funding provided to PAs is regarded as insufficient to cover their living costs. This prevents disabled students from engaging fully in all postgraduate activities including research, conferences, and other career building exercises.
- > While there are supports available under the **Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)**, HEIs reported that increases in the number of students registered with disability services and budget limitations have an impact on the institutional capacity to cover the extra costs associated with postgraduate studies.
- > Consideration should be given to postgraduate **awards being ring-fenced** for disabled researchers.
- > **Consideration needs to be given as to how more supports for international disabled postgraduate students** can be provided. **Supports funded through the FSD are not available to international students.** More collaboration with International Offices is required and it was suggested that HEI International Strategies need to address how supports will be provided. Greater awareness and clarity of the disability supports available through the Erasmus Plus programme and application processes are also needed.

3.2 Whole of institution approach

- > A whole of institution approach is needed to ensure a **greater representation of disabled people in HEIs**. Disabled postgraduate students are a minority group in HEIs. This results in a **lack of role models, mentors, and peers** who can offer support and guidance based on shared experiences.
- > There needs to be **greater awareness** of the diversity of needs of disabled postgraduates. Academic staff need to be made aware of the range of disability supports available for disabled postgraduates and there needs to be better recognition of disability services within HEIs. There should be **more training courses and information events** available to all staff and students in HEIs to increase awareness of the needs of disabled postgraduates.
- > Consideration should be given to institutions having a **standardised approach to captioning, recording of lectures and the provision of notes** to students. This would ensure accessibility for students with disabilities.
- > It was recommended that academic materials provided by lecturers should be subject to **accessibility checks**. It was also recommended that accessibility training should be compulsory for staff.
- > **All technology and learning platforms** in HEIs should be suitable for Assistive Technology software and licenses.
- > **Mechanisms are required to address the lack of awareness** among postgraduates regarding their eligibility for disability support, including FSD and other funding. It was considered that there needs to be greater cohesion within colleges and awareness on the part of Postgraduate Admissions on available supports.

3.3 Flexible supports

- > **Greater flexibility and reasonable accommodations** are required in various aspects of postgraduate programmes, such as application processes; deadlines for assignments; the format of annual progress meetings on doctoral programmes, where verbal presentations are often expected to be delivered while standing; the timings afforded for responses in viva voce examinations; and mandatory teaching hours all need to be adapted to meet the individual needs of the student.
- > When evaluating disabled students' academic outputs and contributions, it is important to recognise their **unique perspectives and experiences**, which will be evident in their CVs and research outcomes.

- > Postgraduate study programmes can be varied (taught or research masters; placements off campus; travel) and supports need to be flexible to reflect this. **A one size fits all approach is not suitable** for postgraduate study.
- > Disabled postgraduate students may be **deterred from choosing their preferred course** because of the expected barriers that may exist and the implications they might have for student success, for example if there is more travel or if there has been a history of not adapting courses to support students.

3.4 Holistic approach

- > Wrap around supports are required for all disabled students. Disabled postgraduate students face unique challenges and often experience **emotional and mental exhaustion**, particularly in situations where they need to navigate bureaucratic processes to access necessary supports. It is important that adequate and accessible medical services are in place in HEIs to support students. This includes counselling and mental health services.
- > **Ireland has the largest disability employment gap in the EU¹.** Designated career supports within HEIs are required for postgraduate students with disabilities to ensure that students are aware of pathways to employment and career options.

3.5 Part-time study

- > **Full-time study is not always a viable route** for all disabled students. While it is possible to defer a semester or take a leave of absence during postgraduate study, doing so may result in a loss of funding, as it is often predicated on full-time study. A reassessment of such policies was recommended.
- > It was considered that there is a need for processes allowing students to take a leave of absence or transfer to part-time study to be made less bureaucratic and more student-friendly. Students may be expected to take leave at certain times in the year or for specified time periods.
- > **Catherine's Law**, which ensures that students can continue their scholarships whilst maintaining their Disability Allowance, does not apply to part-time study. It was recommended that it should be extended to take part-time study into account.

¹ EDF 7th Human Rights Report. The Right to Work: The employment situation of persons with disabilities in Europe.

