Submission 2.15 Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)

Consultation Process

Key stakeholders were invited to discuss and input into the consultation process. Stakeholders invited included; Staff from all areas of the institute (academic, administrative and student support roles), guidance counsellors and teachers from local DEIS schools, community partners (Southside Partnership, Southside Traveller Action Group) as well as IADT students and the Student's Union. The Access Officer and Disability Officer also took part in sectoral consultations with THEA Access Officers and DAWN networks.

The questions set out in the National Access Plan Consultation Paper were used as guidance for participants. Responses were collected via email and a facilitated meeting of stakeholders was also held. Recommendations are summarised below.

What should our overall vision for equity of access to higher education in Ireland be for 2022-2026?

No changes to the overarching vision were suggested. It was felt the overall vision is still relevant, however, feedback and suggestions on how this vision is achieved are outlined below.

Who are the target groups that should be specified in the next National Access Plan? How do we ensure that vulnerable members of our society are included (e.g., learners currently in care or who have experience of being in care)?

While it is recognised that the current target groups continue to be underrepresented in HE, within the current list, groups need to be refined and an enhanced identification of target groups is needed. There are sub categories within these groups that are particularly marginalised and current access initiatives are not meeting the needs of these groups. Additional target groups suggested are:

Young adults who have "aged out" of care, homelessness/no fixed address and access to supports is major challenge for this cohort.

Ex-offenders on completion of prison sentence. Having no fixed address is an issue, no access to financial documents for access supports.

Students in direct provision and unaccompanied minors

Senior Citizens- struggle to get a diagnosis and may not be entitled to supports. Other related issues like technophobia also impact for this cohort.

How can pre-entry and post-entry activities be developed?

There is great work being done nationally at pre and post-entry level, however there is a lot of duplication across HEI's. Actively sharing and disseminating good practice is key to developing access work nationally. This will not only remove duplication of work but will encourage collaboration, something which the PATH programme has shown to be hugely beneficial to participating HEI's. Other suggestions for Pre and Post entry development:

Further develop and enhance relationships with primary and post primary sectors.

It is important to note that for HEI's the goal of pre-entry work is for students to access Higher Education and it is not about competition between HEI's.

The value of the Foundation Courses needs to be emphasised and Foundation Courses should be recognised more widely by HEI's as an important access route. Particularly for students who did not complete the Leaving Certificate.

Reduce the burden of reporting/metrics-gathering to allow the Access Officers to do more of the meaningful work

Create an 'Access Passport' system that would follow the student right through their educational journey – regardless of where they study. Students are facing assessments to participate in outreach activities and then again to enter HEI's and for post-entry supports and grants. We need to remove this duplication of assessment processes.

Create a cultural shift across education such that the issue of access is for everyone to be partnering with – not just Access Officers

Build partnerships with Direct Provision Centres nationwide in order to create opportunities / scholarships which include funding for accommodation and food for this cohort

Maintain and enhance ongoing support for students throughout their studies to maximise the whole student experience of higher education.

Build on opportunities that COVID has presented in terms of flexible learning. Many students will benefit from continuation of flexible/blended learning approaches and we should not revert back to pre-covid practices.

Provide more support for aged population to access education.

How can current funding programmes be better utilised to further the objectives of the National Access Plan?

More flexibility is needed, while the nationalisation of schemes such as SUSI, HEAR and DARE has removed administrative burden from Local Authorities and HEI's, it also removes the flexibility to look at applicants on individual needs basis. Students circumstances can be complex and nuanced and many of the most marginalised students are losing out on supports because of the inflexibility of schemes.

As mentioned previously, the idea of an "Access Passport" would remove duplication of applications for students. They could be assessed for access eligibility and then would not have to apply for all of the various schemes separately. Removing duplication and pressure on Access Offices administration burdens.

HEI's and other funding programmes need to work more collaboratively in order to develop a more consistent approach to data collection. This would facilitate tracking of individual student success, as students often progress between HEI's.

In terms of funding being granted to Access Offices, more forward planning is required. Often funding is granted with requests for funding proposals at short notice and spending deadlines that are unrealistic. If given more time to think in a strategic way rather than a reactive way, access offices may be able to spend funding in a more meaningful way.

