



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

# University of Galway *Widening Participation* Committee

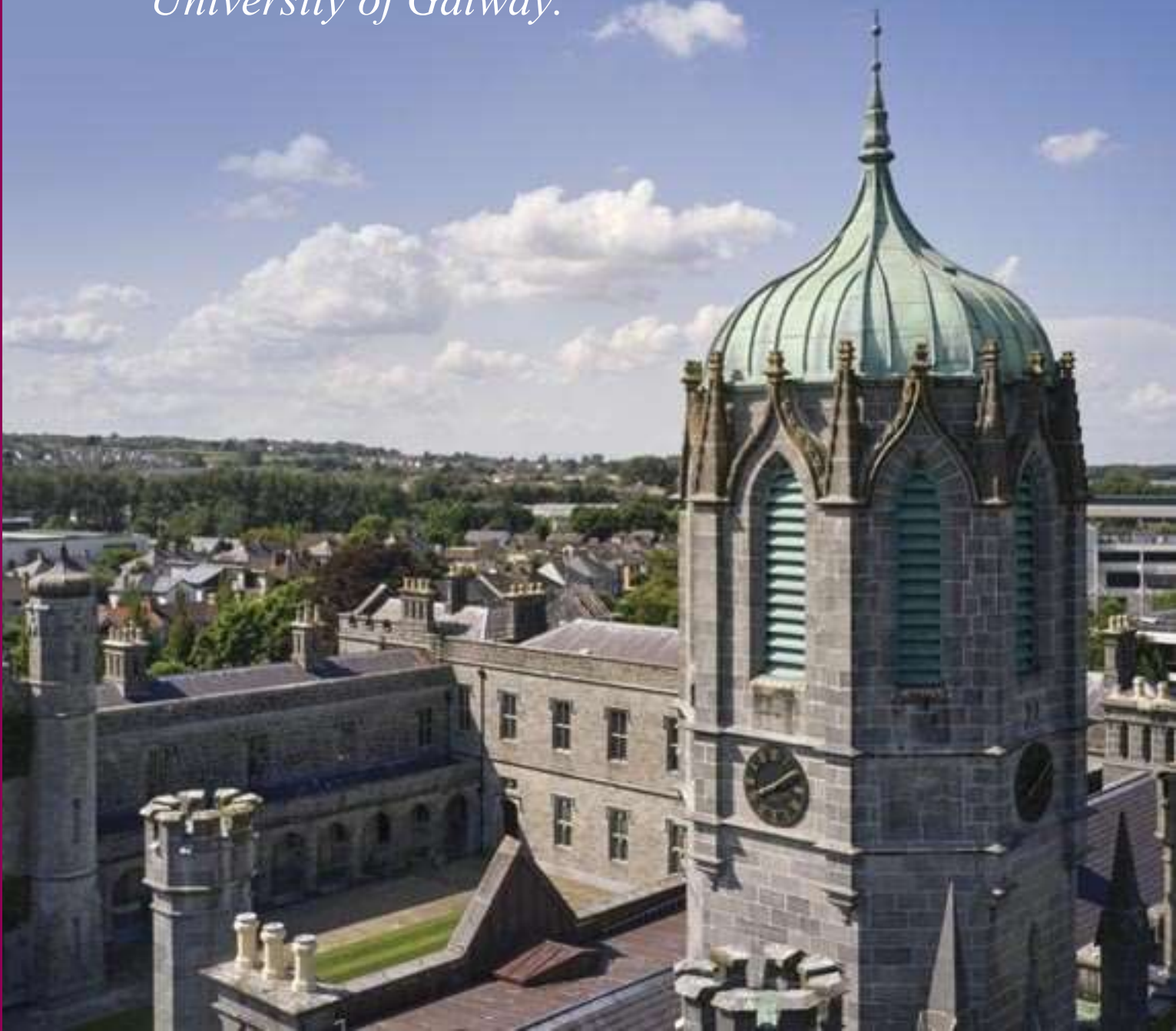
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## Annual Report 2021-22



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*“The commitment to Widening Participation extends throughout the University and it is through a whole-of-institution approach that we stand the best chance of ensuring students from underrepresented groups in HE can access, participate and succeed in the University of Galway.”*





## Chair's Foreword



The University of Galway's Widening Participation Committee (WPC) is a sub-committee of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Campus Committee (EDICC). It was established to support and monitor the University's strategic plans on widening access. The committee is comprised of members from the University's four Colleges, students, professional services staff, and external stakeholders.

This first annual Widening Participation Report produced by the University of Galway, outlines our efforts to increase the equality of opportunity for students who would traditionally be regarded as underrepresented in Higher Education (HE). A large part of the data in the first section of this report is derived from our Student Record System (SRS), with information on the number of students progressing to University of Galway through some of the specific entry routes that have been developed, nationally and institutionally, to ensure the student population in Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) reflects the social mix of the population we find more broadly in society. As our University population has continued to grow each year, we have also seen a welcome increase of students entering through these entry routes.

Extensive work has been done to move us closer to a University population that reflects the social mix of the general population. This report provides an important opportunity for us to take stock and examine the clear progress we have made. However, it should not mean that we become complacent; we recognise that lots of work remains to be done. The commitment to Widening Participation extends throughout the University and it is through a whole-of-institution approach that we stand the best chance of ensuring students from underrepresented groups in HE can access, participate and succeed in the University of Galway.

