



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMH  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

# University of Galway *Widening Participation* Committee



## Annual Report 2022-23



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of Galway.ie



*“University of Galway  
continues to make  
significant strides in  
levelling the playing field  
for unrepresented students.”*





## Chair's Foreword



I am delighted to write this foreword to the University of Galway Widening Participation Committee's (WPC) annual Widening Participation Report. The WPC is a sub-committee of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Campus Committee (EDICC), and is now in its third year of existence. It is comprised of members from the University's four Colleges, professional services staff, Students' Union and external stakeholders. This second annual report outlines the University's ongoing efforts to increase the equality of opportunity for students traditionally regarded as underrepresented in Higher Education (HE). It provides an opportunity for us to pause and consider the extent to which the social body in our university reflects the social mix of the wider population.

The University of Galway continues to make significant strides in levelling the playing field for unrepresented students. This progress was linked to the recent award of €833,333 in HEA performance funding for successfully developing and delivering partnerships and initiatives for National Access Plan target groups, including Further Education and Training (FET) learners, people with disabilities, and members of the Travelling Community. This funding will enable the University of Galway to continue to be at the forefront in terms of developing initiatives that advance widening access and participation in the region.

In late 2022, we also had official opening of the new Access Centre in Áras Uí Chathail by Minister of State at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and at the Department of Health, Anne Rabbitte, T.D. The new Access Centre will provide an important source of support to ensure that the growing number of underrepresented students can meaningfully access, participate and succeed at third level.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all our University staff and members of the Students' Union who continue to demonstrate a commitment to the Widening Participation agenda in their work and everyday interactions with students. It is through this whole-of-institution approach that we stand the best chance of ensuring an inclusive environment for all.

**John Hannon**

Director of Student Services and Chair of the University of Galway Widening Participation Committee



## Commentary

Since the publication of our first annual Widening Participation report, we have seen some significant strategic changes in widening access and participation in higher education (HE). In November 2022, Minister for Further and Higher Education Simon Harris announced the commencement of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Act 2022. Part 5 of the Act titled 'Access, participation and lifelong learning' contains the statutory requirement that Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) must develop 'draft strategic action plan[s]...providing for equity of access to, and participation and the promotion of success in, higher education' (HEA, 2022b, p. 45). This is a significant development, as it ensures that HEI's must now have a roadmap in terms of how they plan to achieve equality of opportunity for underrepresented students in HE. It is significant for the University of Galway as it promises to build on existing strategic commitments we find in this area in our own institutional strategic plan *Shared Vision, Shaped by Values: Strategy 2020-2025* and *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2025*, as well as our draft Student Success Strategy (forthcoming). The Widening Participation Committee (WPC) has been leading on the development of this Widening Participation Strategy/Action Plan and plan to submit this to Údarás na hOllscoile for approval in the latter half of 2024.

If the HEA Act 2022 provides the legislative basis for the future of widening participation in HE, the HEA's *National plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-28* (NAP) provides much of the context for the kind of work that ought to be carried out in HEI's in this area. There are two 'overarching ambitions' in the new plan: 'the higher education student body entering, participating in and completing higher education, at all levels and across all programmes reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population' and HEI's are 'inclusive, universally designed environments which support and foster student success and outcomes, equity and diversity and are responsive to the needs of students and wider communities' (HEA, 2002a, p.51). The HEA also identify three 'overarching priority groups' that are particularly underrepresented in HE and in need of particular focus, namely, students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, students who are members of Irish Traveller and Roma communities and students with disabilities including intellectual disabilities (HEAa, 2002, p.52). Distinctive to this iteration of NAP is also the recognition that there are a number of 'life experiences' that can lead to someone being socio-economically disadvantaged – for example, having experience of the care system, being a lone or teen parent, experiencing homelessness and so on – and these groups are recognised in the plan as in need of support (HEA, 2022a, p. 53). Perhaps the most significant development when it comes to the new NAP, however, is the requirement that HEI's must now report on annual basis to the extent they are reaching the strategic targets outlined in NAP.

The collection of good institutional data in widening participation will be key to reporting on NAP. It has also been key to University of Galway securing additional HEA Performance Funding (€833,333) to deliver several additional widening participation initiatives. The University of Galway's three year (1st January 2023 – 31st December 2025) Widening Access and Participation Project (WAPP) promises to further drive excellence in supporting access and participation across the student lifecycle for those most underrepresented in University of Galway. This project contains three pillars:

1. Pre-entry – Increasing progression to HE for the following target groups: DEIS, Disability and care-experienced students.





2. Progression and Retention – Using innovative technological solutions to support student progression
3. Data and impact – Developing a strong evidence-base for the Access Centre’s widening participation initiatives

Each of the project pillars aligns with important strategic commitments and key performance indicators (KPI’s) outlined in the NAP. For example, with its focus on students in DEIS schools (KPI 6), FET Students (KPI 2), students with disabilities (KPI 5) and care-experienced children, this project is closely aligned with the strategic targets in NAP. Indeed, a central focus of pillar one of this project is to directly engage with these identified target groups through targeted outreach initiatives. With the expansion of the DEIS programme to include 8 additional post-primary schools in the western region, the additional strategic focus on FET to HE progression in *The National Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-24*, the ‘particular needs and challenges in accessing higher education’ experienced by those in the care system (HEA, 2022) and the findings of the recent AHEAD *Students Disabilities Engaged with Support Services in Higher Education in Ireland 2019/20* report outlining the underrepresentation of certain categories of students with disabilities in HE, University of Galway is well situated to do its part in delivering on these strategic objectives.

Crucially, to continue to be at the forefront in establishing a strong evidence-base for the work we do in this area, pillar three will focus on establishing best practice internationally on the most effective interventions when supporting underrepresented students. We look forward to including these findings in future iterations of University of Galway’s Widening Participation Committee’s annual report.

**Imelda Byrne**

Head of Access Centre

**Dr. Daniel Savery**

Widening Participation Officer



# Abbreviations

<b>PATH</b>	Programme for Access to Higher Education
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>DEIS</b>	Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools
<b>WP</b>	Widening Participation
<b>HEA</b>	Higher Education Authority
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institute
<b>HEAR</b>	Higher Education Access Route
<b>DARE</b>	Disability Access Route to Education
<b>SLA</b>	School Leaver's Access
<b>MMIE</b>	Mincéirs Misl'd in Education
<b>FSD</b>	Fund for Students with Disabilities
<b>UoS</b>	University of Sanctuary
<b>ETP</b>	Educational Transition Project
<b>GRETB</b>	Galway and Roscommon Education Training Board
<b>CALPD</b>	Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development
<b>CMNHS</b>	College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences
<b>CSE</b>	College of Science and Engineering
<b>CASSCS</b>	College of Arts, Social Science and Celtic Studies
<b>CBPPL</b>	College of Business, Public Policy and Law
<b>APT</b>	Access to Post-Primary Teaching
<b>ATS</b>	Attract-Transition-Succeed
<b>EDI</b>	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>UDL</b>	Universal Design for Learning
<b>UD</b>	Universal Design
<b>UDE</b>	Universal Design in Education
<b>AHEAD</b>	Association for Higher Education Access & Disability
<b>FAF</b>	Financial Aid Fund
<b>SAF</b>	Student Assistance Fund
<b>EAS</b>	Equal Access Survey
<b>DIS</b>	Deprivation Index Score
<b>SRS</b>	Student Record System

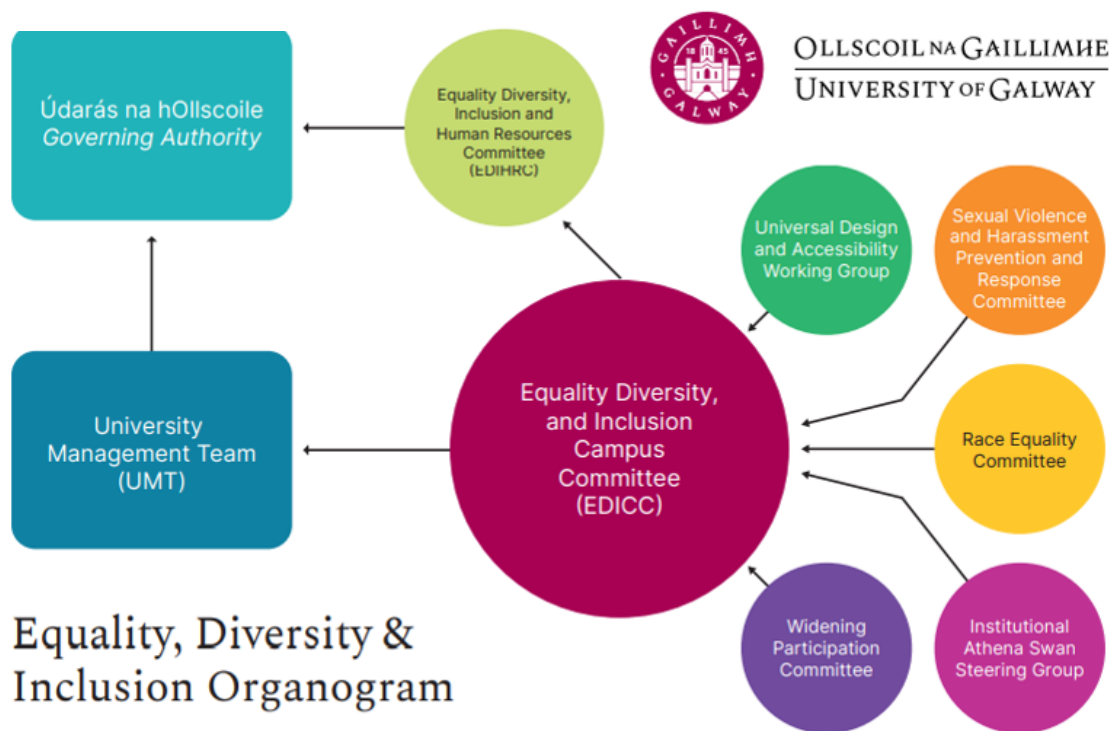
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# Governance

Established in 2020, University of Galway's Widening Participation (WP) Committee is a sub-Committee of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Campus Committee (EDICC). This committee works specifically towards progressing the WP agenda in all areas of the University. The governance structure for this committee is outlined in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** WP Committee Governance Structure



*Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Governance at University of Galway*



# 1. Widening Participation Defined

In order to progress the WP agenda in the University, it is important to define what we mean by this concept. An important initial task of the committee was to establish an agreed upon definition of WP for the institution, which would capture three key elements:

- 1) WP is about creating a more inclusive environment for students who would be traditionally regarded as underrepresented in Higher Education
- 2) WP involves a set of policies and activities developed to improve (1)
- 3) These WP activities and policies (2) take place across the full student lifecycle: Pre-entry, transition, post-entry and employment.