3.6 Whole of Government approach

- > **Government-supported schemes** aimed at increasing employment of people with disabilities that act as a pathway to employment for postgraduate students with disabilities could be considered. This would create opportunities for students with disabilities but also work to decrease the employment gap in Ireland.
- > It was considered that greater **policy coherence across government departments and agencies** is needed. For example, the extension of Catherine's Law to part-time students. This is particularly relevant to students who are in receipt of state support. It was also reported that visa and immigration rules make it difficult for international disabled students to receive flexible supports during their studies, such as extensions to deadlines, as it can result in a visa overstay.

3.7 Research and data

- > **Further research** is needed to fully understand why students with disabilities do not progress to postgraduate study. Best practice in other countries should be considered too.
- > **More data on postgraduate students with disabilities** is needed to create effective policies in HEIs and across government.
- > The National Disabled Postgraduate Advisory Committee suggested the development of an entry into academic employment scheme titled DARA, Disability Access Route to Academia. This is a direct entry scheme with ring-fenced places for disabled students. More information can be found on page 14.



Summary

Increasing the number of postgraduate students with disabilities is dependent on the creation of an educational environment at postgraduate level that embraces and supports diversity and inclusivity. The discussions identified important measures and recommended that they be taken to encourage and welcome students from a broad range of backgrounds, experiences, and abilities. Recommendations included measures in the following areas:

- > transition pathways to postgraduate study
- > financial supports
- > a whole of institution and holistic approach to supporting students with disabilities
- > flexibility in academic practices and supports
- > a review of supports for disabled students
- > greater policy coherence
- > career progression pathways, post-postgraduate study, and research
- > research into best practices and better data on postgraduate students with disabilities

An important step in the achievement of such measures is the creation of safe spaces for open dialogue and constructive engagement. The voice of postgraduate students with disabilities is key to understanding the barriers that exist and how we can begin to break these barriers down. The existence of such barriers represents a significant and damaging loss of potential and talent in society. It is imperative that over the lifetime of the National Access Plan (2022-2028) significant progress is made in increasing the numbers of disabled students progressing to postgraduate study.

Profiles of Disabled Postgraduate Students

Personal Reflection

Claire Butler, PhD Researcher, University College Cork.



My postgraduate journey began in 2017 when I started my Masters in Ethnomusicology at University College Cork. My master's thesis entitled 'The Female Yidaki Player: Towards a Womanist Perspective' focused on the topic of women and the Yidaki/Didgeridoo. This paved the way for my PhD research, which focused on the music of Indigenous Australian composers.

As a student with a visual impairment, I have faced and continue to face a number of challenges. I require all my reading materials in alternative formats and often need EA (Educational Assistant) hours to complete tasks such as editing documents. The biggest challenge I have been experiencing however is the ability to travel to Australia to conduct field research as part of my PhD.

I had intended to travel last June 2023, but ended up having to cancel the trip. My main difficulty was securing disability support in Sydney. I found that because I was not going to be in a classroom setting it was impossible to get disability support. In order to receive any support, I was required to register with a university in Sydney. I was as a result working with the University of Sydney, but they took an extremely long time to work through the process and then explained that there would be fees of 15,000 Australian dollars. This was in addition to the quarantine cost for my guide dog. If I did not have a disability, I would not have these costs. In order to overcome this, I am planning a short trip in November where I will travel with an assistant for a month and make contacts out there. I will have to leave my guide dog behind and use a cane for the month.

The challenges faced whilst engaging in my PhD are the main reason I joined NDPAC. It is great to be able to give voice to my experience with others who understand and work together to make real and lasting change. I really enjoy making things easier for future postgraduates.

Profiles of Disabled Postgraduate Students

Personal Reflection

Disability Access Route to Academia

Dr David Loughrey, NDPAC.

