



Ollscoil Chathair  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City University



# DCU Access Impact Report

2016 / 2017



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# Welcome

Dublin City University is home to Ireland's largest and very first University-based Access Programme. Here at DCU, we have a strong tradition of creating equality of access for students from groups currently under-represented in higher education.



In 2016, we celebrated a number of major developments that advanced our mission to transform lives and societies through education, research and innovation. This report showcases programmes and supports offered by the Access Service to enable all students to reach their full potential. One particular success in 2016 was the growth in our Access numbers, with 1,257 students currently supported by the service.

This work would not be possible without the support received from our Corporate Supporters, DCU Alumni and other Private Donors, through the DCU Educational Trust. Philanthropy continues to play an important role in enabling us to encourage young people from all socioeconomic backgrounds to consider third level education as a viable option and provide the necessary supports to help them complete their programme of study at DCU.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brian MacCraith". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Professor Brian MacCraith,  
President,  
Dublin City University

# Mission, Values and Strategy

## Our Mission

'Harnessing the unique resources and support of the wider DCU Community, the DCU Access Service, informed by research and nearly thirty years of practice, seeks to work in partnership with Educators, Government, Third Sector Organisations and our supporters and funders to increase access to and progression from higher education for students from underrepresented groups, at local, regional and national level'.



## Our Values

We are committed to:

- Equality of opportunity
- Empowerment
- Social Inclusion
- Diversity
- Transformative learning experience



## Our Strategy

Research has shown that in the North Dublin area, there are fifteen Electoral Districts where 5% or less of the population hold a third level degree or equivalent\* (Census 2011). A key part of the DCU Access strategy is outreach and engagement. We are heavily invested in outreach in the local community, seeking to engage with schools and community organisations to promote progression to third level.

The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 states as its vision:

**“To ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population”.**

For the duration of the current National Access Plan, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Department of Education and Science (DES) are committed to increasing participation in higher education by groups who have been underrepresented up to now.

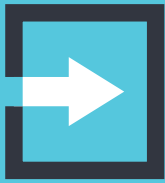
DCU Outreach targets all underrepresented groups as specified in the the National Access Plan. In addition, the DCU Outreach and Engagement Strategy targets the following groups:

- Double Disadvantage - students who are experiencing educational disadvantage and who also have a physical, sensory or learning disability
- 1st Generation - no history of 3rd level education in the family
- Gender - working class boys
- In Care / Young Carers
- Students from the Traveller Community

28 years of experience in Access outreach has helped us to build an understanding of the communities we serve and has informed our mission and affirmed our values as a service.

Currently supporting 1,257 students in our post entry work throughout their time in DCU. The DCU Access strategy is Post Entry Support, available to all Access students throughout their time at DCU. From our research; continuous personal, academic and financial supports impact greatly on students’ success, from increasing retention to achieving higher results upon graduating. Currently, 93% of Access students complete their studies and 53% go on to Master’s level or higher.



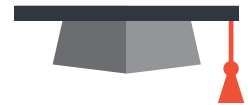


**1257**  
STUDENTS  
ON THE DCU  
ACCESS  
PROGRAMME  
(2016/2017).



**385** NEW FIRST YEARS IN 2016

**221**



students graduated in  
2017 with 97% of students  
achieving a higher honours  
degree (H2.2 or higher).



Approximately

**3,000**

Junior Cycle students  
representing 20 DCU link  
schools took part in our  
U & University programmes  
in 2017.



**2**

DCU Access students  
were selected for the 8  
week Digicel Summer  
Internship programme in  
Jamaica and Barbados



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# 3

Different Orientation Programmes in August/ September 2016 and 2017 on Glasnevin & St Patricks Campus.

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Presentation on HEAR/ DARE entry routes delivered to over **1,300** students in 19 link schools by DCU Access staff and Access Ambassadors.

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# 65

teachers attended CPD for UniTY Programmes receiving training in Multimedia and Smart skills.

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**50 STUDENTS COMMENCED THE UFIRST PROGRAMME IN OCTOBER 2016 AND A FURTHER 100 STUDENTS JOINED THE PROGRAMME IN OCTOBER 2017.**



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# 976

students participated in the DCU UniTY Programme during 2016/2017.