I would like to thank all the Committee members who have contributed to the work of the Widening Participation Committee and the publication of this report. I would also like to thank all the 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.

John Hannon

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



## Commentary

In its recently published National plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-28, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) reminds us that '[e]quity of access to higher education is a fundamental principle of Irish education policy' (HEA, 2022, p. 20). This strategic commitment to the principle of equity of access to HE is further demonstrated in our own institutional strategic plan *Shared Vision, Shaped by Values: Strategy 2020-2025* and *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2025*. The University of Galway First Annual Widening Participation (WP) Report enables us to evaluate the progress we have made as an institution in terms of creating a more level playing field for students from underrepresented groups in society.

A key component of this report examines some of the data we have on students from underrepresented groups in this institution. Indeed, the importance of having good data on widening participation activities is something that has featured prominently in previous National Access Plan's. For example, in the HEA's *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-19 (NAP)* and *Progress Review of the National Access Plan and Priorities to 2019-2021* explicit reference was made to the importance of data collection in informing the work that HEI's undertake in the area of widening access and participation. Priority goal three of the previous NAP spoke directly to the need to gather 'accurate data and evidence on access and participation and to base policy on what that data tells us' (HEA, 2015, p. 28). In the most recent NAP 2022-28, this requirement for good data and an evidence-driven approach to access and participation remains a specific goal (HEA, 2022). We see this report as an important first-step in providing a stronger evidence-base for the work we do in the area of widening participation in the University of Galway, and providing important information which will help to inform us on where we plan to go as an institution in the future.

If the previous NAP spoke to the importance of accurate data and evidence in informing policy in the area of WP, it also made explicit reference to the importance that the whole of the institution had towards integrating the principle of equity of access more fully into the everyday life of HEI's (HEA, 2015, p. 25). This need for a whole-of-institution approach to WP is something that also features prominently in the new NAP (HEA, 2022, p. 23). While the Access Centre and the Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development (CALPD) continue to play a prominent role in developing initiatives to create a more level playing field for underrepresented groups, this report also serves to highlight the way in which many innovative WP activities are now delivered across the University, and involve collaborative efforts across the Colleges, Schools and Professional Services that make up University of Galway. These collaborative efforts are also shown to extend beyond the institution to the many external organisations that work directly with underrepresented groups, affirming our mission that University of Galway is a University for the public good (University of Galway, 2019).



Implementing these priority goals in the context of a global pandemic has not been without its challenges. However, with every challenge comes a response. The many WP activities, projects and initiatives that were delivered in the academic year 2021/22 have demonstrated considerable creativity in engaging with students during these challenging times. As this report outlines, great progress has been made in creating a more inclusive environment for students from traditionally underrepresented groups in University of Galway. Often, this progress has involved high degrees of collaboration internally between University of Galway staff, students and external stakeholders. The new challenge now is to continue to develop our WP activities and policies and engage with those new target groups identified in the National Access Plan (HEA, 2022, p. 52). Ultimately, this will help to ensure that students continue to have the necessary supports to access, participate and succeed in Higher Education.

Imelda Byrne

Head of Access Centre

Dr. Daniel Savery

Widening Participation Officer



# Abbreviations

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

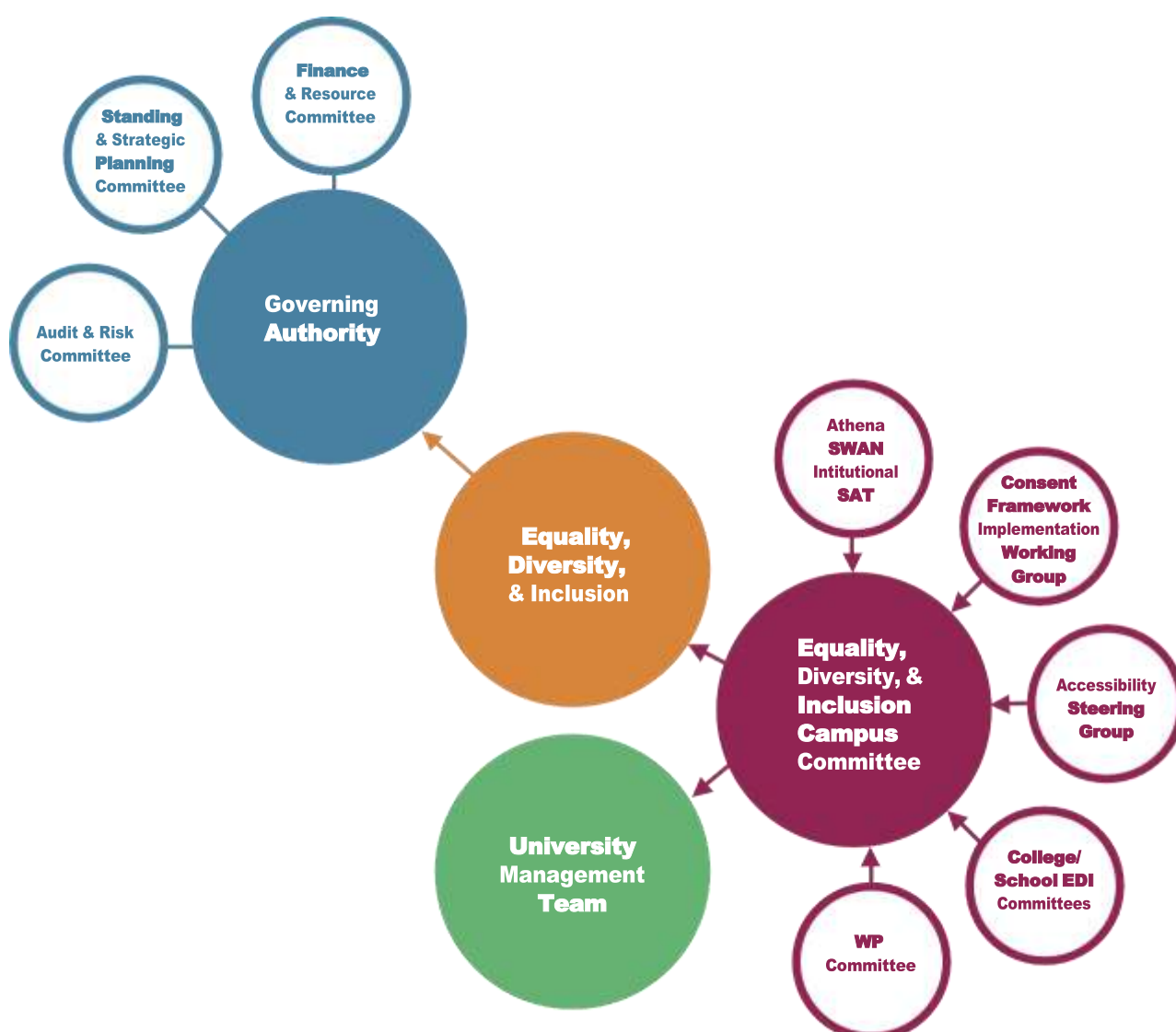
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# Governance