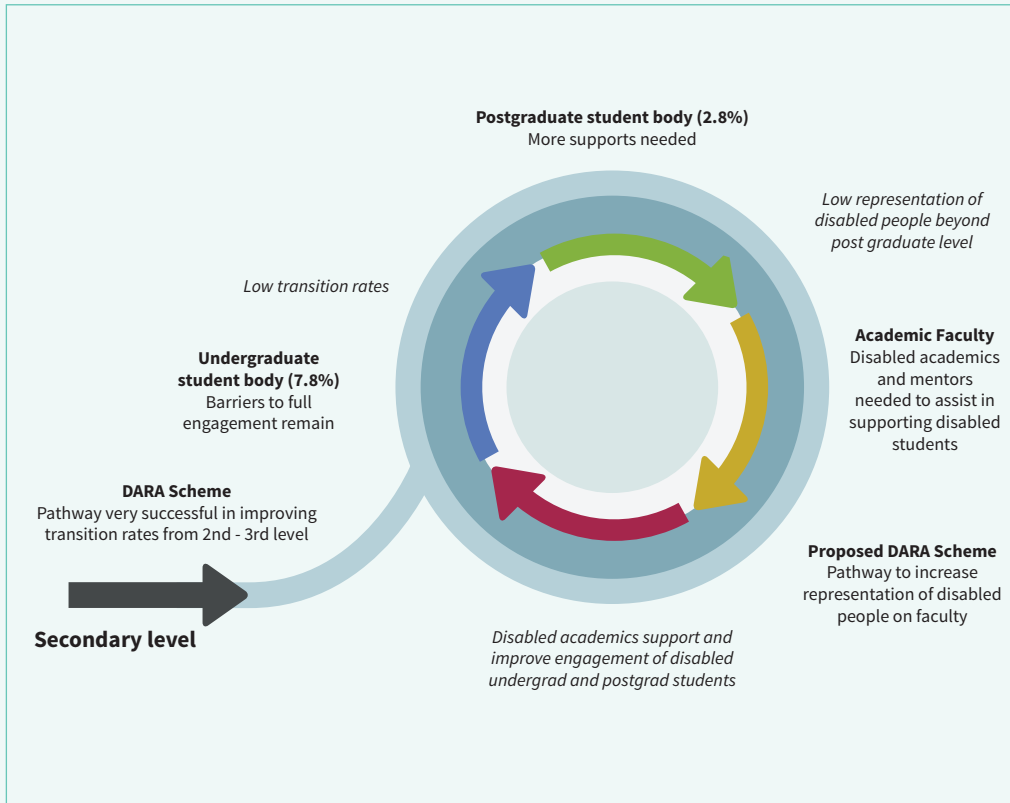


Disabled people are substantially underrepresented through the academic pipeline from undergraduate student body to academic faculty. This represents a loss to the diversity of the University and has consequences for participation of disabled people in society. Students with sensory disabilities have the lowest representation in higher education in comparison to other categories of

disabilities. I have joined the NDPAC as I have sought collaborations and strategies to address this. Schemes such as the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) pathway have demonstrated success in improving equity for those with a disability in the undergraduate student body, but systemic legacy gaps remain as their progression is substantially limited.

Current recruitment practices often do not consider the unique skills or experiences that come with adapting to a disability and the benefits that these would bring to academia and may only compare the candidate to abled peers on traditional academic skills and experiences. Another challenge is that there are few representative mentors for disabled people on academic faculty. The presence of representative mentors on academic staff is an important predictor of completion of a degree program by disabled students. One solution to increase the numbers of qualified disabled academics is to create a pathway to academic faculty such as Disability Access Route to Academia (DARA). This scheme would focus on early-career, qualified academics who because of having a disability have experienced additional challenges in career progression. These academics could then help mentor and support progression of disabled people through higher education.

Disability Access Route to Academia [Figure]



Personal Reflection

Leesa Flynn, PME (Primary Teaching), Maynooth University.



I am a Professional Master of Education student in Maynooth University, and as of recently I have become the first wheelchair user in Ireland to qualify as a Primary School Teacher. While this is an achievement that I am wholeheartedly proud of, it hasn't come without its barriers, which have been both mentally and physically draining over the last few years.

From the beginning of my master's in education, I realised that this was a course that was much more placement-based than my undergraduate degree. This meant that a lot of the course would be taking place outside of my comfort zone of the university campus. While this was to be expected, as a disabled student this is a very daunting factor. One thing I realised very quickly is that the career I have wanted to be in since a small child, i.e., primary teaching, was not built from a disabled perspective. An example of this was that when the mandatory Gaeltacht placement came about, there was no contingency plan put in place for me to attend as a wheelchair user, and as this became known with little to no time left, this resulted in me having to attend the Gaeltacht over Zoom. The result was that I missed the experience of learning in the Gaeltacht with my peers. It is my hope that those responsible within the learning environment in these institutions may take my case as an example, and that improvements can be made for future students who may also be disabled.