Accordingly, WP may be defined as:

**“Widening participation refers to a set of policies and activities which aim to create a more inclusive environment for students who would traditionally be regarded as underrepresented in higher education. These activities cover the full-duration of the student lifecycle (see Figure 2): pre-entry, transition, post-entry and employability.”**

**Figure 2:** The Student Lifecycle



## 1.1 Widening Participation – Baseline Data

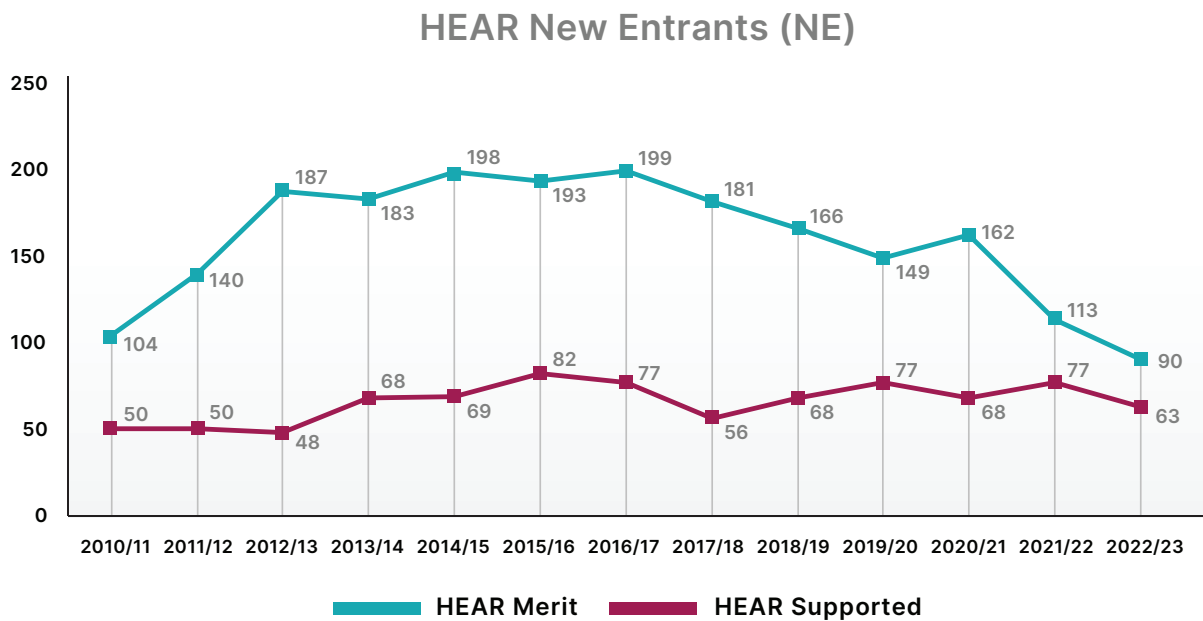
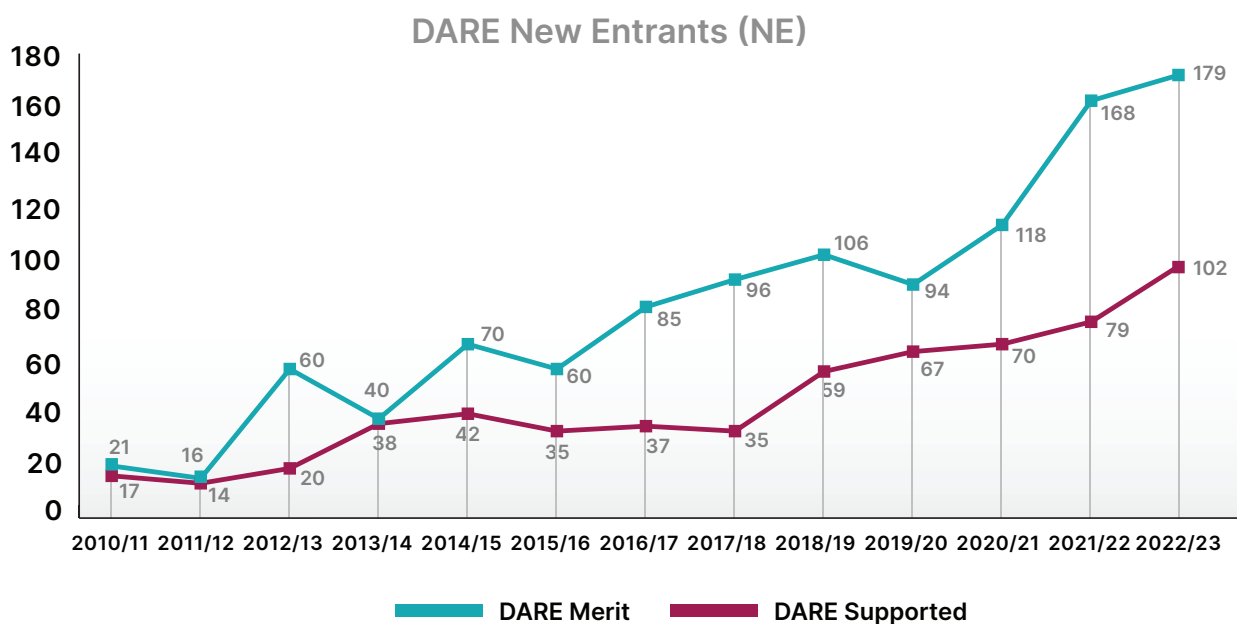
### Entry Routes

To ensure the student population reflects the diversity that we find more widely in society, it is important to have good data. Using data from the Student Record System (SRS) we can see the total number of students entering through WP entry routes from 2010 to 2022 outlined below in Table 1. Numbers for these groups below are recorded in October of each academic year.

**Table 1.** Number of undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2010/11 to 2022/23

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
HEAR Merit	104	140	187	183	198	193	199	181	166	149	162	113	90
HEAR Supported	50	50	48	68	69	82	77	56	68	77	68	77	63
DARE Merit	21	16	60	40	70	60	85	96	106	94	118	168	179
DARE Supported	17	14	20	38	42	35	37	35	59	67	70	79	102
Foundation	50	52	49	37	50	31	40	22	11	11	21	16	7
FET	7	25	21	14	6	39	62	46	92	99	153	134	94
Mature	220	157	127	87	89	75	57	77	66	73	79	86	71
Mature Access	69	55	67	52	41	44	42	35	26	23	29	34	19
School Leavers Access	58	43	52	49	52	35	56	38	39	36	38	27	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>734</b>	<b>644</b>

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) are two national schemes developed by HEI's to increase the number of students entering HE who have a disability (DARE) or who come from socio-economically disadvantaged groups (HEAR) in society. Both the HEAR and DARE schemes offer reduced points places to students on full-time undergraduate programmes and provide additional University supports to students. Figures 2 and 3 chart the increase of students entering through these entry routes over the last 13 years.

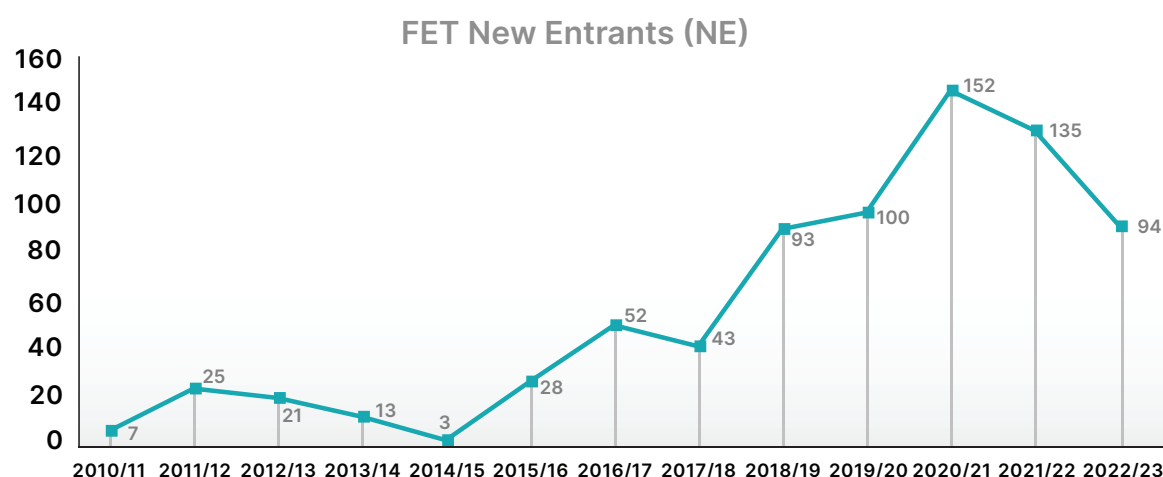
**Figure 2.** Number of HEAR full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2009/10 to 2022/23<sup>1</sup>**Figure 3.** Number of DARE full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2009/10 to 2022/23<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> HEAR Merit refers to students who were eligible for the scheme but did not need to avail of reduced points;  
HEAR Supported refers to students who were eligible for the scheme and availed of reduced points.

