



Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



DCU Access Impact Report

2017 - 2018







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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 2017, 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 2017 was the growth in our Access numbers, with 1,300 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



It has been another full and exciting year for the Access Service at Dublin City University, with the launch of the new DCU Strategic Plan 2017 to 2022. This plan builds on the very significant strengths and existing reputation of DCU with a view to enhancing performance across a wide range of areas with the emphasis squarely on Talent, Discovery and Transformation.

Access continues to focus on supporting students on their journey through DCU, while also making an impact in the surrounding link schools and community groups in North Dublin. We believe that any student who has the ability and ambition to progress to third level should be given the opportunity to do so, regardless of their background.

In this report we showcase our achievements, take a look back on events and hear stories from our current students and graduates. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have contributed to our activities over the past year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy McLoughlin'.

Cathy McLoughlin
Head of Access Service
Dublin City University

Mission, Values and Strategy

Our Mission

'In partnership with the DCU community, we engage with local schools and communities to raise awareness of higher education opportunities. Using evidence based best practice, we provide equal access to and support progression through DCU'.



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 8% or less of the population hold a third level degree or equivalent* (Census 2016). 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 under-represented groups as specified in 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

Almost 30 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.

The second strand of 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 University. Currently, 93% of Access students complete their studies and 53% go on to Master’s level or higher.

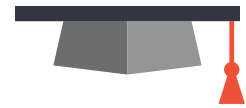


1300
STUDENTS
CURRENTLY
ON THE
DCU ACCESS
PROGRAMME



360 NEW FIRST YEARS IN 2017

252



students graduated in
2018 with 97% of students
achieving a higher honours
degree (H2.2 or higher).



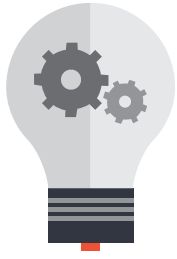
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Orientation Programmes.
Two "Access Welcome Mornings"
one on Glasnevin Campus
and on St Patrick's Campus.



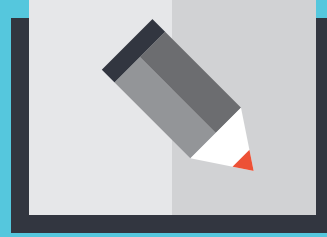
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DCU Access students
were selected for the
8 week Digicel Summer
Internship programme
in St Lucia.



1100

students participated in the DCU TY Programme during.



Approximately

2682

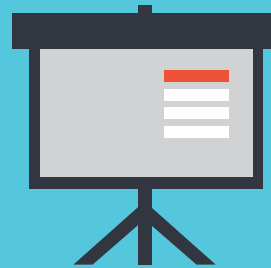
Junior Cycle students representing 20 DCU link schools took part in our U & University programmes.



98 STUDENTS COMMENCED THE UFIRST PROGRAMME IN OCTOBER 2017 AND A FURTHER 60 STUDENTS JOINED THE PROGRAMME IN OCTOBER 2018.

60

teachers attended CPD for DCU TY modules receiving training in multimedia and smart skills.



19 individual presentations on HEAR/DARE entry routes delivered to students in link schools by DCU Access staff and Access Ambassadors with a reach of approx **1,530** students.



“The work you all do should be shouted from the rooftops I appreciate it so much.”

Emma Lockwood,
DCU Communications Graduate

“Thank you so much for your help, support, guidance and work experience throughout my time in DCU, I will be forever grateful and will always cherish my time there thanks to the Access Service.”

Aaron McDonagh
DCU Business Graduate



“Access has helped me hugely throughout my college years, particularly at times when I was struggling with my course and felt like giving up. The team has always been there for me in my achievements throughout college also, no matter how big or small they were.

Always an open door with the team whether it be for a chat, or personal reasons. I know that in years to come, those same doors will always be open to continue on the chats or catch-ups.”

Robynn Walker
DCU Education Graduate

“Without DCU Access and all the other support networks within DCU I don’t think my Graduation day would’ve happened!”

Daniel Harvey,
DCU Business Graduate



Talent, Discovery and Transformation

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 in to university to 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 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)
- Coding Classes

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. In 2017, 98 students from DCU link schools throughout North Dublin participated in the programme. Students attended workshops on 'Goal Setting', 'Life Coaching', 'Career Exploration/CV Building and Interview Skills' and 'How to apply to University'.

Participants also attended a three-day long summer school in June 2018. Working in small teams, they undertook workshops in 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 DCU TY programme. The layering of outreach activities at key stages throughout a student's educational journey, aids us in targeting our most under-represented groups.



DCU TY Programme

In 2014, we established our DCU TY Programme, 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, located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage with a history of low progression to third-level education.