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



# 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

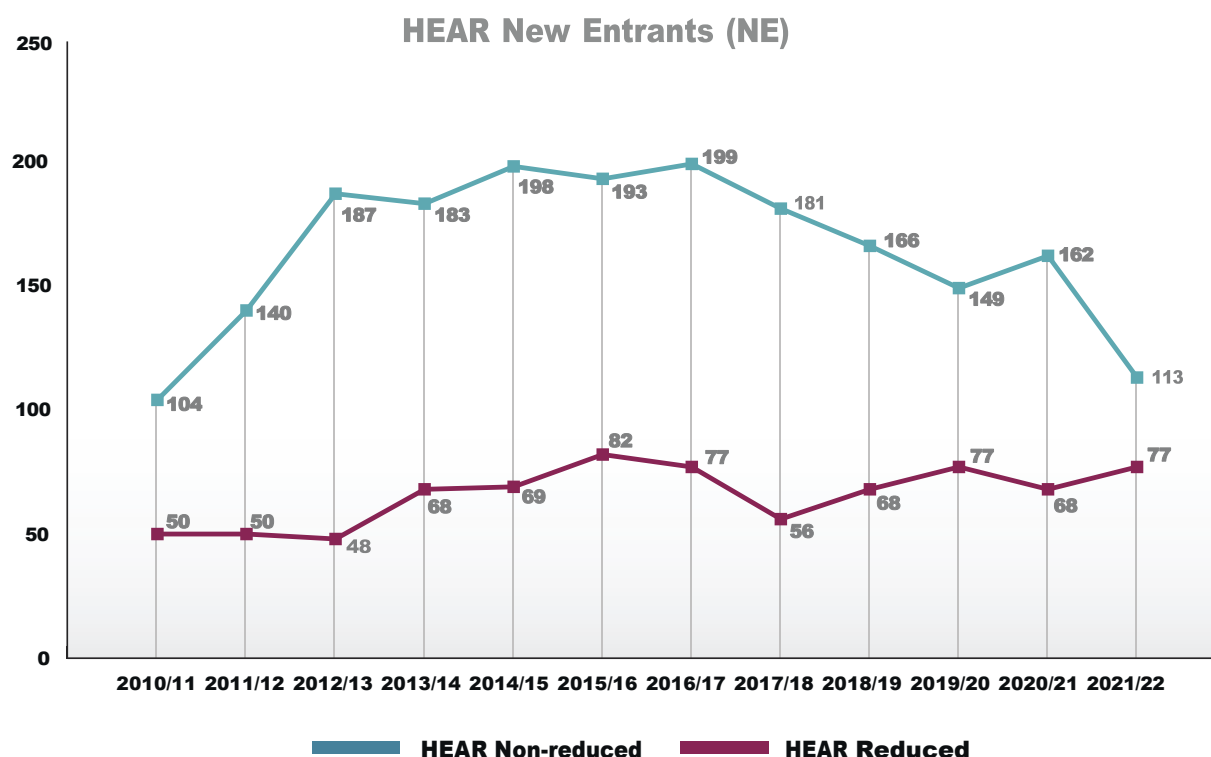
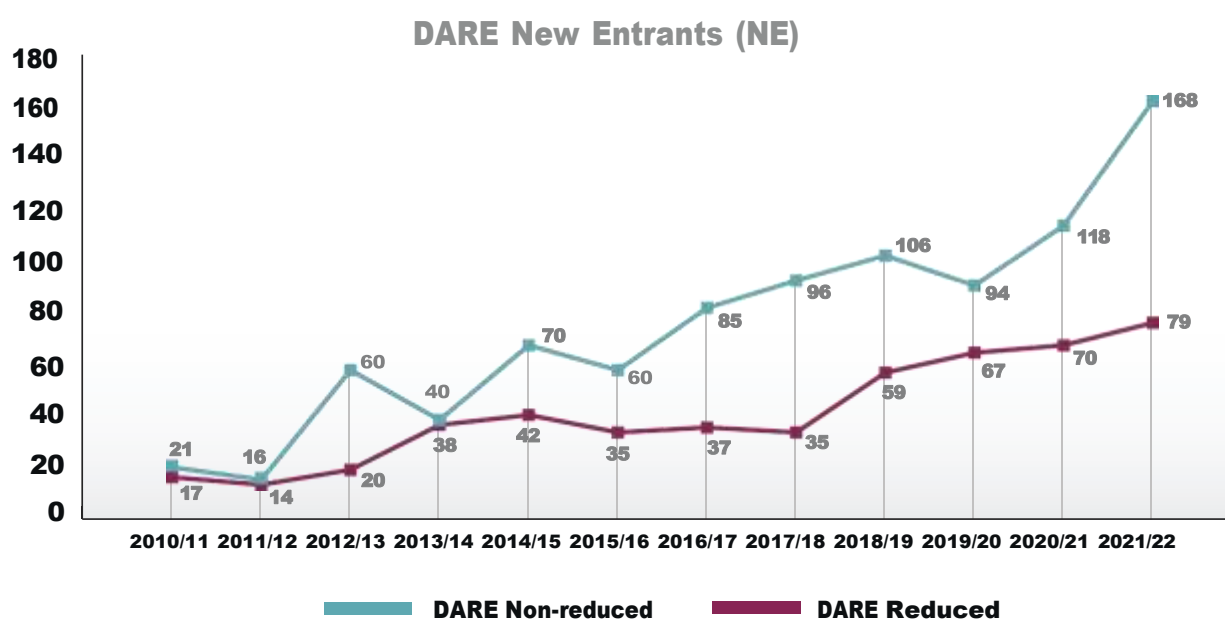
## Entry Routes