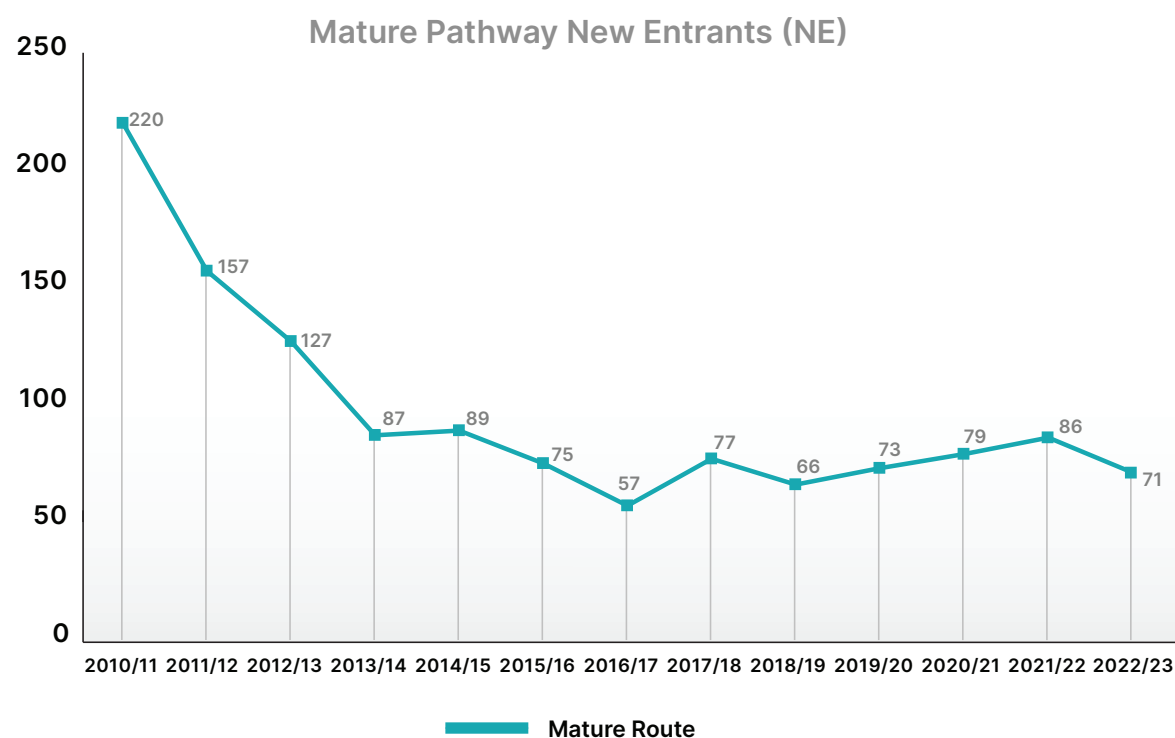
<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1 for distinction between merit and supported.

In line with KPI2 the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-28, table 4 charts the significant increase of students entering through the FET entry pathway.

**Figure 4.** Number of Further Education and Training (FET) full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2010/11 to 2022/23



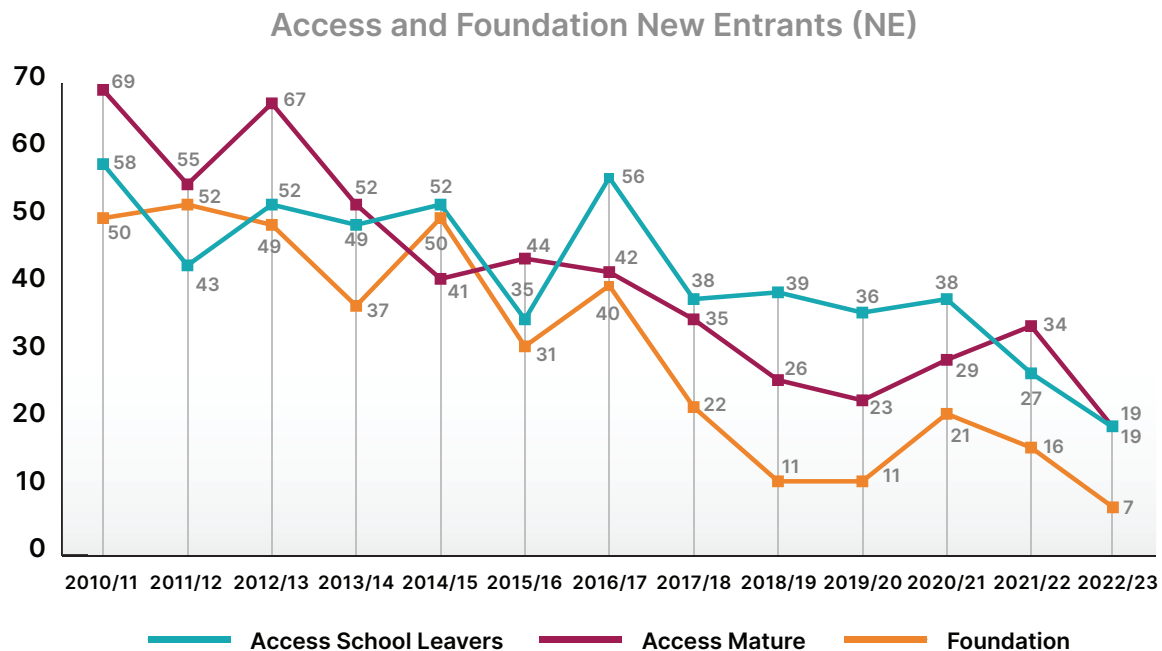
**Figure 5.** Number of New Entrants (NE) entering through the Mature Student Entry route into full-time undergraduate degrees from 2010/11 to 2022/23<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that mature students can also enter through the FET, Access and Foundation pathways, as well as on the basis of their Leaving Certificate results. This chart only relates to students entering through the Mature entry pathway, which has its own specific entry criteria.

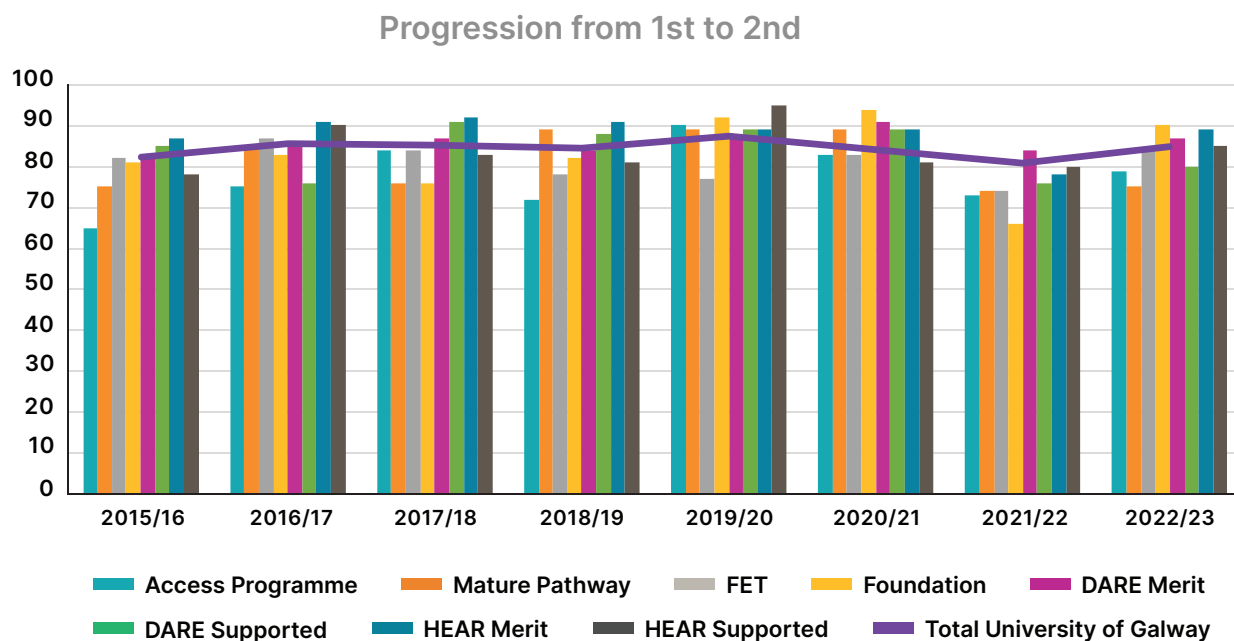


**Figure 6.** Number of Access and Foundation programme full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2010/11 to 2022/23



## 1.2 Progression

**Figure 7.** Full-time Undergraduate first Year Progression Rates Disaggregated by Entry Route, from 2015/16 to 2022/23



**Table 8.** Aggregated and Disaggregated Full-time Undergraduate First Year Progression Rates by Target Group, from 2015/16 to 2022/23

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
HEAR Merit	87%	91%	92%	91%	89%	89%	78%	89%
HEAR Supported	78%	90%	83%	81%	95%	81%	80%	85%
DARE Merit	82%	85%	87%	84%	87%	91%	84%	87%
DARE Supported	85%	76%	91%	88%	89%	89%	75%	80%
Foundation	81%	83%	76%	82%	92%	94%	66%	90%
FET	82%	87%	84%	78%	77%	83%	74%	84%
Mature	75%	85%	76%	89%	89%	89%	74%	75%
Mature and School Leaver Access Programme	65%	75%	84%	72%	90%	83%	73%	79%
<b>Aggregated under-represented students</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Total University of Galway</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>83%</b>

## 1.3 Ethnicity

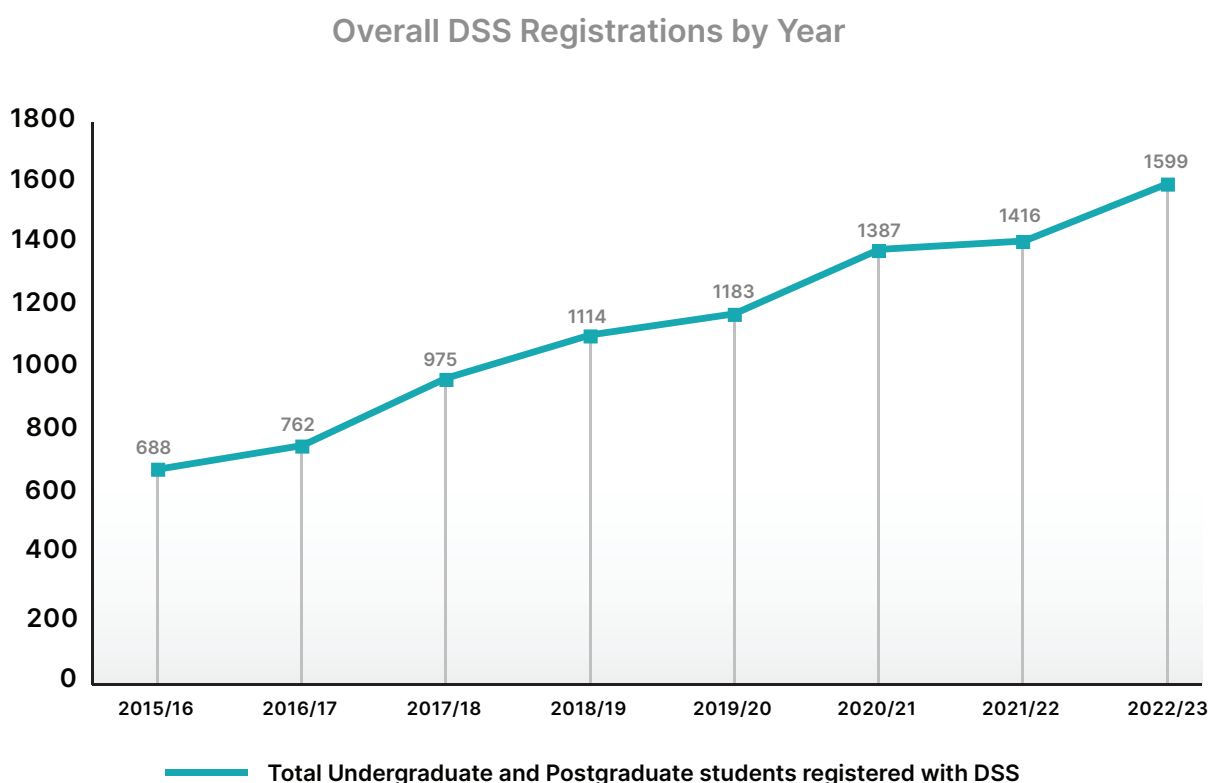
**Table 9.** Equal Access Survey Results 2010/11 to 2022/23