I joined the NDPAC mainly for this reason. It is clear to me that the disabled voice is not being heard within the postgraduate setting. I hope that those in NDPAC will be listened to and that changes will be made. Another contributing factor in my joining of NDPAC is the sense of community that comes from meeting like-minded people and those who have had similar experiences to me. Being a postgraduate student, and especially one with additional challenges in an environment that was not made with me in mind, can be a very isolating experience. Being engaged in this peer group has been a very welcome addition to my academic experience.

Appendix A: Conference Bios



Dr Louise Callinan is the former Interim Director of the Irish Research Council. She previously held roles in the Higher Education Authority, most recently supporting the establishment and development of technological universities and working with higher education institutions on matters relating to strategy and performance.



Catherine Gallagher (NDPAC) is a PhD student in the School of Communications in DCU where she is researching the journalism and political communication response to Covid-19 in Ireland. Catherine sits on the boards of AHEAD Ireland and the Independent Living Movement Ireland. In her advocacy work, she focuses particularly on means-testing of disability supports, higher education, independent living, and the framing of disability.

Ann Gorman is the Principal Officer of the Student Support & SUSI section of the Department of Further & Higher Education Research Innovation & Science. This Section has responsibility for Access Policy in Higher Education & policy in respect of the Student Grant Scheme.



Amy Hassett (NDPAC) is a disability advocate and a co-chairperson of Disabled Women Ireland (DWI), Ireland's national disabled person's organisation advocating for the rights of disabled self-identified women, girls, and non-binary people. Originally from Wexford, Amy is also a neuroscience PhD student in UCD.



Dr David Loughrey (NDPAC) is a postdoctoral researcher at the TCD Centre for Deaf Studies and a Teaching Fellow in the Institute of Population Health, School of Medicine TCD. He earned his PhD in Psychiatry in the TCD School of Medicine, where he was funded by the Irish Research Council employment-based postgraduate research scholarship in partnership with Chime and by the Dr Ciaran Barry Research Scholarship awarded by the Central Remedial Clinic. He is also a senior Atlantic Fellow for Equity in Brain Health at the Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI). He also worked in the DCU School of Inclusive & Special Education on improving access for sign language users to STEM content.



Dr Patricia McCarthy's (NDPAC) PhD focused on the educational experiences and transition opportunities of vision impaired/blind young people. Patricia has been a Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin where she is an active member of the research community. She is currently the vice-chair of the TCD Forum for Disabled Staff & Postgraduate Students and a member of the Disabled Staff Working Group in Trinity College Dublin.



Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh is Deputy President and Registrar of NUI Galway and current Chair of the CAO Board. He was previously Professor of German and Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ulster. He holds a BA (Hons) in German from Cardiff University, a BA (Hons) in Irish Language and Literature and a Postgraduate Certificate in University Teaching from Ulster University, and a PhD and DLitt in German from Nottingham University. He has worked on the legacy of the Holocaust, the German involvement in Celtic Studies and, more recently, on Jews in Irish literature and history. He has published five monographs, six edited collections and over forty articles and chapters.



Aoife Price (NDPAC) is a final year PhD student at the Centre for Disability Law and Policy at the University of Galway. She has been an active member of the disability movement at a national and international level for the past number of years. Currently her involvement centres around work with Disabled Women Ireland, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's Disability Advisory Committee and the Government's Disability Stakeholders Group.



Dr Vivian Rath (NDPAC) is organiser and founder of the NDPAC. He is an Adjunct Teaching Fellow in Trinity College Dublin and a Research and Policy Officer with AHEAD. His Ph.D., titled the "social engagement experiences of disabled students in higher education in Ireland", focused on the areas of disabled student social engagement, transitions, voice and belonging. He is the current Chair and founder of the TCD Forum for Disabled Staff & Postgraduate Students. He is an appointee to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Disability Advisory Committee, and the Board of the National Disability Authority.



Caitríona Ryan is Head of Access Policy in the HEA. Working with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science, Caitríona has responsibility for several projects in the implementation of the National Access Plan, 2022 - 2028. Caitríona has worked in the HEA for 20 years and was formerly Head of Policy & Planning. Previously, she held positions in Deloitte & Touche Management Consultants, the Department of Enterprise and Employment and the Department of Health and Children.