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 2021 outlined below in Table 1. During this time, University of Galway has seen a total 28.5% increase in students entering through these routes.

**Table 1.** Number of undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2010/11 to 2020/21

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>HEAR Non-reduced</b>	104	140	187	183	198	193	199	181	166	149	162	113
<b>HEAR Reduced</b>	50	50	48	68	69	82	77	56	68	77	68	77
<b>DARE Non-reduced</b>	21	16	60	40	70	60	85	96	106	94	118	168
<b>DARE Reduced</b>	17	14	20	38	42	35	37	35	59	67	70	79
<b>Foundation</b>	50	52	49	37	50	31	40	22	11	11	21	16
<b>FET</b>	7	25	21	14	6	39	62	46	92	99	153	134
<b>Mature</b>	220	157	127	87	89	75	57	77	66	73	79	86
<b>Mature Access</b>	69	55	67	52	41	44	42	35	26	23	29	34
<b>School Leavers Access</b>	58	43	52	49	52	35	56	38	39	36	38	27
<b>Total</b>	596	552	631	568	617	594	655	586	633	629	738	734

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 10 years.

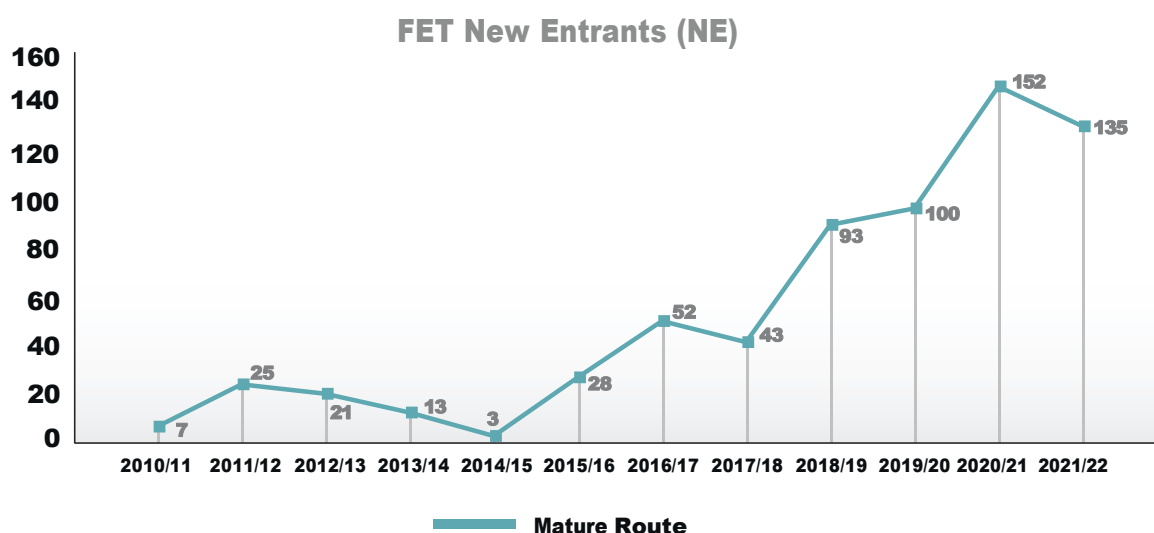
**Figure 2.** Number of HEAR full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2010/11 to 2021/22<sup>1</sup>**Figure 3.** Number of DARE full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2010/11 to 2021/22<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hear Non-reduced refers to students who were eligible for the scheme but did not need to avail of reduced points; Hear Reduced refers to students who were eligible for the scheme and availed of reduced points.