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**“The Access Programme has always been there to support me throughout my University life. It has given me a lot and opened a door for me that I probably wouldn’t have.”**

Hannah Kelly, Communications Graduate, 2017

**“The Access program has given me access to third level education and has allowed me to thrive in DCU with its supports. I am highly passionate about this entryway to university as without it my life would be vastly different. I hope to help the program in the future to allow opportunities for others like myself and without it I would not be going to America for the summer as part of the Washington Ireland Program.”**

Sarah McLaughlin,  
Communications  
Studies Graduate, 2017





**“If it wasn’t for Access, not only would I not have secured an internship in Barbados with Digicel that will benefit both my career and my personal life, but I would not have been in DCU. DCU has completely changed my perspective on life and has encouraged me to work hard to succeed in life. All of the Access staff that I have encountered have worked incredibly hard to give not only myself, but all Access Students, amazing opportunities and support. Thank you.”**

Amy Redmond, Business Studies Graduate, 2017

**“My whole university experience has improved because I can count on that financial help and I do not need to stress over how I’m going to pay my rent.”**

Gabor Romhanyi, Economics, Politics and Law Graduate, 2017



## Transforming Students' Lives

DCU Access engages with students at different stages of the education lifecycle. Work begins with outreach in 20 linked schools across North Dublin, engaging with students from Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Leaving Cert years. DCU Access facilitates entry routes into university for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Our post entry team supports students during their time in DCU. These supports “provide a transformative student experience”, reinforcing DCU’s commitment to students to prepare them well to flourish in the world outside the university; in their personal lives, in civic society, and in the rapidly evolving workplace (DCU Strategic Plan, 2017-2022)



## Outreach

### U & University

Our widening participation outreach programme for secondary school students starts at Junior Cycle and offers events and activities on the DCU campus to students from 1st to 3rd year attending our linked schools.

We believe that it is vital to build a link to 3rd level as early as possible in the secondary school cycle in order to break down barriers and raise aspirations. We offer a number of programmes designed to introduce the University and build a relationship between DCU, our linked schools and students.

- Discover DCU (discovering pathways to 3rd level)
- Achievement Awards for 3rd year students (includes music and entertainment drawn from all of our linked schools)
- Introduction to Campus Life (Tours, Careers fairs, Open Days, Question and Answer sessions with current students)
- Maths Fun Days
- Sports Days - Rugby, Soccer
- Summer Scholars - academic taster programmes run on the DCU campus by the Centre for Talented Youth Ireland (CTYI) in Humanities and Social Sciences (\*12-17 year olds).

### UniTY

In 2014, we established UniTY, a skills based programme specifically aimed at Transition Year students, aged 15-16 years old. Students are drawn from the twenty DCU Access linked schools. Our linked schools are located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage with a history of low progression to third-level education. The UniTY programme has been designed to increase student engagement in education, raise motivation and career aspirations and to increase progression to third-level.

Harnessing resources from within the University, 4 Modules were developed, two of which are largely technology based. These modules, outlined below, are delivered in schools by teachers who receive training and support from DCU.

976 TY students from 21 link schools participated in UniTY modules this year.

- The Multimedia Module
- Smart Skills
- Employability & Leadership
- Student Empowerment



### UFirst

UFirst is a programme of supports for selected secondary school students in 5th & 6th Year. Designed to give them the knowledge, confidence and skills needed to thrive in third-level, students. In 2016, fifty students from DCU link schools throughout North Dublin participated in the initial programme. Students attended workshops on 'Goal Setting', 'Life Coaching', 'Career Exploration/CV Building and Interview Skills' and 'How to apply to University'. They also attended a week long summer school in June 2016.

During Summer school, participants working in small teams based on areas of interest, undertook workshops, such as Multimedia, Business, Engineering and Science/Health. Over the course of the

week the students worked on projects, developed important skills and finally presented their project to the entire group. At the end of the week all participants said that they now really want to go to university.

In September 2017 over 60% of those accepted onto the UFirst programme had participated in the UniTY programme. The layering of outreach activities at key stages throughout a student's educational journey, aids us in targeting our most under-represented groups.