Dr Teresa Shiels (NDPAC) is a Traumatic Brain Injury survivor who is a researcher and advocate in inclusive education, neurodiversity, and disability studies. She recently completed her PhD on the experience of living with TBI, and access to higher education in Ireland. Teresa is a unique scholar, having achieved an undergraduate, master's and doctorate degree, providing personal and insider knowledge of social and systemic barriers faced by neurodivergent students.

Appendix B: Presentation Slides

Presentation on Supporting Postgraduate Research Students with Disabilities, IRC

Supporting postgraduate research students with disabilities

Dr Louise Callinan
lcallinan@research.ie



What we do...

The Irish Research Council funds excellent research across all disciplines and career stages via individual awards



Awards and partnerships...

- Fund research at all career stages and across all disciplines relating to disability – largely relating to improving lived experience for people with disabilities
- Partnerships – National Disability Authority; Inclusion Ireland; Disability Federation of Ireland; COPE Foundation; Enable Ireland



EDI measures...

- Gender Equality Strategy – 2013
- Review of Gender Equality Strategy – 2022
 - *“evolve the IRC strategy to capture broader diversity and intersectionality issues”;*
 - *“review what data and evidence is needed in relation to other diversity characteristics” and “how this evidence might drive a wider equality and diversity strategy”*



What we know...

- Census, 2016 – 13.5% of population have a disability
- NDA estimate % of population with a disability will increase to 20% by 2028
- In 2020/21, HEA data reports that 12.4% of new entrants to higher education have a disability



- In 2020/21, 1,300 students who received support from the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) were registered on Level 9 and 10 programmes
- In 2020/21, HEA report that 6% of students who indicated a disability were pursuing postgraduate study

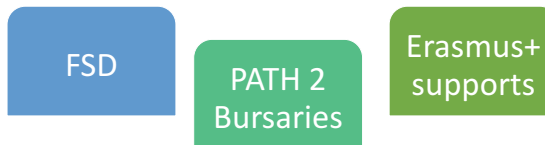


- AHEAD data indicates that there have been year-on-year increases in number of students with disabilities registering with support services in higher education
 - 2.8% of postgraduate population registered with disability support services in 2020/21
- HEA Graduate Outcomes data suggests that the proportion of graduates with a disability pursuing further study (full-time or part-time) was 20%



National Access Plan 2022-2028

Dedicated KPI on PG study by priority groups, including students with disabilities



What we need to do...

- Data
 - Numbers of applicants with a disability
 - Numbers of awardees with a disability
- +
- Barriers/challenges
 - Lived experience
- ↓
- Best practice models/interventions
 - Supports not just financial

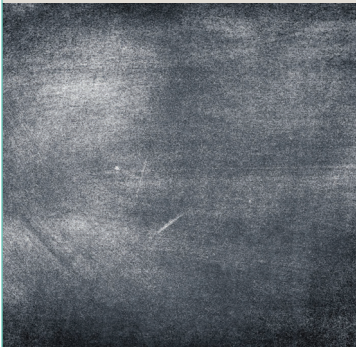
National approach – consistency

Universal design principles

Measures to assess progress



Presentation on Removing Barriers to Postgraduate Study for Disabled Students, NDPAC



REMOVING BARRIERS TO POSTGRADUATE STUDY FOR DISABLED STUDENTS

DR VIVIAN RATH,	NDPAC	@RATHVIVAN
DR PATRICIA MCCARTHY,	TCD	@MCCARTPM
DR TERESA SHIELS	UL	@TERESASHIELS01

PRESENTATION TO HE & NDPAC CONFERENCE
23.02.2023

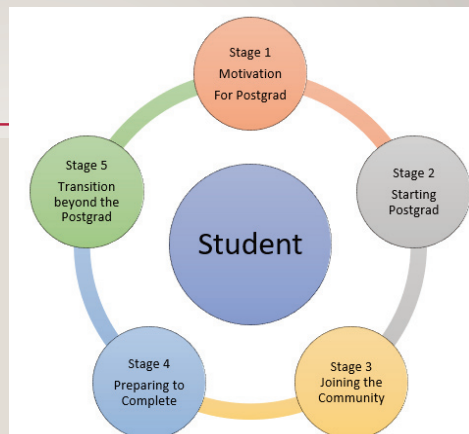
DISABLED STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Increase in the number of disabled students in HE
- 7.1% - Undergrad (Ahead)
 - Very successful – DARE Scheme
 - Many barriers to full engagement still exist
- 2.8% - Postgrad – AHEAD
 - Low transition rates
 - Lack of knowledge & awareness within institutions
 - Challenges accessing and lack of information around funding, (how many disabled students are receiving support from funding bodies?)