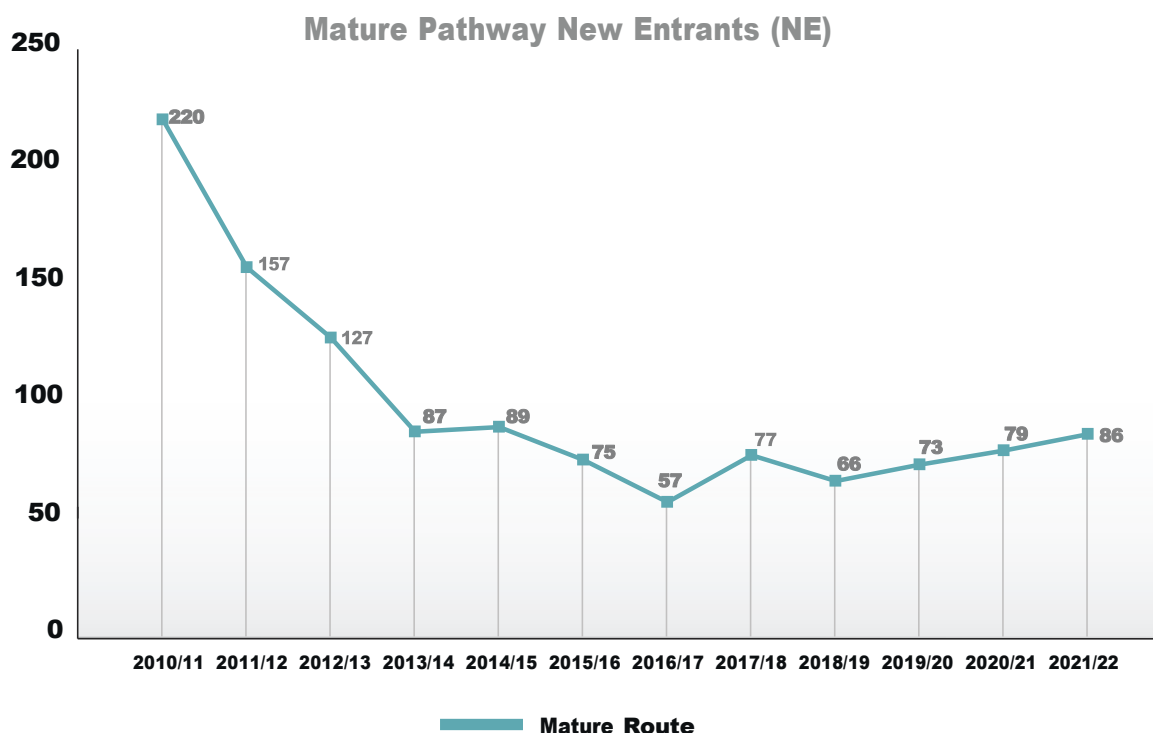
<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1 for distinction between merit and supported.

In line with Goal 4 of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-21<sup>3</sup>, University of Galway has developed its pathways from Further Education to Higher Education. Table 4 charts the significant increase of students entering through this entry pathway.

**Figure 4.** Number of Further Education and Training (FET) full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2010/11 to 2021/22



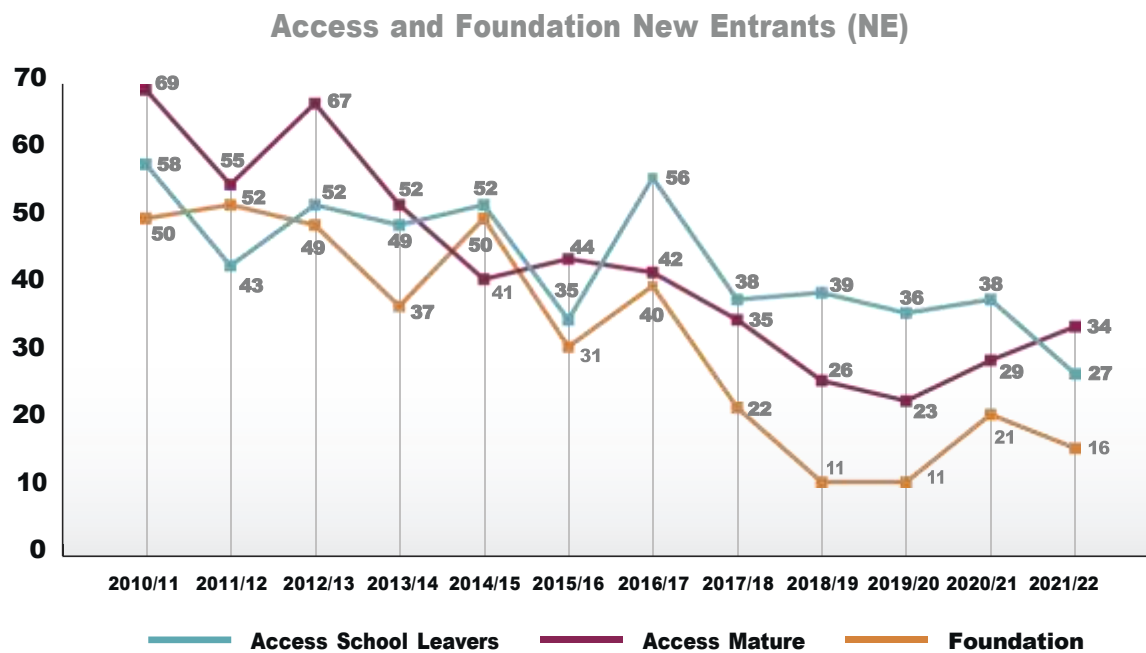
**Figure 5.** Number of New Entrants (NE) entering through the Mature Student Entry route into full-time undergraduate degrees from 2010/11 to 2021/22<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> The plan was originally set to run between 2015-2019 but was extended until 2021.