### **Post Entry Supports**

The DCU Access Service is committed to supporting students' full participation and engagement in University life. The service provides academic, financial and social supports to students throughout their degree. This commitment and support offered to students aligns with our own belief that educational equality extends beyond equity of access to equity of outcome.

### **Access Orientation Programme**

In 2016 DCU Access hosted their 18th Orientation programme catering for 385 first year students. Due to the large intake of students the service ran three separate orientation programmes. Students were assigned to an orientation programme based on a number of factors including leaving certificate results, programme choice, needs and geographical location.

The aim of the Orientation Programme is to assist students who have entered DCU through the Higher Access Entry Route (HEAR) to make a positive transition into the third level environment. It provides an opportunity for students to experience college and the different learning styles required before they are formally enrolled in third level. There is an emphasis on making friends and getting to know the DCU campus.

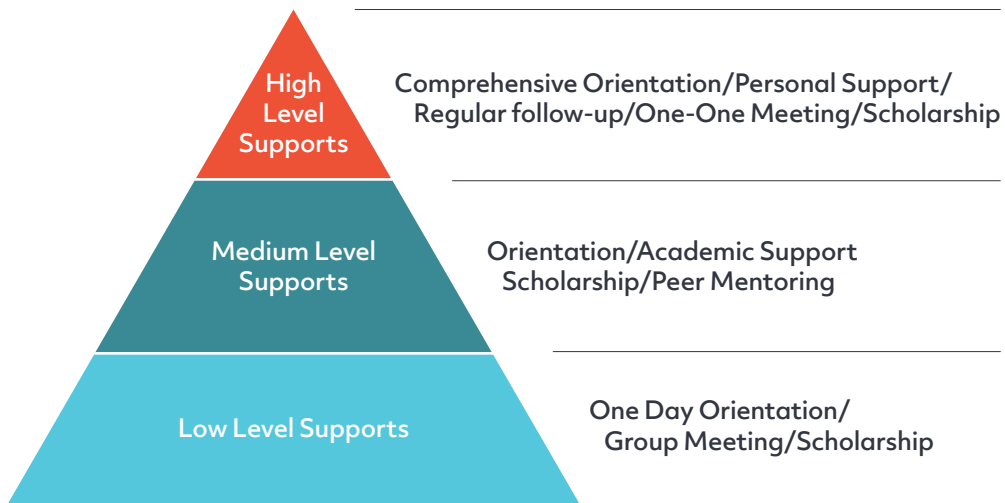




### Student Support

Within the first three weeks of college Access students meet with their Access support officer on a one-to one or group basis. The purpose of these meetings is to identify and discuss the individual supports needed and make a referral to other SS&D services if necessary.

Post entry supports are reviewed and modified each year. A triage model of supports is currently in place, where low, medium and high level supports are provided based on the individual needs of students. The diagram below outlines the specific supports that are provided.