Ethnic/Cultural Background	2010 /11	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22	2022 /23
White Irish	895	1151	3133	1788	1763	1887	2583	3618	2624	3396	3678	2998	3158
Irish Traveller (and Roma added in 2020/21)	1	1	3	4	3	1	8	18	12	24	23	20	32
Any Other White Background	60	68	174	123	106	127	168	282	216	340	345	287	518
Black or Black Irish African	3	14	24	8	9	11	29	58	63	82	115	82	96
Other Black Background (new category in 2011/12)		4	5	4	0	2	4	8	12	32	16	10	8
Asian or Asian Irish Chinese	7	3	9	2	4	4	9	47	32	32	33	17	29
Other Asian Background	18	5	15	3	4	7	9	64	50	77	99	84	150
Other (new category in 2020/21)											124	112	150
Did not respond	122	251	384	279	303	307	163	350	185	135	77	39	54
<b>Total Responding to EAS Survey</b>	<b>1106</b>	<b>1497</b>	<b>3747</b>	<b>2211</b>	<b>2192</b>	<b>2346</b>	<b>2973</b>	<b>4445</b>	<b>3194</b>	<b>4118</b>	<b>4510</b>	<b>3649</b>	<b>4195</b>

## 1.4 Disability Registrations

Students with a disability are entitled, under law, to reasonable accommodations. To avail of these accommodations, students are invited to register with the Disability Support Service in the Access Centre. The total number of students registering with a disability from 2015/16 to 2022/23 is outlined in figure 10. The breakdown of these annual figures by primary disability category is outlined in table 8. Overall, since the academic years 2015/16 and 2022/23, there has been a **132%** increase in students registering for disability support.

**Figure 10.** Total Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students registering for Disability Support from 2015/16 to 2022/23





**Table 11.** Disability Registrations by Primary Disability Category 2015/16 to 2022/23

Primary Disability Category (UG&PG)	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22	2022 /23
Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (ADD/ADHD)	25	28	39	44	62	74	105	155
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	33	39	51	59	67	77	92	107
Blind/Vision Impaired (B/VI)	15	20	22	25	30	25	30	36
Deaf/Hearing Impaired (D/HI)	12	13	21	25	24	39	44	40
Developmental Coordination Disorder(DCD)/Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia	25	24	31	40	43	59	61	67
Mental Health	86	117	207	262	290	327	297	365
Neurological	42	49	54	68	66	97	90	98
Physical/Mobility	54	57	74	87	89	80	88	92
Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) – Dyslexia, Dyscalculia	286	300	329	347	341	433	441	438
Significant Ongoing Illness (SOI)	110	115	147	157	171	176	167	200
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>1114</b>	<b>1183</b>	<b>1387</b>	<b>1416</b>	<b>1599</b>

**Table 12.** Total % increase of Primary Disability Categories registrations from 2015/16 to 2022/23

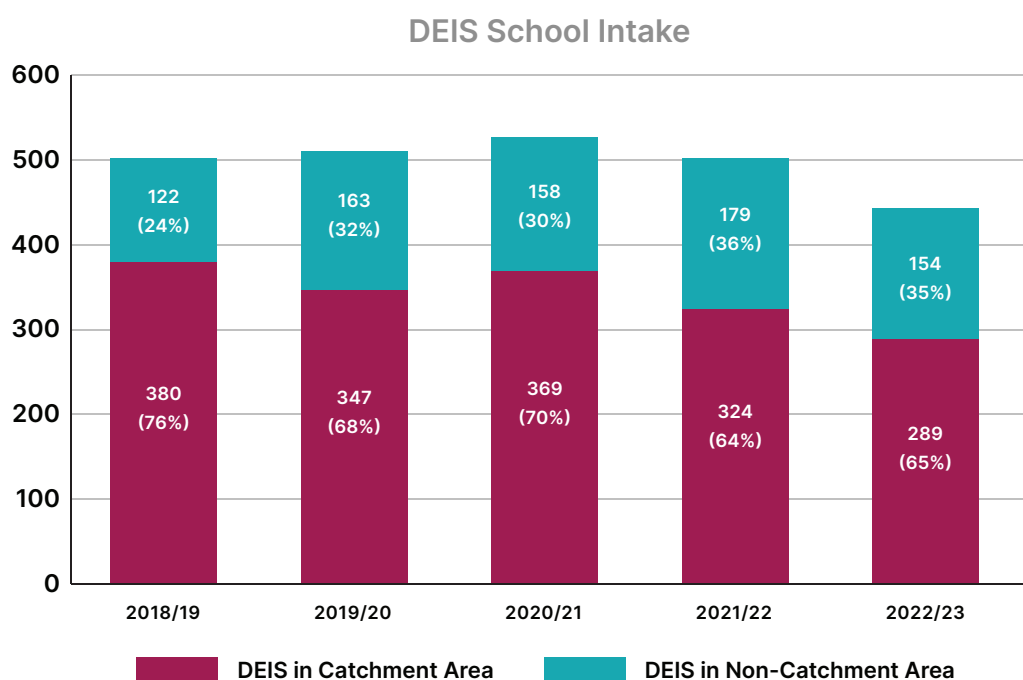
	% Increase 2015/16 – 2022/23
Mental Health Condition	324%
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	224%
Significant Ongoing Illness	82%
Specific Learning Difficulties – Dyslexia/Dyscalculia	53%
ADD/ADHD	520%
Physical/Mobility	70%
Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)/Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia	168%
Neurological	133%
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	233%
Blind/Visually Impaired	140%

## 1.5 DEIS School Data

KPI6 of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-2028 refers to monitoring the number of students entering HE from DEIS schools. In 2022, eight additional schools in the Galway, Roscommon, Mayo and Clare region were awarded DEIS status. These are:

- Ardscoil Mhuire, Mackney, Ballinasloe.
- Merlin College, Galway.
- St. Nathy's College, Roscommon.
- St. Joseph's College, Kilkee, Co. Clare.
- St. Patricks College, Lacken Cross, Co. Mayo.
- St. Joseph's Community College, Charlestown, Co. Mayo.
- Ballyhaunis Community School, Co. Mayo.
- Castlerea Community School, Co. Roscommon.

**Figure 13.** Number of DEIS full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2018/19 to 2022/23



**Table 14.** Number of DEIS full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from catchment area 2018/19 to 2022/23

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Galway	153	132	140	131	110
Mayo	79	78	88	51	59
Clare	22	9	20	20	16
Roscommon	11	14	31	25	26
Sligo	0	1	4	6	6
Donegal	115	113	86	91	72
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>289</b>

## 2. Widening Participation Activities

**This section outlines some of the many successful WP activities delivered by University of Galway in 2022/23. These activities cover the full student lifecycle.**

### 2.1 Uni4U

Uni 4 U is a University of Galway Access Centre initiative specifically targeted at students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds attending DEIS primary schools and primary schools linked to the Access Centre in Galway City. It is a cross-institutional, cross-disciplinary collaboration between the Access Centre and the Colleges, Schools, Support Services and Students Union at University of Galway. Central to Uni 4 U's mission is to increase the social, cultural and educational capital of primary school students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds by immersing students in University life, where they spend up to 10 weeks on campus participating in specifically designed classes and campus activities delivered by University staff and students.



In 22/23 Uni 4 U worked with 4 different schools in the region and welcomed over 160 primary school students on campus each week over the programme period. While on campus, students engaged in multiple workshops and activities delivered by our campus colleagues, including:

- Visits to the on-campus Zoology and Marine Science Museum.
- Visits to the on-campus Computer and Communication Museum.
- Interactive biology workshops delivered by the Cell Explorers team.
- An introduction to radio broadcasting delivered by our Student Union colleagues in Flirt FM.
- Participation in the University's Moot Court delivered by colleagues in the School of Law.

- Creativity and Innovation workshops delivered by colleagues in IdeasLab.
- Workshops in economics, engineering, career opportunities, coding, children's literature and many more.

At the end of each session, participating students were partnered with a University Mentor to reflect on their experience on the programme and talk about their hopes and dreams for the future through reflective activities such as storytelling, goal setting and achieving your dreams.

In line with the programmes focus on goal setting and achieving your dreams, this year's awards ceremony for all participating students includes invited guest speaker Damian Browne, an extreme adventurer, peak performance athlete and international keynote speaker to take questions from students. Damian gained worldwide recognition this year when he became the first man to row from New York to Galway in 112 days.

## 2.2 FET2HE Mentoring

Funded through the HEA's PATH 3 fund, in 2022/23 the Access Centre delivered a Community Mentor programme titled FET2HE. This programme matched student Mentors studying science and engineering at University of Galway with Mentees from the FET sector aiming to progress to HE in 23/24. In 2022/23 the College of Science and Engineering offered 110 places to students entering through the FET entry route.

A key motivation behind the delivery of FET2HE mentoring concerns breaking down barriers for students progressing from the FET to HE sector by increasing their levels of social and cultural capital. 40 Mentees from local FET providers Galway Technical Institute (GTI) and Galway Community College (GCC) were recruited to take part on the programme.