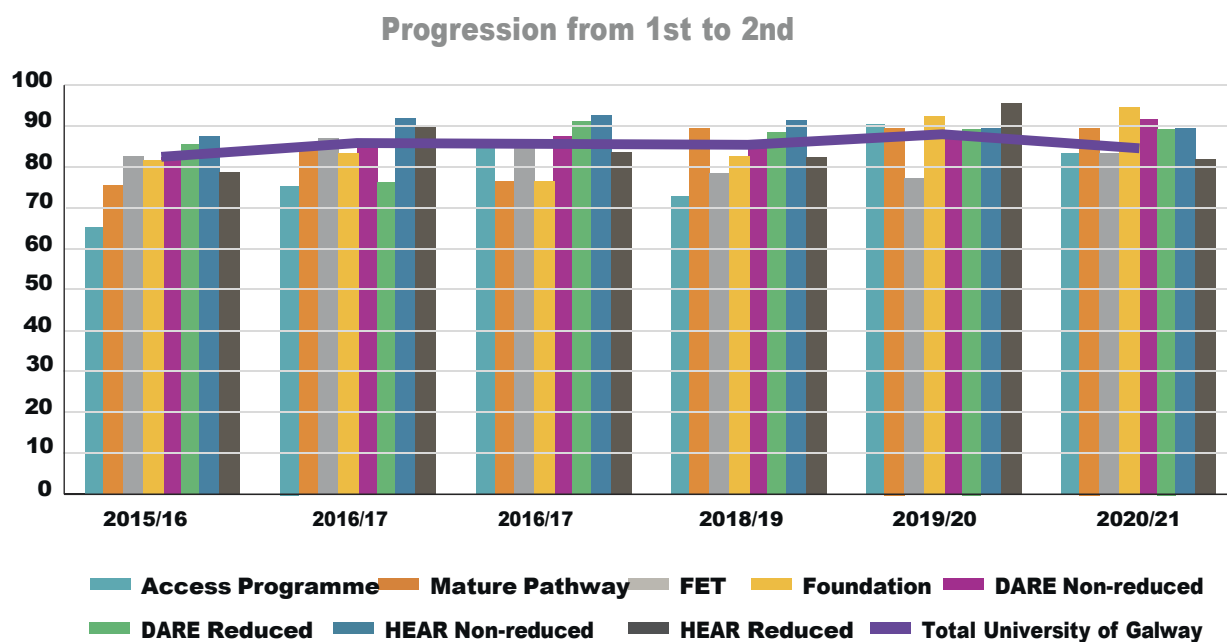
<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that mature students can also enter through the FET, Access and Foundation pathways, as well as on the basis of their Leaving Certificate results. This chart only relates to students entering through the Mature entry pathway, which has its own specific entry criteria.

**Figure 6.** Number of Access and Foundation programme full-time undergraduate New Entrants (NE) from 2010/11 to 2021/22



## 1.2 Progression

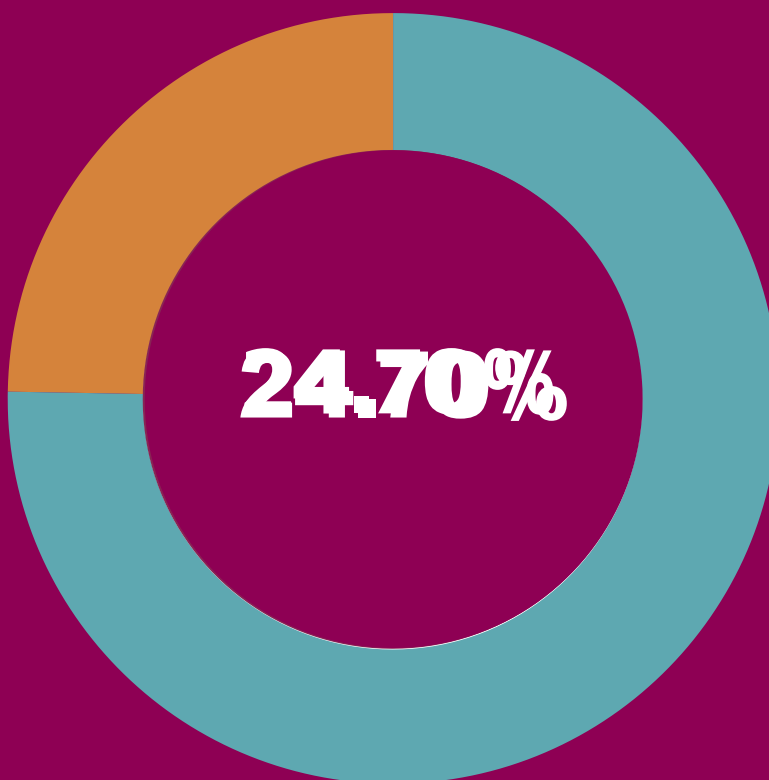
**Figure 7.** Full-time Undergraduate first Year Progression Rates Disaggregated by Entry Route, from 2015/16 to 2020/21<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Data for 2021/22 not available at time of publication.