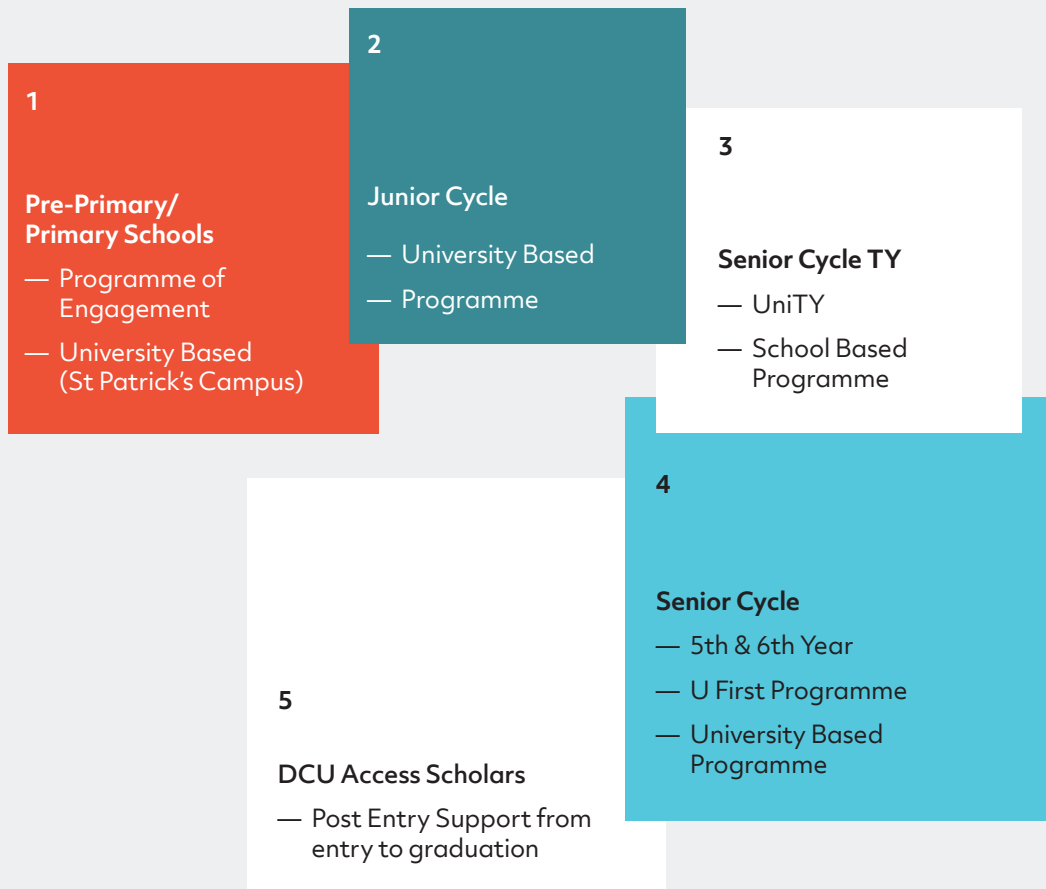




### Life Cycle of Engagement

Underpinning the work of the Access Service is a focus on connecting the work of pre and post entry to create sustained, continuous engagement with students. DCU Access have set out to create a

'life cycle of engagement' between the university and our Access students which starts at primary school and continues through to graduation.





Acids  
Citrus  
Vinegar  
Mouthwash!

Bases  
Ammonia







## DCU Educational Trust

Access students receive a financial scholarship funded by the DCU Educational Trust (DCUET) through major campaigns run each year. The Access Service works in close collaboration with the DCUET, donors and student representatives.





At DCU Educational Trust, we are passionate about the power of higher education to transform lives and society and we believe great things are possible when philanthropy combines with a young, dynamic and ambitious university like DCU. Through our fundraising work, we build meaningful partnerships with DCU's supporters for today and for the future in order to further DCU's mission to transform lives and society through education, research, innovation and engagement.

The generous support of our donors enabled us to contribute over €1.1 million to fund the DCU Access Scholarship Programme in 2016/17. This support enabled 1,257 DCU Access students to pursue their dreams of a higher education by providing a critical annual scholarship payment. This support is vital in enabling students to overcome the additional financial burden which entering university presents.

Our support comes from many different sources, from corporate donors, trusts and foundations to individual DCU friends and alumni who make a monthly gift to the Access Scholarship Programme. In 2016/17, we spoke to over 1,800 DCU alumni through our telethons when more than €146,000 was pledged to support Access Scholarships at DCU.

Dublin City University Educational Trust is a registered charity (CHY 8960) established in 1988 to advance the development of Dublin City University. For more information, please visit: [www.dcu.ie/trust](http://www.dcu.ie/trust)





## Graduate Stories

As a service we maintain strong connections with our graduates and follow up on their career development. We have captured two of our 2017 graduate stories below. Both students share their experiences and the role the Access Service played in their education.







### Simi's Story

Access has given such great support throughout my time here in DCU. It wasn't always easy, from struggling with certain modules to repeats. The great thing about Access is that their door is always open whenever you want to talk and they also reach out which I think is so important especially if you are anything like me.

I have always been the kind of person to struggle asking for help and talking about what I'm going through so it helped so much that Access would actually check in to see how I was getting on and organise meetings just to talk. This allowed me to avail of opportunities such as tutors for modules I struggled in, mainly maths and economics. Essentially anything involving numbers. Access offers so much more than just support, it also offers amazing opportunities.