Participants were brought on campus for 4 mentoring sessions with University Mentors. Mentees were assigned a mentor who was studying in an area they were interested in. Mentees were given an insightful tour of the campus and a detailed tour of the buildings for that discipline. They also met with colleagues in Student Services and members of our Students Union to discuss the many supports available to students. At the end of each session, Mentees were invited to talk with their Mentors about their own experiences and raise any unanswered questions.



## 2.3 Professional Engagement Module (PEM)



Since 2018, the Access Centre has collaborated with Grant Thornton to deliver a Professional Engagement Module (PEM) to students studying the business stream on the Diploma in Foundation Studies: Access Programme. This experiential based model of learning matches professional Mentors from Grant Thornton with Mentees from the Access programme in a module of structured interactive learning. As a result of taking part in the programme, students:

- Gain exposure to a professional working environment.
- Develop an insight into career progression.
- Hone a skillset for career readiness.
- Cultivate a working/ supportive relationship with their assigned Mentors.
- Develop an understanding and insight into the core requisites of a professional working environment.

From the beginning of this collaboration, over 40 students have received the invaluable professional mentoring support that our partner Grant Thornton provides. For the coming academic year 2023/24, the Access Centre is delighted to announce that the programme will be expanding. Access programme students studying the science and engineering stream of the programme will now also have the opportunity to be matched with professional Mentors from Medtronic.



## 2.4 University of Sanctuary

The Universities of Sanctuary (UoS) Scholarship Programme welcomed 9 new students to the University for the 2022-2023 academic year. The Programme is currently in its fourth year, and is open to International Protection applicants, refugees, vulnerable immigrant groups and Irish Travellers. In collaboration with the University's four Colleges, the programme has welcomed 38 students from 20 different countries to the University to date. To support this cohort on their educational journey, they are paired with both support and academic mentors. UoS Mentors receive bespoke training developed in collaboration with Spirasi, Foróige and the Galway Traveller Movement (GTM).

The programme is always looking for new Mentors and has proven a fantastic way for University staff to develop meaningful relationships with some of the most disenfranchised students who experience discrimination in their daily lives. Interested staff members can view descriptions of the mentoring roles and can express an interest in becoming a mentor at [www.universityofgalway.ie/sanctuary/scholarships](http://www.universityofgalway.ie/sanctuary/scholarships). This year, the Programme has also supported the EU Passworld Programme, providing stipend and mentor support for the incoming students.

The Schools of Sanctuary Programme is going from strength to strength, following an information-sharing event held in the Institute for Lifecourse & Society (ILAS) Building in November. The event served to encourage primary & post-primary schools in the region to undertake their Sanctuary journeys and was well attended by representatives from several schools. Following the event, Galway's Educate Together Post-Primary School and Sancta Maria College in Louisburgh, Co Mayo became involved in the SoS network, while St Nathy's College in Ballaghadereen became a designated School of Sanctuary following a monitoring visit from the Galway Sanctuary Ambassador team in May. Galway City's only designated School of Sanctuary, Scoil Bhríde, held an event to mark Galway City Council's Bike Week in collaboration with An Mheitheal Rothar in May. The workshop encouraged students to dig out their bikes and to have them repaired free of charge. For Refugee Week this year, Galway's Sanctuary Ambassadors will visit Claddagh NS and Kinaffa NS in Mayo to discuss their education journey with students. To get involved with the Schools of Sanctuary Programme, interested persons can email [sanctuary@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:sanctuary@universityofgalway.ie)

Beyond the education sphere, the UoS is contributing to Galway City's Intercultural Strategy, and was a founding member of the Galway Community Against Racism & Discrimination (CARD) Group. CARD launched on Monday, 20th March 2023 to mark the UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and held a solidarity rally in Galway City on Saturday, 25th March. The group comprises membership from Galway City Partnership (GCP), Galway Traveller Movement (GTM), Galway Council of Trade Unions, Amach! LGBT+ Galway, Galway City Community Network (GCCN), among other community groups, and was established to build community solidarity to challenge racism, discrimination and the spread of division and hate. To get involved with CARD, interested persons can email [uni.sanctuary@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:uni.sanctuary@universityofgalway.ie)

## 2.5 Science4Survival initiative (TY Outreach)

### An initiative of It'sNotJustScience!

Science4Survival is a Transition year biology outreach initiative designed to promote interest and enthusiasm among second-level males before they indicate their subject choices for senior cycle. It is designed to address the underrepresentation of males in the biological sciences and address the gendered division of labour we find in the sciences. However, Science4Survival is also open to female students.

In 2022/23, the programme was available to several DEIS schools in Donegal, Sligo, Mayo and Galway. While Science4Survival is packaged primarily as a Teaching & Learning resource for participating teachers, the programme also seeks data, insights and feedback from participating students and facilitators/teachers so they may identify module virtues, drawbacks, and avenues for future improvements.

The project is funded by PATH 3 and is delivered by the School of Education. Initial student and teacher feedback is promising, and survey returns explicitly mention experiential positives regarding the hands-on, practical and experimental elements of the module, including *'Mystery Boxes'* and *'Hypothetical Survivalism'*.

The T&L resource package includes Science Capital literature, a teacher handbook, student handbooks, handy teacher pocket guide, a full-colour classroom/lab poster suite (4xA3), University of Galway promotional and publicity material, and a digital T&L starter slideshow. Participating teacher training was undertaken online, the webinar recorded and submitted to teachers both present and absent. 11 DEIS schools have engaged with the programme to date.

## 2.6 Mincéirs Misl'd in Education

In 2022/23, the Mincéirs Misl'd in Education project was funded through a combination of the HEA's PATH 3 and PATH 5 funds. Key to the delivery of this project are the Access Centre's Grinds4Mincéirs programme and Educational Transition Project, as well as events on campus celebrating Traveller Ethnicity. In 22/23, the Access Centre's Grinds4Mincéirs programme offered one-to-one grinds to Traveller students who were sitting the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied (Year 2) in the catchment area. Subjects delivered included: English, Irish, Maths, Science, History, languages and exam preparation with a visit to the University's Undergraduate Open Day in March and Revision Week on campus in April in 2023. In total, 12 Traveller students benefited from participating on the programme.

In the Summer of 2023, the Educational Transition Project (ETP) for Traveller and Roma students was delivered. This project works directly with community organisations in supporting prospective members of the Travelling and Roma community to progress to higher education. The programme in 2023 was delivered in collaboration with the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) in University of Galway and our University of Sanctuary Coordinator. In total, 13 Irish Travellers participated on the ETP in 2023. Most of these participants came from Tuam's, Western Traveller and Intercultural Centre and transport was made available to students through PATH 5.



March 1st 2017 was a historic and momentous day for the Irish Traveller community when the Irish Government formally recognised Irish Travellers as a distinct ethnic group. Irish Traveller Ethnicity Day marks the anniversary while celebrating Irish Travellers culture and heritage including music, craft traditions and language. The now annual celebration of Irish Traveller Ethnicity Day at University of Galway is organised by the Access Centre's Mincéirs Mis'l'd in Education (MMIE) project and continues the University's tradition of partnerships with community groups and organisations to support and contribute to cultural and educational development, regionally and nationally. In 2022/23 comedian, writer, photographer and former University of Galway Access student, Martin 'Beanz' Warde officially opened the week's series of events in celebration of Irish Traveller Ethnicity.





## 2.7 Path 4: Universal Design and Widening Participation

The HEA's PATH 4 Phase 1 funding stream allowed the Access Centre to build on the achievements of its 'Enhancing Access and Inclusion Project', which was funded under the HEA's Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) Strategic Project scheme in AY 2021-22. PATH 4 Phase 1 established a partnership between the HEA and the National Disability Authority (NDA)'s Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) to support the adoption of the principles of universal design across Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Through a national collaborative project under PATH 4, Phase 1, this important developmental work was extended to the whole tertiary education sector.

A further objective of PATH 4, Phase 1 was to enhance programme provision for students with intellectual disabilities, to build capacity for their implementation under the PATH 4 Phase 2 funding stream (2024-26).

**Universal Design in Education (UDE) is defined by the CEUD as a 'whole systems approach' to ensuring that:**  
*'... the physical and digital environments, the educational services, and the teaching and learning can be easily accessed, understood and used, by the widest range of learners and by all key stakeholders, in a more inclusive environment.'*

UDE is increasingly prominent in the Irish tertiary education landscape as a means of embracing diversity and widening participation across all under-represented groups, particularly, but not only, students with disabilities. To advance UDE under PATH 4, Phase 1, the Access Centre retained its Physical Accessibility Coordinator, appointed under the FSD Strategic Project, and employed a Digital Communications Coordinator and an Intellectual Disabilities Programme Coordinator.

See below for a snapshot of the Access Centre's activities in this area in AY 2022-23.

### Universal Design of the Built Environment

- Architect engaged to design step-free, barrier-free access and egress to twelve lecture theatres on campus to improve accessibility and fire safety.
- Collaboration between the Access Centre, the Insight SFI Research Centre for Data Analytics, the ALIVE Student Volunteering Programme and the BSc in Applied Social Sciences to engage students with the Crowd4Access footpath accessibility mapping project. This work was presented at the AHEAD Conference in March 2023.
- Universal design approach to emergency evacuation of people with additional needs reflected in the University Safety Statement.

### Universal Design of the Digital Environment and Communications

- Web accessibility significantly improved in response to weekly NDA audits under the European Web Accessibility Directive. University of Galway in second place among HEIs nationally for web accessibility.
- 'Creating Accessible Documents' training offered to all staff and this work was presented at the Digital Accessibility Conference at the University of Nottingham in June 2023.
- Bespoke accessibility training and development provided to Marketing and Communications Office, the Exams Office, and the School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences.

## Sensory-friendly Campus

- State-of-the-art multi-sensory room developed.
- Sensory-friendly campus locations added to campus Wayfinder map and static map in development.
- Ongoing community partnership with the Galway Autism Partnership, with collaboration on events including a sensory-friendly space at the Galway Science and Technology Festival and a sensory-friendly Santa Day.