PRESENTATION TO MINISTER HARRIS 2020, 2021 AND 2022

NEED TO CONSIDER WIDER POSTGRAD ENGAGEMENT

- FOCUS ON THE POSTGRAD JOURNEY:
 - 5 STAGES TO JOURNEY FROM BEGINNING TO END
 - BARRIERS EXIST AT ALL STAGES
 - SUPPORTS EXIST BUT NOT CONNECTED
 - ENSURE POSTGRAD PATHWAY IS VISIBLE & A VIABLE OPTION FOR DISABLED STUDENTS
 - NEED TO BE PROACTIVE INSTEAD OF REACTIVE



A THEMATIC APPROACH

5 Thematic Recommendations

THEMES 1 AND 2

- **Theme 1 National Access Plan & Transitioning to Postgraduate**
Establish Targets for Progression of Disabled Postgrad Study
Engagement in full Postgrad Lifecycle – including lecturing & social & community engagement, resulting in greater student belonging
Support to transition to Postgraduate study
- **Theme 2 National Cross Campus Postgrad Study Awareness Campaign**
Disabled Role Models
 - Increased visibility of disabled Postgrads/PhD**Staff in HE**
 - Target lack of knowledge
 - Encourage college initiatives

THEME 3 AND 4

- **Theme 3 Funding**
 - PATH Fund for new initiatives for Postgrad study/PhD.
 - Research Scholarship for Disabled PhD Researchers
 - Cross Departmental Engagement with Disabled Leaders to remove barriers to funding.
 - Inclusion of those on 'Blind Pension' as part of 'Catherine's Law'.
- **Theme 4 Flexible Learning Approaches**
Maintain Blended Learning Approach & inclusion of disabled students in development

Ensure UDL is implemented across the postgraduate sector.

THEME 5

- **Theme 5 Transitioning from Post-Postgraduate**
Removal of barriers to pathways to in-college employment & post-doc opportunities.
Support for leadership development opportunities within academia.
Development of Access to Employment Scheme in HE

LIVED EXPERIENCE

DR TERESA SHIELS

National Disabled Postgraduate Advisory Committee

Negotiating access to higher education was a complex process involving personal and systemic barriers for me as a PhD Student with Traumatic Brain Injury

Barriers	Supports
Physical barriers	Importance of educators/supervisors listening to the voices of neurodiverse students in planning, design and implementation of programmes of study in HE
Noisy environments	Flexibility in the doctoral process and access to disability support services
Ableist pedagogical Assumptions (normative expectations)	Communication and Collaboration with educators/supervisors/others
Annual doctoral progressions	Importance of supports to ensure resilience and self-advocacy

*Disclosure was both a barrier and support for me

QUESTIONS & CONTACT

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- Dr Patricia McCarthy mccartpm@tcd.ie
- Teresa Shiels
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Appendix C: Glossary of Terms

Catherine's Law – this legislation guarantees that scholarship awards for PhD students are not assessed as income in the Disability Allowance means test. This means that students can receive scholarships and retain Disability Allowance. The law has been extended to people who are blind.

Cost of Disability – the Cost of Disability is the extra spending needs that people with a disability face in their day-to-day lives that others in society do not face. These extra costs are a direct result of the person's disability and would not arise otherwise.

DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) – a third level alternative admissions scheme for school leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education. DARE offers reduced points places to school leavers who, as a result of having a disability, have experienced additional educational challenges in second level education.

Disability Allowance – is a weekly allowance paid to people with a disability.

Disabled people/ People with disabilities – we have chosen to use these terms in this report interchangeably. The term 'disabled people' is recognised by many within the disability rights movement in Ireland to align with the social and human rights model of disability, as it is considered to acknowledge the fact that people with an impairment are disabled by barriers in the environment and society. However, we also recognise that others prefer the term "persons with disabilities" because of the inherent understanding in the term that they are first and foremost human beings entitled to human rights. This reflects the language used in the UN CRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). Finally, we recognise that some people do not identify as being disabled.

Higher Education Authority (HEA) – officially **An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas**, is the statutory body providing policy advice for higher education in Ireland.