Through Access I was able to get a fantastic summer internship with Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard where I was able to prove myself and as a result was offered a yearlong internship with the company. This was one of the greatest experiences of my life as I learnt so much. After college I have had the opportunity to go back to the company and I'm now working in their brand home. I am extremely thankful to Access for giving me the support I needed whether I asked for it or not, giving me amazing opportunities and most importantly helping me succeed in DCU.



### Aaron's Story

The penny dropped the summer before 5th year that I wanted to strengthen my education and career prospect for the future. I was very much involved with a lot of extra curricular activities, especially sports. I quickly adapted the same mindset and applied it to my education.

I was fortunate enough to be chosen for a place on the Take5 programme. This invited students to explore and experience college life through the lens of 5 colleges i.e. DCU, UCD, TCD, NUIM and DIT. Effectively, this prompted my decision to apply to study Business Studies at DCU. I felt comfortable with the campus settings and confident in the career prospects that DCU offered.

I was offered my first choice through the CAO. Throughout my time in DCU I availed of many supports and services. In particular, when I was struggling with Accountancy the Access Service provided me with extra grinds, as well as, mental, physical and financial supports.

I am extremely thankful and grateful for the opportunity and career platform that DCU Access Service provided me with. While in DCU, I completed two internships with Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard. I will forever remember the support, help and guidance that the service provided me with.



## Professional Development

The DCU Access Service provides a number of professional supports to students including; placement support and guidance, internship, volunteering and networking opportunities both abroad and at home. In 2016 Access scholars participated on programmes such as the Washington Ireland Programme (WIP), Digicel Internship Programme in Jamaica and Intercultural Learning Programme (EIL, volunteering abroad programme).





### **WIP Scholar 2016 - Diana Oprea**

My name is Diana Oprea and I was born in Romania, in April of 1998. Fast forward to January 2011, my family made a great sacrifice for myself, a sacrifice to which I will dedicate all my achievements in this life: we moved to the emerald isle in pursuit of a better education and a brighter future for both me and my sister. I was 12 years old at the time, moving to a new country where everything was alien to me, including the language.

Over the past six years spent in Ireland, I have chosen to embrace every single opportunity that came my way and have tried my very best to make my parents proud and ensure their sacrifice was worthwhile.

Some of these experiences included joining Future Voices Ireland, an organisation which empowers young people coming from disadvantaged areas ... also becoming a youth ambassador for UNICEF Ireland and Plan International which allowed me to give back to the Irish community in which I grew and developed as a young person.

When I discovered WIP, I knew immediately that I wanted to be a part of it and demonstrate the values which it upholds: professionalism, accountability, empathy and gratitude. Now, I am honoured to be part of the Class of 2017 and to learn from my 29 inspiring, role model classmates about leadership, service and the ability to deal with difference.

During the programme I was very fortunate to learn from the most some inspirational individuals who kindly gave their time to share their knowledge with us and invest in us. As my friend and classmate Rachel said "we are all still a work in progress" and New York itself and many great institutions such as Bank of America give us the inspiration and the momentum we need to make the most of our last month in the US and to return to our beautiful island, brighter, stronger and braver than we have left.

I will leave you with one of my favourite Romanian quotes:  
"Vointa inimii da aripi picioarelor."  
"The will of the heart gives wings to your feet."





## Access Ambassadors

This year, DCU Access recruited and trained 36 Access Ambassadors to work alongside Access staff on different initiatives. These students support the work of the Service and are invaluable to the programmes in many ways. They act as mentors to students on outreach programmes, offering advice and sharing their knowledge and experiences of college.

We would like to thank all of our Ambassadors this year for the hard work, dedication, commitment and passion they bring to the role. Their willingness to give back to the Access Service and encourage students from our linked schools to aspire to third level is admirable.





# Meet the Team



**Cathy McLoughlin**  
Head of Access Service (Acting)

Cathy joined DCU in 2008 working as part of the Community Outreach Office in Ballymun, in 2009 she took up a role in the Access Service on the Glasnevin Campus. In 2013 she took over as Senior Access Officer and is currently Acting Head of the Access Service.

Prior to joining DCU Cathy worked for Blanchardstown Area Partnership Company in the area of adult and community education. She holds a BBS from DCU, a postgraduate Diploma in Marketing from the University of Westminster and a Master degree in Adult and Community Education from Maynooth University.