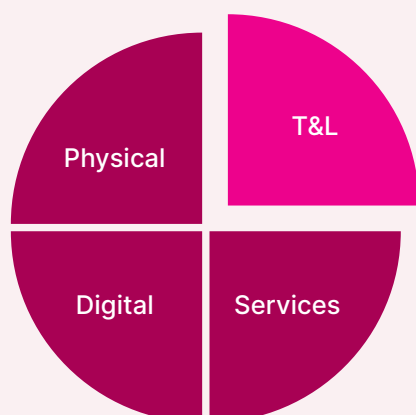


## Programme Provision for students with Intellectual Disabilities

- Establishment of a high-level Intellectual Disabilities Programmes Steering Group, including external stakeholders the Brothers of Charity, Ability West and Western Care.
- Focus group research conducted with prospective students with intellectual disabilities.
- Comprehensive programme plan developed with a view to availing of PATH 4, Phase 2 funding.

## The ALTITUDE National Charter for Universal Design in Tertiary Education

- University of Galway is a partner in this project, along with ATU (Lead Partner), UCD and MTU. The ALTITUDE Project is an extensive cross sectoral collaboration involving six national agencies, fifteen higher education (HE) institutions and six Education and Training Board (ETB) representatives, nominated by Directors of FET to represent the Further Education and Training sector.
- Initial charter draft devised through a whole conference reflective exercise at the AHEAD Conference 2023 (199 participants) and refined through a role-specific staff consultation (July 2023), with further stakeholder engagement exercises planned.



*The four pillars of Universal Design in Education (UDE) and the ALTITUDE National Charter for Universal Design in Tertiary Education.*

## 2.8 Micro-credentials at University of Galway



The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development has led the roll-out of the Micro-credentials Project at University of Galway in collaboration with academic staff in the University's Schools and Disciplines. This innovative project is funded by the Human Capital, Pillar 3 initiative.

Micro-credentials are short, flexibility delivered and accredited courses. They can accelerate a student's career by providing them with industry-leading knowledge, expertise and skills over a short timeframe. Potentially stackable and portable into larger qualifications, micro-credentials are enterprise driven courses for professional or personal development. They offer opportunities to upskill and give students an edge in their professional field.

Micro-credentials at the University of Galway are developed with academic and industry partners, covering various subjects including environment and climate action, technology, sustainability, health, construction innovation and many others. They are available in five or ten ECTS course blocks and are delivered flexibility in fully online or blended learning format. Twenty micro-credentials were offered during the 2022/23 academic year.

Micro-credentials provide students who have never attended University previously, the opportunity to try out a course at a level that suits them and in a manageable timeframe. As a standalone course, completing a micro-credential signifies achievement at university level study, and helps students build their skills and knowledge for career advancement. Achieving success with one micro-credential may lead them to further study and the completion of a minor or major award at a later date.

Full course details are available at: [www.universityofgalway.ie/courses/micro-credentials/](http://www.universityofgalway.ie/courses/micro-credentials/)

## 2.9 Laptop Loan Scheme

As part of a package of supports for higher and further education institutions during COVID- 19 Pandemic, the Department of Further and Higher Education Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) allocated funding to support disadvantaged students in the higher education sector in accessing ICT devices. To date, the Access Centre has been to the fore of this initiative and the process for application, screening and allocation of laptops is consistent with other HEI's in terms of eligibility criteria. Other university units such as ISS, Students Services, Chaplaincy, CALPD and the library have played a crucial role in the success of the scheme.

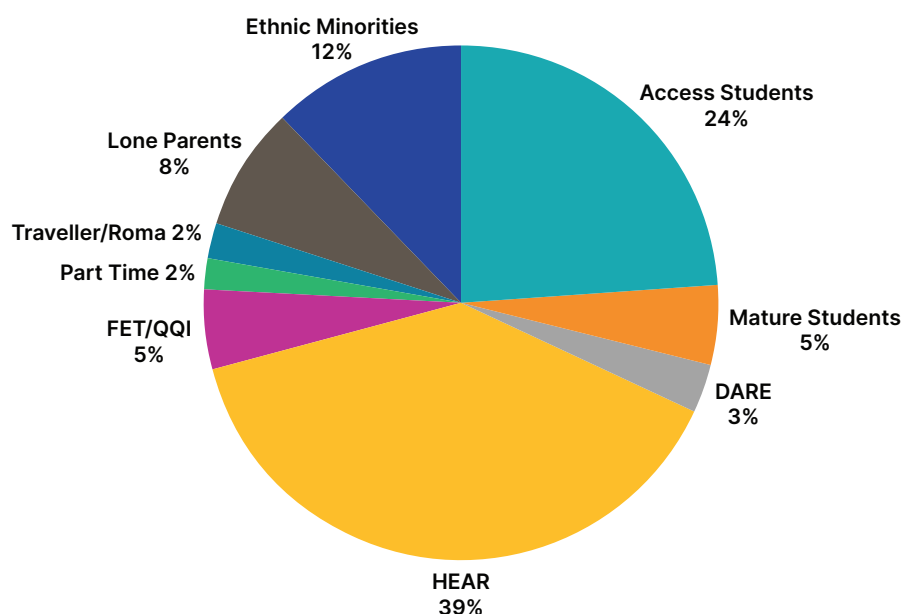
Under this scheme, foundation level, undergraduate and postgraduate students are eligible to apply for a laptop on long-term loan for the duration of their studies, to assist with their learning. Upon completion of a student's studies at University of Galway, they are required to return their device so it can be given to another student that is unable to gain access to an ICT device for their studies.

The allocation of devices was based on the following NAP target groups:

- Students disadvantaged by socio-economic barriers
- First Time mature students
- Students with disabilities
- Part- time/ Flexible learning students
- Students who hold further education qualifications
- Students who are a member of the traveller and Roma Communities
- Students who are lone parents
- Students who are members of ethnic minorities

In the academic year 2022-2023, there were 342 laptops distributed. This was an increase on the 158 students that had received devices in the previous year. The percentage breakdown for these groups is as follows:

**Target Groups: Distributed Laptops**



## 2.10 1916 Bursary

The 1916 Bursary is a financial award funded by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) for students that are under-represented in higher education. The Bursaries are targeted at students who are socio-economically disadvantaged and who are from one or more of the following target groups that have low participation rates in higher education:

- Socio-economic groups that have low participation in higher education
- Mature Students
- Students with a disability
- Irish Travellers
- FET
- Lone parents
- Ethnic minorities

Since 2017/18, and as part of the West/North-West clusters (University of Galway and Atlantic Technological University) overall distribution of bursaries from the HEA, University of Galway has awarded 7 bursaries of €5,000 per annum for the duration of a student's studies. In 2021/22, however, the bursary scheme was expanded by the HEA to include three tiers of payments:

- **Tier 1 Bursaries:** €5,000 per year
- **Tier 2 Bursaries:** €2,000 per year
- **Tier 3 Once-off payments** of €1,500

Due to this restructuring of payments and a lack of applicants to the overall pool of bursaries in our West/North-West partner institutions, a considerably higher number of University of Galway students were supported through this scheme in 22/23. The full allocation for 22/23 is as follows:

**16 Tier 1 Bursaries** (€5,000 per year) were awarded.

**12 Tier 2 Bursaries** (€2,000 per year) were awarded.

**28 Tier 3 Once-off payments** of €1,500 were awarded.



## 2.11 Youth Academy



The Youth Academy was established in 2012 at University of Galway to work with high ability young people to support their learning and academic development. The programme aims to inspire progression to university by introducing children and their families to university life and by creating positive perceptions of the university and its academic programmes. The initiative demonstrates University of Galway's commitment to the wider community by responding to the educational needs of the region and opening the campus to foster children's educational and personal growth.

The Youth Academy offer courses for both primary (4th-6th class) and secondary school (1st-3rd year) students. Classes are over 6 weeks in October/November and February/March each year. Week long summer camps are also held in July. There are both virtual and in-person course options available, giving students from across the country the opportunity to attend Youth Academy programmes. Each term there are approximately 20 specially designed courses for students to choose from. Classes are followed by a graduation ceremony where students are presented with certificates of participation by the President of University of Galway.

Special efforts are made to engage students from underrepresented groups in HE. The programme has made strong efforts to engage young people who may not have a history of third-level education in their family such as children from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds. Twenty five percent of places are made available, free of charge, to students from DEIS schools and medical card holders, with thanks to funding from Merit Medical. The Youth Academy links in with Home School Liaison teachers in DEIS schools in Galway to encourage participation. Relationships have been established with the travelling community to attract children from this community to apply for the programme. The Youth Academy also engages with Galway City Partnership and the University of Sanctuary at University Galway to encourage students living in direct provision centres to apply. Since the programme was established in 2012, almost 8000 students have participated, with almost 2000 of these places offered on a scholarship basis.



## 2.12 Academic Writing Centre (AWC)

The AWC works closely with the Access Centre to ensure that underrepresented students receive support with academic writing. At the AWC, students work on their writing with an experienced and friendly tutor, who helps them to identify areas of improvement as well as discover their strengths. A session at the AWC is confidential; it is a non-judgmental and safe space, where students can work on such topics as the writing process, sentence structure and grammar, editing techniques, using secondary sources correctly, and understanding academic writing conventions.

In 2022-23, the AWC held 112 sessions with students registered for disability support with the Access Centre's Disability Support Service. This represents 30% of the total visits for that year, and an increase on the previous academic year. Some of the feedback from students on their experiences with the Academic Writing Centre are as follows:

*"At the end of the session, I felt I got my motivation back. I had a more positive and productive outlook on my own writing skills and progress. I felt very supported throughout. Thank you!"*

*"Service is highly beneficial and will be a returning customer."*

In 2022-23, thanks to additional funding received from the Access Centre, it was possible to open the AWC for 6 weeks from June 15 until July 30. During this time, the AWC ran a 3-day writing course, and held several one-on-one appointments.

## 2.13 Irish National History Competition

From 2021-24, the Irish National History Competition broadened the catchment of those who could apply for the competition, accepting applications from students interested nationally. The Irish National History Competition invites young historians to contribute elements of their Research Study Report from their Senior Cycle Curricular Assessment. The competition allows for students to share, showcase and celebrate research and writing efforts beyond the restrictive limitations of the history grading process currently held in the Leaving Certificate.

This process involves the student, their history teacher and the allocated person for grading responsibility at Leaving Certificate level. The submitted essays are judged by an independent academic panel with successful entrants being promoted online via a prize giving ceremony which could result in attending 'EUSTORY Next generation Summits on the Continent'. EUSTORY is a history-specific organisation encouraging collaboration between more than 20 member states and is funded by German philanthropic corporation Korber-Stiftung.