Income Disregard – refers to a certain amount of income or income from particular sources which is not taken into account when a means test is conducted to determine one's eligibility for social assistance payments. In the context of disabled postgraduate students, scholarship awards for PhD students are not counted when means are assessed for Disability Allowance.



Appendix D: Contact Details

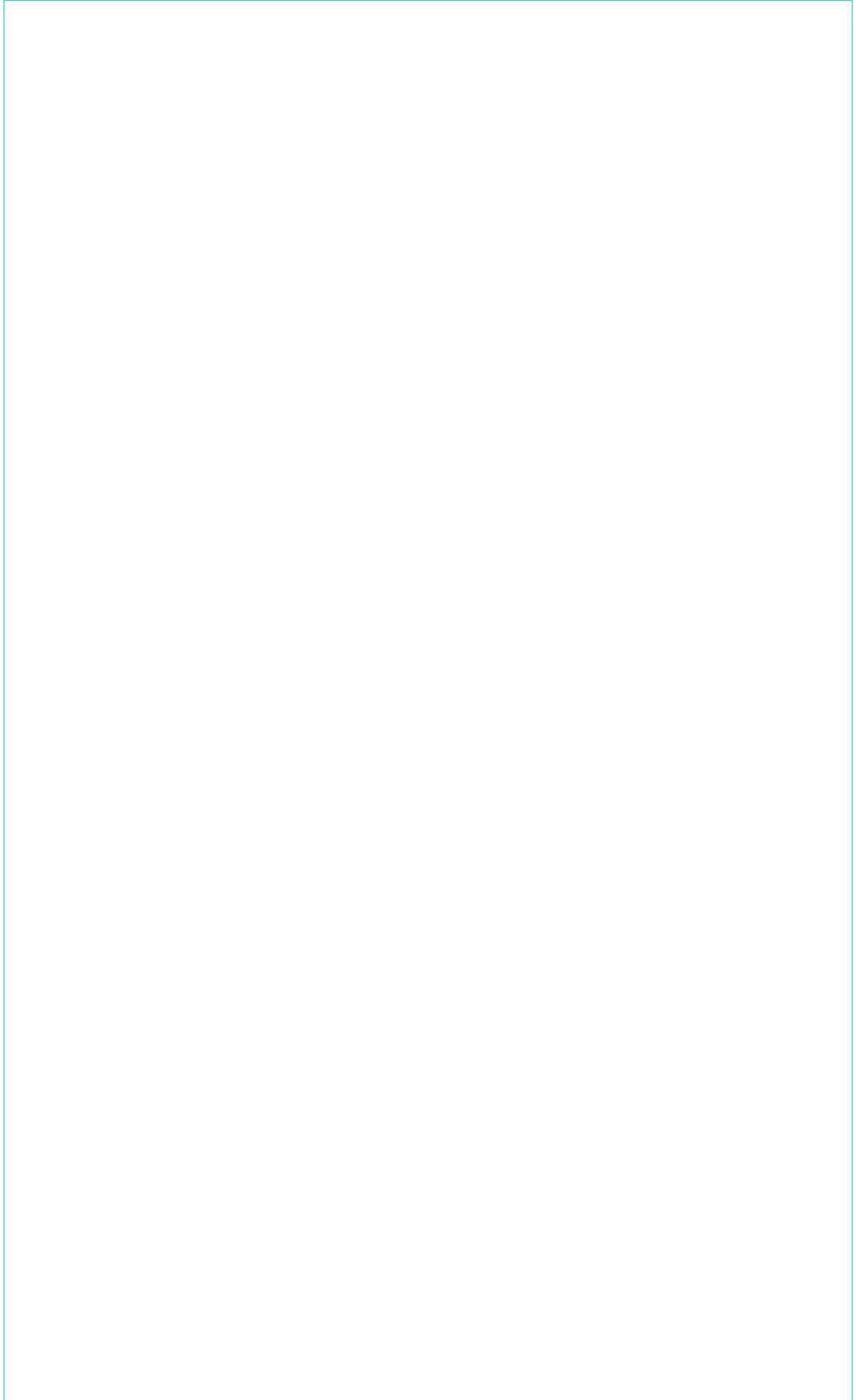
National Disabled Postgraduate Advisory Committee (NDPAC)
disabledpostgradgroup@gmail.com

Higher Education Authority, Access Policy
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Notes



Notes





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