**Table 8.** Aggregated and Disaggregated Full-time Undergraduate first Year Progression Rates by Target Group, from 2015/16 to 2020/21

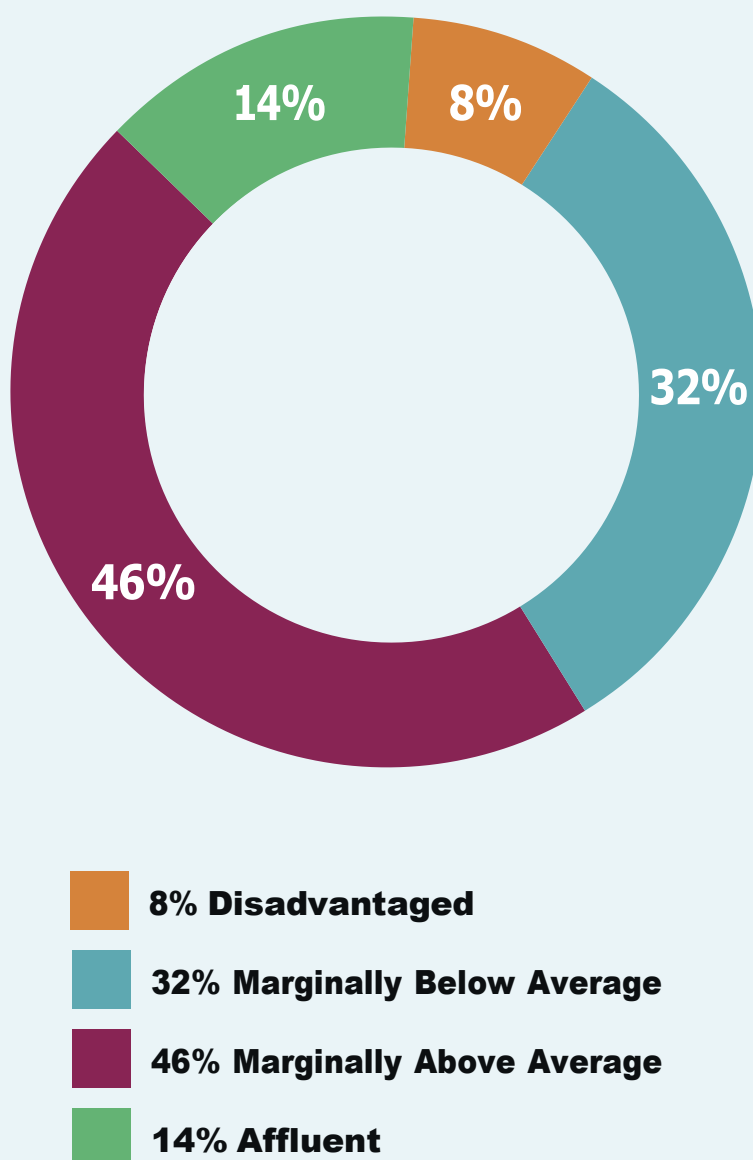
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>HEAR Non-reduced</b>	87%	91%	92%	91%	89%	89%
<b>HEAR Reduced</b>	78%	90%	83%	81%	95%	81%
<b>DARE Non-reduced</b>	82%	85%	87%	84%	87%	91%
<b>DARE Reduced</b>	85%	76%	91%	88%	89%	89%
<b>Foundation</b>	81%	83%	76%	82%	92%	94%
<b>FET</b>	82%	87%	84%	78%	77%	83%
<b>Mature</b>	75%	85%	76%	89%	89%	89%
<b>Mature and School Leaver Access Prog.</b>	65%	75%	84%	72%	90%	83%
<b>Aggregated under-represented students</b>	81%	86%	86%	87%	88%	88%
<b>Total University of Galway</b>	82%	86%	85%	84%	87%	84%

**Figure 9.** Total % of new undergraduate entrants from traditionally under-represented groups (WP Entry route students and Disability Support Registrations).

## 1.3 Deprivation Index Score (DIS) Data

Using Pobal Deprivation Index Score (DIS) data, it is possible to measure the socio-economic profile of the student population at University of Galway. In Figure 10 we see that 8% of our University's population have a socio-economic profile of disadvantage and 32% of students have a socio-economic profile of marginally below average.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 10.



<sup>6</sup> For more comprehensive socio-economic profile data for all HEI's, see HEA (2019).