Most recently, EUSTORY hosted 105 finalists from its member network, including six Irish Students. Due to restrictions on travel summit gatherings had been cancelled in 2020-2022. The invitation in 2023 included all past winners dating back 2020. Ireland was the most-represented member state present at the summit. Typically, the Irish National History Competition receives between 45-90 essay entries annually but is heavily reliant on voluntary competition management which, during the competition and judging season, can be a significant level of work and requires considerable voluntary input from a small team of history enthusiasts. Each year, DEIS participant schools submit entries to the competition with, these students featuring among finalists.

## 2.14 Support for Undergraduate Mathematics and Statistics (SUMS)

In 2022/23 SUMS continued to provide informal mathematics support to 1st and 2nd year students across all colleges and courses as well as to students engaged in Access and Foundation courses.

SUMS helps students with any aspect of Mathematics, Statistics or Mathematics-related subjects. It provides a comfortable, informal environment where students can study at their own pace, with expert tutors on hand to offer individual help, if required. The tutors at SUMS are postgraduates of the School of Mathematics, Statistics and Applied Mathematics.

Students can receive extra mathematics or statistics tuition during SUMS drop-in or online service hours. Students of all levels are welcome. While some may need help with revision of some basic mathematical concepts, others use our services to get feedback to their approaches or to explore ideas themselves or in groups, knowing there is help at hand if needed.

One of the objectives of SUMS is to provide targeted support to students who are currently engaged in Access/Foundation courses or have come through University through Access and Foundation or FETAC entry routes. The large number of visits to SUMS in recent years by these students and their very positive feedback is evidence of the successful achievement of this objective:

*“I don’t think I would have been able to pass the first semester without the help I received at sums, it is an amazing resource to have in the college.”*

*“Studying Foundation Business Commerce, just commenced semester 2. SUMS is a necessity personally, going forward, not a natural with mathematics acumen, struggling for consistency.”*

*“I prefer to go to SUMS than my lectures, because it feels more personalised and I can ask about everything”*

*“It was immensely helpful to me last semester and I hope to avail of it this semester too. The tutors always helped in a way that did not answer the questions I had directly, but rather thought me the relevant material and methods needed to answer such a question. Best academic support feature of the entire college.”*

In 2022/23, SUMS recorded 1939 individual visits. 26% of all visits were made by students registered with the Disability Support Service, engaged in Access/Foundation courses, or have entered University through the Access and Foundation route. The total number of visits made to SUMS on Fridays this year, a day specifically dedicated to supporting to Access/Foundation Students was 318. This translates into an average Friday attendance figure of 13.25 visits.

## 2.15 Financial Aid Fund

The Financial Aid Funds are operated by Professional Services providing financial supports to students experiencing short or long-term financial difficulties while attending higher education.

The Funds are partly supported by the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) with additional funding provided by University of Galway. The Student Assistance Fund is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). The University of Galway Financial Aid Funds are overseen by a Steering Group comprising of Professional Services with the Students Union and Academic College representatives.

The Funds are intended to tackle disadvantage by providing financial support to enable students to fully benefit from their third level studies. There are three funds for students to apply for. These are the Means Tested Fund, which is a fund aimed at students whose gross household income was below a threshold level (€46,790 in 2022 /2023), the HEAR/Access fund which supports HEAR undergraduates, Access school leavers and Access mature students. Students can apply for one of these two funds. The third fund, that is open to all students, is the Hardship and Emergency Fund, which aids students who have found themselves in an unexpectedly difficult financial situation. From the figures last year, there were 149 lone parents in recipient of financial aid fund payments.

**For the academic year 22/23 the following number of FAF payments were made:**

<b>Means Tested Fund</b>	<b>767</b>
<b>Emergency Hardship Fund</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>HEAR /Access Fund</b>	<b>583</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,587</b>

## 2.16 Access to Post-primary Teaching (APT) Project

The Access to Post-primary Teaching (APT) Project (PIs: Dr. Elaine Keane and Dr. Manuela Heinz, School of Education) is a joint University of Galway and St. Angela's College, Sligo initiative (2017-2023) funded under the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH): Strand 1 (Equity of Access to Initial Teacher Education). Some project activities have also been funded by Galway University Foundation.

The University of Galway strand aims to support the access, retention and success of student teachers from lower socio-economic groups who entered higher education through a pre-entry Access programme, or the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR). APT at the University of Galway, which operates in partnership with the Access and Career Development Centres, has supported over 43 student teachers to date on the Professional Master of Education (PME) programme through the provision of bursaries, and academic and pastoral supports.

Through the APT student teachers' Year 2 Practitioner Research projects, the project has also supported the career and higher education planning, including in relation to the possibility of teaching as a career, of over 2000 senior cycle students in DEIS schools. Other project activities include an annual Schools' event through which more than 1,500 post-primary students in DEIS schools have been supported regarding higher education access and teaching as a potential future career, and annual peer mentoring and careers' events.

The research strand of the APT project has involved in-depth semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with APT student teachers, about their motivations for teaching, and their schooling, PME, and early career experiences. The PIs have published widely from APT project data and their edited volume on Diversifying the Teaching Profession (Routledge, 2023) was recently published (see:

<https://www.routledge.com/Diversifying-the-Teaching-Profession-Dimensions-Dilemmas-and-Directions/Keane-Heinz-Daid/p/book/9781032037349>)

## 2.17 Cell Explorers (CE)

### Giving real opportunities to widen participation in science with Cell Explorers

At the heart of Cell EXPLORERS ([www.cellexplorers.ie](http://www.cellexplorers.ie)) is the belief that science is for everyone, and the GROWS (Giving Real Opportunities to Widen Participation in STEM) project of Cell Explorers aims to do just that. To widen participation in STEM to young people from marginalised Irish communities, primarily those from the Irish Traveller and Roma community, and others which have been identified as being at risk from poverty and/or social exclusion, the GROWS project brings tailored and fun activities to communities across Galway and Ireland. All activities are offered with a zero barrier to entry approach and as such no knowledge or interest in STEM is needed to engage. As part of this project, specific STEM activities are offered in partnerships with youth work, including Foróige and DEIS or rurally located secondary schools, to allow to reach a wide range underrepresented young people that might not normally have access to STEM outreach activities.

### Science Club, Escape Room and STEM experiential visits

The 5-week CE Science Club is run in youth groups and is developed to instil confidence in young people through continual empowerment and autonomy over its duration. Additionally, young people get to meet local scientists to dispel myths around who gets to be in science. With the science themed CE escape room ran in secondary schools, students work in teams to identify a patient zero to prevent another lockdown in Ireland. Classic escape room luck, teamwork, and a few fun experiments unlock the clues to solve the puzzle without any previous knowledge being needed.

As part of the GROWS project, a programme of experiential visits has been created and organised. A VIP visits pilot was run by inviting families to the Engineering week Family Day (4th of March 2023) for which they are offered a programme of activities, lunch and a science-based goodie bag. The majority of GROWS participating youth groups have also attended their own 'Evening at the Aquarium' (24th of May 2023) during which the Galway Atlantaquaria is closed to the public and becomes all their own with tours, fun, and hands-on experiments.

Furthermore, The GROWS project hosts trainings for science communicators and researchers across Ireland on science inclusivity in public engagement through partnerships such as the Kinderbüro at University of Vienna.

In 2022-23, the running of the GROWS project has directly engaged with approximately 550 young people and 50 youth workers/Teacher in activities aiming to widen participation, in addition to training University of Galway students to delivery activities to a diverse audience. The project is funded by the Medtronic Foundation and managed by Dr Kristin Anderson. Its main aim is to bring science to underserved students to widen participation of young people from underserved and marginalized groups.

**Medtronic**

## 2.18 Performance Funding

In 2022/23 the Access Centre in University of Galway secured HEA Performance Funding to deliver additional work in widening participation until the end of the calendar year 2025. In November 2022, the HEA approved the Access Centre's Widening Access and Participation Project (WAPP), which aims to drive excellence in supporting Access and Participation across the student lifecycle for the most underrepresented in Higher Education.

The three pillars of this project are:

**Pillar One:**

Pre-entry –Increasing progression to Higher Education for the following target groups: DEIS, disability and care-experienced.

**Pillar Two:**

Progression and Retention – Using innovative technological solutions to support student progression.

**Pillar Three:**

Data and impact – Developing a strong evidence-base for the Access Centre's widening participation initiatives.

### Pillar one update:

In semester two of 22/23, the following positions were recruited for:

- Schools/FET Outreach Coordinator
- Disability Outreach Coordinator
- Care-experienced Educational Support Worker

All three members of staff above form part of the Access Centre's Outreach team delivering the Uni 4 U+ programme in Post-primary Schools and FET Colleges. As part of WAPP, 21 DEIS schools were visited and over 226 one-to-one meetings took place in schools. Information sessions were held on the HEAR, DARE and Access programme entry route in each school and students were provided with additional study skills supports. FET colleges were also visited this period outlining the many progression opportunities to University of Galway. A key objective in Year 1 of WAPP has also been to establish baseline data for care-experienced students currently enrolled at University of Galway. In the academic year 22/23, 43 students were identified at undergraduate and postgraduate level as having experience of the care-system.

### Pillars Two & Three

*As per the project proposal, pillars 2 and 3 are to commence in Q1 of 2024.*



## 3.

## University of Galway Widening Participation Committee members

### **Chair: John Hannon**

John Hannon is Director of Student Services in the University of Galway. The role of the Director is to provide leadership in the integration of the student service functions and for the provision of high quality and comprehensive wellbeing services. Working closely with the Dean of Students, his role helps ensure appropriate working partnerships are in place between colleagues, students, and external stakeholders to support student engagement and success.

### **Dr Daniel Savery**

Daniel Savery is Widening Participation Officer based in the Access Centre at University of Galway. Within this role he has responsibility for developing and expanding opportunities for underrepresented students to progress to and participate in University, as well as driving the Widening Participation agenda in the University. Daniel holds a doctorate in Social and Political Theory from University of Galway and has a particular interest in barriers to access and participation in Higher Education.

### **Imelda Byrne**

Imelda Byrne is Head of the Access Centre at University of Galway, which incorporates Access Programmes, Disability Support Service, Mature Students Office and a range of other programmes aimed at increasing access and participation for students from underrepresented groups. Within this role she provides strategic leadership and management for the University's approach to access and inclusion for students from the most underrepresented groups in society. With over 20 years' experience of working in Access, she has extensive experience of supporting underrepresented students in University of Galway.