In addition, funding needs to be made available to HEI's to recruit permanent or longer fixed term contract staff to support the activities of the access office. It must be acknowledged that the work of Access Officers has evolved over the past number of years, the work load has increased significantly as a result of PATH projects, E-

cohesion and the increase in student numbers. And the strain of this extra work, with no extra resources is being felt by Access Officers. It is not sustainable.

How can the goal of mainstreaming be further embedded within HEIs? / How can a whole-of education approach to widening participation in higher education be achieved?

We talk about mainstreaming access in our institutions, but before this can be achieved we need to look at mainstreaming access within our sector and raising awareness of the sector nationally.

More collaboration is needed between the HEA, Access and Disability Officers to align our work practices. Access outreach and supports vary greatly in each HEI and therefore there is mystery around what "Access" actually is.

Staff outside of Access in HEI's are not sure what their role is in terms of supporting access students.

Access/disability can be seen as an 'add-on but the onus should be on all staff to be involved. A national awareness campaign may create more of an awareness among all staff categories and remove some of the fear/unknown and often labels that are put on students to fit into a system. Instead the integration should be more seamless and support the concept of Universal Design for Learning.

There is a need for national policies and infrastructure to more systematically support whole of institution / whole of higher education approaches.

The whole of institution approaches can only be achieved when sufficient and sustainable Access resourcing is built into funding models

How can pathways between further education and training and higher education be better developed?

HEAR and DARE schemes need to be reviewed to incorporate Further Education and Leaving Cert Applied applicants. The scheme needs to move away from the LC points system as some of the most marginalised groups in our society will never qualify for these schemes.

Importance of Access courses, or foundation courses as an entry route needs to be communicated to HEI's from the HEA. Very few HEI's are offering this important entry route and development of such an entry route requires buy-in from the top down.

How can other social inclusion initiatives outside of the higher education sector be harnessed to support equity of access objectives?

Collaboration between HEI's within PATH clusters have demonstrated the success that results from cross sectoral collaboration, we believe this can be replicated with collaboration between clusters.

There are many successful social inclusion initiatives in operation that Access Offices are engaged with at a local level. As mentioned previously, in order to harness meaningful partnerships, HEI's need to share best practice in this area to replicate their successes across the country.

Roma & Traveller Pride Week

University of Sanctuary

Cities of Sanctuary – build from a College of Sanctuary. Opportunity for collaboration between all universities and colleges of sanctuary to become regions of sanctuary (for example PATH clusters with UoS status)

Dublin Learning City (DLC) is supported by PATH Funding and is Co-Chaired by IADT and Marino Institute. It has achieved membership of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and has reached very significant milestones. It continues to engage with learners to encourage, acknowledge and support learning in all formats including formal, informal and non-formal settings. The future direction of DLC will put the learner at the centre of its activities, creating a sense of belonging for them in the education system through effective relationships with stakeholders including Dublin City Council, Education and Training Boards and HEI'S. Efforts should continue to create a sustainable model for a Healthy Learning City for Dublin and its environs.

What challenges has Covid-19 presented in relation to an inclusive higher education system and how can they be addressed?

There is no doubt that COVID has changed the landscape of Access work in Ireland. While COVID has had a negative impact on the lives of students, particularly those already marginalised. Opportunities have also arisen as a result of the pandemic in terms of flexible delivery options for target groups (mature learners and lone parents with caring commitments, students with disabilities, etc.). Reverting to pre-covid ways may be just as harmful to these target groups and a more flexible and blended approach going forward is needed.

A post COVID sectoral review would be useful to research the challenges and opportunities that COVID presented to Access target groups. This will be key to developing and maintaining supports going forward.

Conclusion

IADT is fully committed to the important work of widening participation of underrepresented groups in Higher Education. The landscape of the access sector in Ireland is constantly evolving, the needs of students are changing and we have seen that more than ever since the start of the pandemic. With that said, in order for HEI's to adapt to the changing needs of students, achieve targets set out in the National Access Plan, to meet reporting requirements and to serve our students at pre and post entry stages to the best of our ability, more resources will be required. Smaller access offices in particular need support in order to make the next National Access Plan a success.