**Margaret Lamont**  
Access Officer

Margaret joined the DCU Access team as an Access Officer on St Patrick's Campus DCU after the incorporation with St Patrick's College, Mater Dei and CICE in 2016. She works with Access students providing them with academic, financial and social supports. Margaret sits on the board of the Ballymun Initiative for 3rd level Education (BITE) and the Traveller Education Network.

Prior to this Margaret worked as the Access Officer in St Patrick's College, and also worked as a tutor and guest lecturer for the Human Development team situated in St Patrick's College. She is a past graduate of Loughborough University and DCU and has completed an MA (Humanities) in DCU. In 2016 Margaret qualified as an Executive Life Coach.





**Colette Keogh**  
Post-Entry Support Officer

Colette began working in the DCU Access Service in the year 2000. Colette began as the sole administrator for the Access Service and in 2008 was promoted to the role of post-entry support officer responsible for the retention and progression of Access students.

Colette graduated from DCU as a mature student with a B.A in Education and Training in 2010 and has undertaken training in other areas such as Neuro Linguistic Programming, Counselling skills & Facilitation skills. Most recently, Colette has completed a diploma in Executive and Life Coaching with the Positive Success Group in Dublin.

Colette is a member of the Post-Entry Access Network group which includes colleagues from all the universities of Ireland.



**Fiona Hudson**  
Post Entry Support Officer

Fiona joined the DCU Access team in January 2016 as an Access support officer. Fiona currently works with the post entry team as the first year student support officer. She works with students who have entered DCU through the HEAR or DCU Access scheme providing them with personal, financial, social and academic supports.

Prior to joining the team here in DCU Fiona worked as an Education Development Officer in communities experiencing education and socio-economic disadvantage in the Dublin North West area. Fiona is a past graduate of DCU and completed her masters in Community and Youth Work in NUI Maynooth in 2014

# Meet the Team



**Susan Hawkins**  
Access Schools Outreach  
Pre Entry Officer

Susan joined the DCU Access team as Schools Outreach Officer in 2011 having previously worked with the Dublin Institute of Technology Access and Civic Engagement Office. Susan graduated from University College Dublin as a mature student with a B.A in Psychology and Economics and a Masters in Equality Studies. She is due to complete a Masters in Guidance Counselling with DCU in 2018.

Susan sits on the board of the Ballymun Initiative for 3rd level Education (BITE) and the Traveller Education Network. She is a member of the Steering Committee for the Challenger Programme set up by the Northside Partnership and is a member of the Board of Management for Margaret Aylward Community College.



**Gerard Kelly**  
Smart Skills Coordinator

Gerard joined the DCU Access team in October 2015 to enhance the information technology aspects of the Schools Outreach Programme. His current area of focus is the UniTY Smart Skills programme, which introduces Transition Year students in linked schools across North Dublin to coding and other software development skills.

A graduate of University College Dublin with a BE in Electronic Engineering and a Master's in Technology Management, Gerard has over 25 years' experience in the software development industry.



**Darran Heaney**  
eLearning & Communications  
Project Officer

Darran joined the DCU Access team in 2014 and is overall coordinator of the UniTY programme. He is also responsible for all communications for the service.

Darran has over ten years' experience in Event and Project Management, as well as a background in Marketing and Public Relations. He is a graduate of DCU, completing a Masters in Education and Training Management, eLearning Strand in 2012 and qualified as an Executive & Life Coach in 2016. Darran is passionate about widening participation and the use of technology in Education.



**Jennifer Collins**  
Access Administrator

Jennifer joined the DCU Access team in September 2016 to provide secretarial and administrative support to the Access service. Her role also includes administration and reporting of department finances, event organisation, and management of Student Ambassador and Tutor contracts.

Jennifer holds certifications in Computer Applications and Microsoft System Engineering, and has previously worked in the ICT and Investment Funds industries.

## Thank You

The Access Service would like to thank all of our partners who share and support our vision of the power of higher education to transform lives, including our linked schools, the DCU Educational Trust and the wider DCU Community.

If you would like to find out more or to discuss ways in which you can support any of our projects, please feel free to get in touch. You will find our details overleaf.









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