### **Nuala McGuinn**

Nuala McGuinn is Director at the Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development at University of Galway. Within this role she has responsibility for the development and expansion of the University's range of part-time courses with particular emphasis on innovative models of course delivery, expansion of professional development courses in industry, development and implementation of on-line programmes and ongoing research and analysis of the training needs of the region which University of Galway serves. As a steering group member of the WP Committee, she has a particular interest in developing and supporting initiatives for widening access to and increasing participation in Higher Education by adult learners.

### **Dr Maura Farrell**

Maura Farrell is an Associate Professor in the School of Geography, Archaeology and Irish Studies at the University of Galway. Maura's teaching reflects her research specialism which revolves around Rural and Agricultural Geography and her interests focus around processes of social, cultural and economic change for rural inhabitants. Dr Farrell is the Principal Investigator on the Irish National Rural Network Project and the Horizon 2020, RURALIZATION Project. Maura is a widely published academic and extremely active in community engagement outside university life.

### **Josephine Walsh**

Josephine Walsh is Head of Student Engagement Projects in Student Services and was previously Head of the Career Development Centre in University of Galway. She is a qualified secondary teacher, guidance counsellor and is a graduate of the University of Warwick MA in Career Education, Information, Guidance in Higher Education. In her current role, Josephine works on a range of projects to enhance the student experience, including communications, the provision of universal student supports and first year orientation programmes.

### **Dr Paul Flynn**

Paul Flynn, PhD is a Lecturer in Education at the School of Education, University of Galway. A Fellow of ISDDE and Working Group Leader on Education for EU COST Action 18213, focused on modelling Youth NEET interventions, Paul specialises in the application of Design-Based Research in non-formal, placed based, community educational settings and has secured €6m of competitive national and international funding as a Principal Investigator.

### **Mary Liddy**

Mary Liddy is Deputy Admissions Officer (Undergraduate) in the Admissions Office at University of Galway. In addition to her membership of the Widening Participation Committee, Mary is a member of several institutional and national committees, working groups and steering groups developed to further the widening participation and equality, diversity and inclusion agendas in higher education. These include: University of Galway's University of Sanctuary Steering Committee and the Policy and Advocacy sub-group; the University's Financial Aid Steering Group; the university's Health Psychology Advisory Panel; the inter-iversity EU Qualifications Working Group; the university's Respect Charter working group; and the IUA's Access Steering Group.

### **Dr John Walsh**

Dr John Walsh is Vice-Dean (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & People) in the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies and Associate Professor of Irish in the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures. His areas of expertise are Irish language policy, minority language media, multilingualism, language and sexuality and language and socioeconomic development. John's degrees were awarded by University College Dublin and Dublin City University, and he worked as a journalist before joining academia.

### **Dr Maureen Kelly**

Maureen Kelly PhD, MICGP, FRCGP, M Med Ed. is a medical doctor, Senior Lecturer in the Discipline of General Practice, School of Medicine, and lead of the undergraduate General Practice teaching programme. From 2017-Dec 2021, she served as Vice Dean for Civic Engagement, in the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, and spear headed the first multi-professional civic engagement committee and programme of work.

She teaches at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and has a special interest in medical education, teaching and assessing communication skills, social inclusion, civic engagement and selection of medical students. She has over 80 publications. She leads several projects embedded in the community and is particularly committed to widening diversity in the student population in health professions education. She is committed to the concept of capacity building in academic General Practice (GP). She sits on the national Executive of the Association of University Departments of General Practice, Ireland. She supervises research at masters, doctoral and specialist GP training levels.

### **Cliona Ní Neill**

Clíona Ní Néill is a native of Galway City. After graduating from University of Galway in 1985, she began teaching in the Presentation Secondary School Galway as an NQT. Appointed as Deputy Principal there in 2002 and as Principal in 2006, she led the amalgamation process and establishment of Our Lady's College Galway in 2016. As Principal of OLCG, she was significantly involved in the establishment of Galway's newest secondary school which opened its doors as Coláiste Muire Máthair in September 2021. She is currently one of the Senior Management Team in CMMG which has over 750 students and 40 nationalities.

### **Dr Deirdre Curran**

Dr Deirdre Curran is Vice Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the College of Business Public Policy and Law. She also represents the College as a Steering Committee member for the University of Sanctuary initiative aimed at making University of Galway an accessible campus for international protection applicants, and members of our travelling community.

**Raimey Boyle**

Raimey Boyle is Vice-President for Education in the University of Galway Students' Union. Raimey is currently studying the MA in Public Policy and has also been a class rep, CÉIM Leader, ATS mentor, Psych Soc Vice Auditor, and the SU Postgrad Taught Officer while attending University of Galway.

**Izzy Tiernan**

Izzy Tiernan is Vice-President for Welfare and Equality in the University of Galway Students' Union. Izzy is currently studying Human Rights and has been extremely involved in politics and activism from a young age, as Secretary for Fridays for Future Waterford and as an ambassador for a non-profit organisation called The Shona Project that empowers young girls.

**Jane Ennis**

Jane Ennis works as the Student Success Manager in the Office of the Dean of Students, where she is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the University of Galway's first Student Success Strategy. Prior to her current role, Jane worked with the University's Access Centre, both on its Access programmes and with the Disability Support Service. Recent projects have focused on student wellbeing, academic skills development, inclusive practice, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

**Owen Ward**

Owen Ward is Programme Manager for Race Equality in the Office of the Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. He is currently leading on the development, implementation & monitoring of University of Galway's Race Equality Framework & Action Plan. Owen previously occupied the position of University of Galway's first Traveller Education Officer and was the first Irish Traveller to be elected to a University governing authority in Ireland.

**Dr Katarzyna Whysall**

Dr Katarzyna Whysall is Vice Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. She specialises in the therapeutic potential of microRNAs and oxidised microRNAs against muscle loss during ageing and disease, such as cachexia and ALS. She is the recipient of a 2018 Starting Laureate research grant, and in 2020 received funding in the IRC-HRB-SFI co-funded Rapid Response Call to research microRNA-based approaches to improving long-term patient recovery and reducing post-COVID-19 disability.

**Dr Elaine Keane**

Dr. Elaine Keane is Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Sociology of Education & Research Methods in the School of Education. She is Co-Principal Investigator of the Access to Post-primary Teaching (APT) Project (2017-2023), funded by the HEA, and was Co-Principal Investigator of the Irish Research Council-funded Diversity in Initial Teacher Education (DITE) national project (exploring the socio-demographic profiles, career motivations, and experiences with diversity of applicants and entrants to ITE programmes in Ireland). She has published widely on the effectiveness of Widening Participation initiatives.

**Dr Muriel Grenon**

Dr Muriel Grenon is a Lecturer in Biochemistry and the Founding Director of the Cell EXPLORERS science outreach programme ([www.cellexplorers.ie](http://www.cellexplorers.ie)) in the School of Biological & Chemical Sciences. Both her extensive research and teaching experiences have been essential to the creation and the success of the Cell EXPLORERS informal education programme linking research, third level education and primary schools. Her areas of expertise are biology, Science outreach & education and public engagement in science. Her research interests are informal science education, hands on learning and the use of educational science outreach as a University teaching tool.

# 4.

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# 5.

## Appendix 1: University of Galway's Widening Participation Committee Terms of Reference

### Sub-Committee of Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee Campus Committee

## Background

The University has made a strategic decision to widen participation and support lifelong learning. University of Galway's strategic plan also details specific actions associated with this goal including the following:

### Open University of Galway

#### Flagship Actions for 2025

##### Access and Inclusion

- We will implement a capital development programme that is student-centred, community-focused and disability-conscious, to enhance access and engagement with our campus and facilities
- We will adopt the Principles of Universal Design in our learning and working environment to increase accessibility, accommodate different approaches to learning and enable students to fulfil their potential
- We will further develop our pathways for accessing education, building on our designation as a University of Sanctuary, to deliver a portfolio of supports for all communities to access higher education
- We will create an Open Scholarly Community in which the process, content and outcomes of research are ethically managed and openly accessible, and promote the use and production of Open Educational Resources

##### Excellent University of Galway

- We will support and enhance student transition and progression by developing and implementing a Student Success Strategy, and by investing in new processes and systems, through the Student Digital Pathways programme, that meet student needs and future-proof our university

*(University of Galway Strategic Plan 2020-2025).*

## Purpose of Widening Participation Committee

The Widening Participation (WP) Committee will promote, advise and monitor the University's strategic plans on widening access and participation for the identified learner cohorts.

The University has committed to the above flagship actions by 2025. The Access Centre (AC) and the Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development (CALPD) will contribute to these goals, however further progress is dependent on the leadership provided by a strategically focussed WP committee to embed the goals of widening access and participation into all aspects of the University's work.

The University of Galway WP Committee will identify issues and propose actions pertaining to the University's policies and practices vis-a-vis under-represented student cohorts from pre-entry to successful completion, for e.g.

- school leavers from socio-economically dis-advantaged backgrounds
- students with disabilities
- Mature Students
- Travellers
- adults beginning their higher education
- those studying on a flexible, part-time basis
- people who wish to continue learning and pursue intellectual enrichment and fulfilment.

The WP Committee will report at least once per year to the University Management Team (UMT) and EDI Committees and input into the HEA compact and National Access planning processes.

## Proposed Terms of Reference

1. To review the University's academic and administrative policies with a view to identifying barriers to participation, recommend the actions necessary to address same, and establish a process to monitor progress in this regard;
2. To identify good practice, strategies and activities, which enable under-represented students to participate and progress, and recommend policies that will increase understanding and active promotion of University of Galway in areas of Social Inclusion, Equality and Diversity;
3. To develop and oversee a plan to improve the visibility and enhance the reputation of the University as an inclusive educational environment and to train widening participation advisors;
4. To consider quality and programme review reports, with a view to making recommendations that will ensure that the University's widening participation agenda is fully integrated;
5. To consider teaching and learning methodology, and make recommendations, which enable and facilitate the participation of under-represented students, and establish a process to monitor progress in this regard;
6. To consider the participation, retention and progression rates for under-represented students in the University and linking with work of the Student Experience Committee to make recommendations accordingly, and establish a process to monitor progress in this regard;
7. To provide a view on the advisory and support services for under-represented students, and make recommendations for alignment and integration with the generic student services;
8. To monitor and report on the progress of recommendations made.







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