This programme has been designed to increase student engagement in education, raise motivation and career aspirations and to increase progression to third-level. Students participate in multimedia, smart skills and student empowerment modules. As part of the programme students can also avail of different opportunities to further develop their confidence and interest in attending third level.

Professional Work Placement

During 2017 and 2018, several transition year students took part in work placements with Arthur Cox, Google HQ and the DCU Faculty of Science and Health.

Photography Workshop

We linked in with professional photographer, Paula Alvarez and hosted a photography skills workshop during Easter holidays. The result of this workshop was an exhibition called "See Yourself Here", a collection of portraits of the students and their vision of themselves in DCU in several years to come.

Student Empowerment Workshops

To further support the work of Guidance Counsellors from our link schools, we collaborated with the DCU Counselling and Personal Development service and ran two professional development workshops. Working with panic attacks, anxiety and processing the impact of working with students in distress, were themes chosen by the teachers this year and training was delivered by Head of the DCU Counselling Service, Helena Ahern.



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 2017 DCU Access hosted their 18th Orientation programme catering for 360 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.

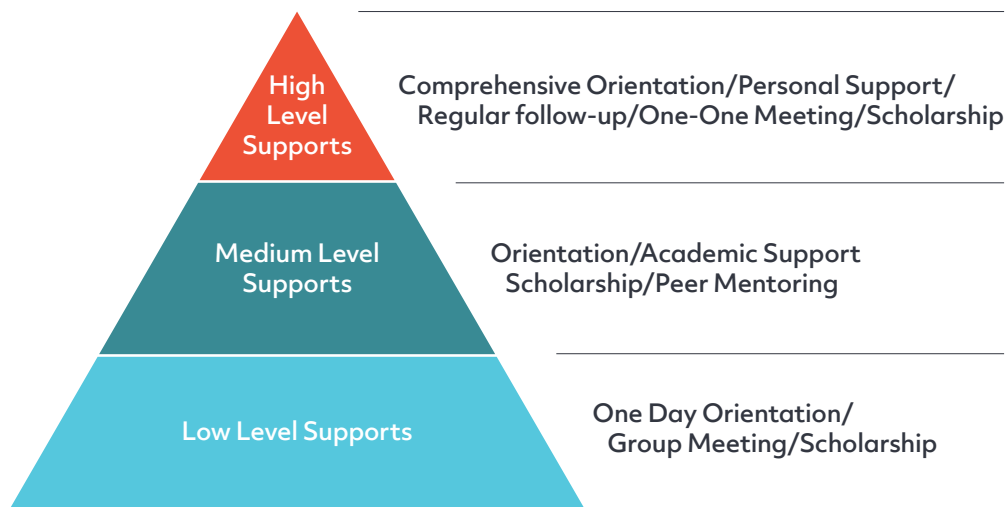




Student Support

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.

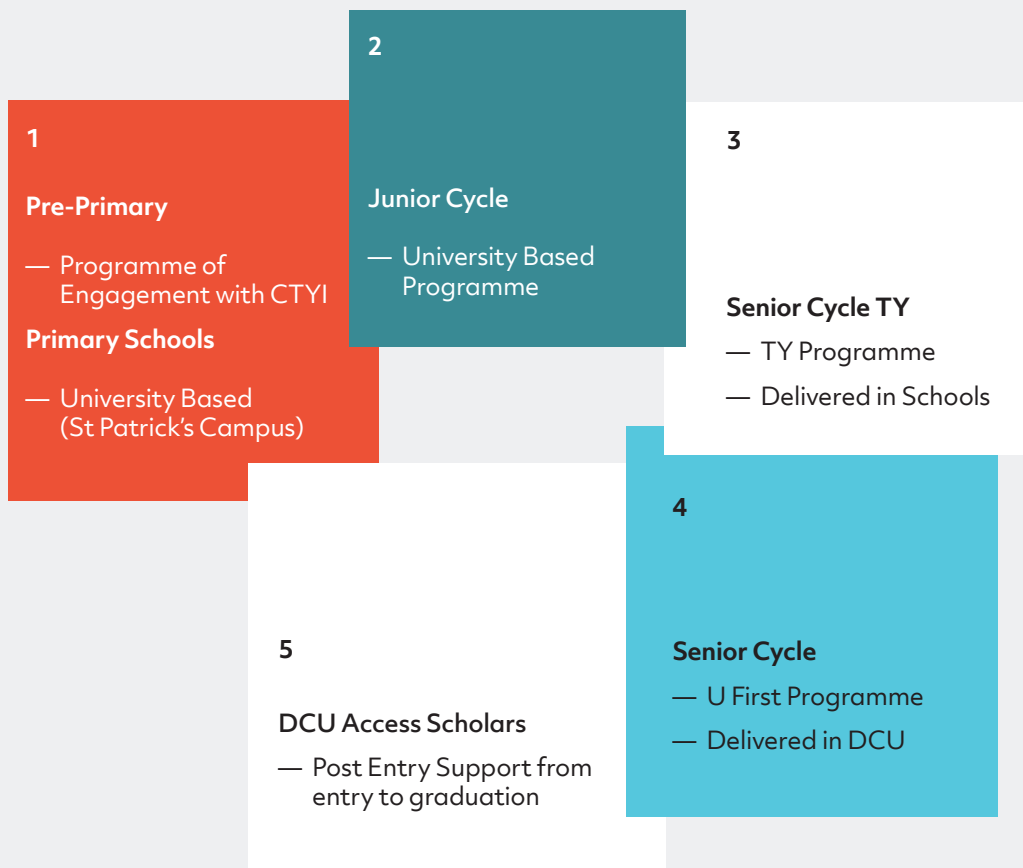


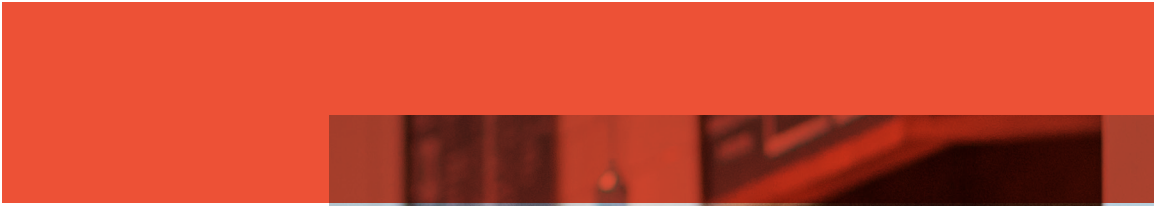


Life Cycle of Engagement

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.









Graduate Stories

The DCU Access Service provides a number of professional supports for students to include placement support and guidance, internships, volunteering and networking opportunities both abroad and at home. In 2017 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).



Aaron's Story

My time at Digicel started with an introduction week in the head office, located in Kingston, Jamaica. Here, along with 14 other interns we had numerous talks from senior management or CEO's of all departments. The week was jammed packed with talks and presentations which gave us an insight in the business and the Digicel culture. For me personally, this week was great, as coming from a retail background I had no experience in a corporate environment.

After spending a week in Jamaica Head Office I then travelled to Saint Lucia where I was based for the duration of my internship. The main function of my internship was sales with the business solutions team. Business solutions are always looking to generate new revenue for the business through other mediums other than mobile phones, e.g. internet connections, providing CCTV etc.

Upon arriving in St Lucia, I was taken back by the beauty of the island. As you can see from the photo below it has a beautiful natural Caribbean vibe and scenic views. My first week here was an introduction to the office and my team. I was introduced to all aspects of the business solutions team, sales, corporate care and service delivery mainly. I then shadowed the corporate sales reps, attending meetings and accompanying the service delivery team on the installation of products.

This exposure was great for me as I don't think any internship could have offered me such an insight into a corporation. This internship gave me great knowledge into the process of corporate sales, which has been hugely beneficial to me as I plan to pursue a career in sales.

Outside of a professional aspect, we arrived in St Lucia during carnival season which is a cultural celebration in St Lucia. The actual carnival itself is similar to our St Patrick's day parade but in the build-up to carnival there are numerous "fetes" which are like small concerts in Ireland. This opportunity allowed me to experience not only the corporate culture Digicel have created here but the local Caribbean culture which I thoroughly enjoyed.





DCU Educational Trust

Access students receive a financial scholarship by the DCU Educational Trust (DCUET) through major campaigns which 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 allowed us to assist 1,106 DCU Access Students to pursue their dreams of a higher education in 2018/2019. 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.

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



Access Ambassadors

This year, DCU Access recruited and trained 35 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.





“When I was in secondary school the thought of college really intimidated me. I honestly had no idea of what it would be like. When I was accepted into DCU through the HEAR and DARE scheme, DCU Access really helped me to ease in and gave the support I needed to get through university. Because of DCU Access I feel at home in university. Working with them as an Access Ambassador has been a great privilege of mine. I do it is because I know how students in our link secondary schools feel and I would like to make their introduction to third level education an approachable one and ease the fears I once had. Everyone deserves a chance at university.”

Ronan Mulligan,
Access Ambassador



Meet the Team



Cathy McLoughlin
Head of Access Service

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 in 2018 was promoted to 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 Masters 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 and 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 has completed 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.



Darran Heaney
eLearning and 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 and 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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