## 1.4 Ethnicity

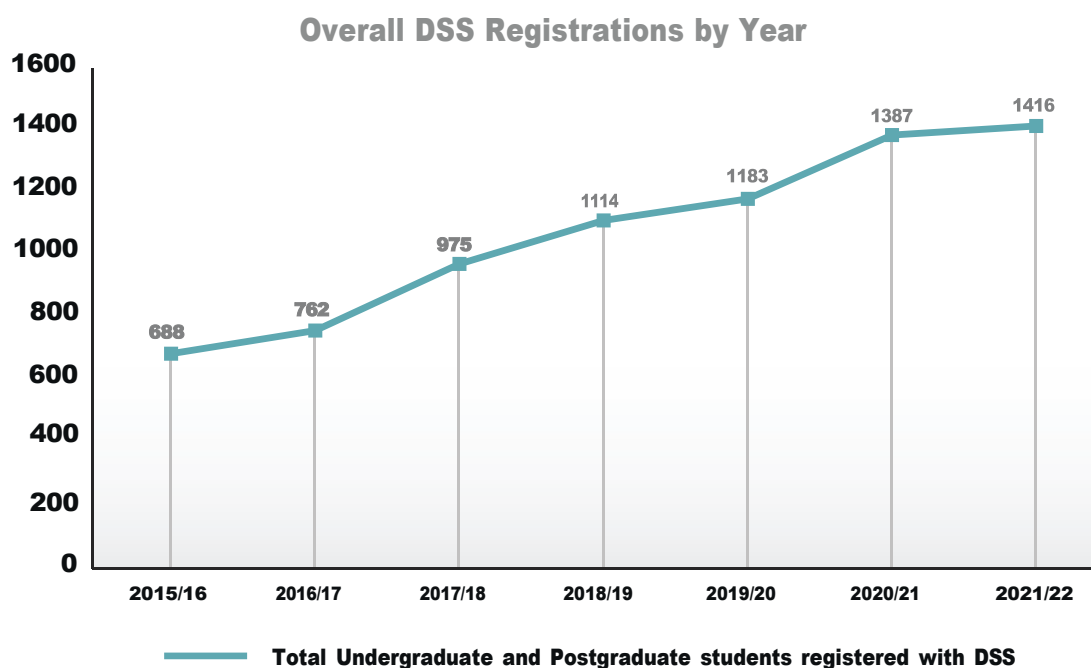
**Table 11.** Equal Access Survey Results 2010/11 to 2021/22

<b>Ethnic/ Cultural Background</b>	<b>2010 /11</b>	<b>2011 /12</b>	<b>2012 /13</b>	<b>2013 /14</b>	<b>2014 /15</b>	<b>2015 /16</b>	<b>2016 /17</b>	<b>2017 /18</b>	<b>2018 /19</b>	<b>2019 /20</b>	<b>2020 /21</b>	<b>2021 /22</b>
<b>White Irish</b>	<b>90.95%</b>	<b>92.37%</b>	<b>93.16%</b>	<b>92.54%</b>	<b>93.32%</b>	<b>92.5%</b>	<b>91.99%</b>	<b>88.99%</b>	<b>87.22%</b>	<b>87.11%</b>	<b>82.96%</b>	<b>83.04%</b>
<b>Irish Traveller (and Roma added in 2020/21)</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.08%</b>	<b>0.08%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.15%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.39%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.51%</b>	<b>0.55%</b>
<b>Any Other White Background</b>	<b>6.09%</b>	<b>5.45%</b>	<b>5.17%</b>	<b>6.36%</b>	<b>5.61%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>7.17%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>7.78%</b>	<b>7.95%</b>
<b>Black or Black Irish African</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1.12%</b>	<b>0.71%</b>	<b>0.41%</b>	<b>0.47%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>2.09%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>2.59%</b>	<b>2.27%</b>
<b>Other Black Background (new category in 2011/12)</b>		<b>0.32%</b>	<b>0.14%</b>	<b>0.20%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.39%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.36%</b>	<b>0.27%</b>
<b>Asian or Asian Irish Chinese</b>	<b>0.71%</b>	<b>0.24%</b>	<b>0.26%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.21%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>1.06%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.74%</b>	<b>0.47%</b>
<b>Other Asian Background</b>	<b>1.82%</b>	<b>0.40%</b>	<b>0.44%</b>	<b>0.15%</b>	<b>0.21%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>1.66%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>2.23%</b>	<b>2.32%</b>
<b>Other (new category in 2020/21)</b>											<b>2.79%</b>	<b>3.10%</b>

## 1.5 Disability Support 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 2021/22 is outlined in figure 12. The breakdown of these annual figures by primary disability category is outlined in table 8. Overall, from 2015/16 to 2020/21, there has been a 106% increase in students registering for disability support.

**Figure 12.** Total Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students registering for Disability Support from 2015/16 to 2021/22



**Table 13.** Disability Registrations by Primary Disability Category 2015/16 to 2020/21

Primary Disability Category (UGsPG)	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22
Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (ADD/ADHD)	25	28	39	44	62	74	105
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	33	39	51	59	67	77	92
Blind/Vision Impaired (B/VI)	15	20	22	25	30	25	30
Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HOH)	12	13	21	25	24	39	44
Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)/Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia	25	24	31	40	43	59	61
Mental Health	86	117	207	262	290	327	297
Neurological	42	49	54	68	66	97	90
Physical/Mobility	54	57	74	87	89	80	88
Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) – Dyslexia, Dyscalculia	286	300	329	347	341	433	441
Significant Ongoing Illness (SOI)	110	115	147	157	171	176	167
Other							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>

**Table 14.** Total % increase per Primary Disability Category registrations from 2015/16 to 2021/22

	% Increase 2015/16 – 2021/22
Mental Health Condition	245%
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	179%
Significant Ongoing Illness	52%
Specific Learning Difficulties – Dyslexia/Dyscalculia	54%
ADD/ADHD	320%
Physical/Mobility	63%
Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)/Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia	144%
Neurological	119%
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	266%
Blind/Visually Impaired	100%

## 2. Widening Participation Activities

**This section outlines some of the many successful WP activities in 2021/22 that helped to support students from traditionally underrepresented groups in HE gain access to and participate in University of Galway.**

### 2.1 Uni4U

The Uni4U programme commenced in 2005 and is delivered by the Access Centre. Uni4U is a primary schools initiative which is part of a broader suite of educational outreach programmes in University of Galway. Aimed at increasing participation, diversity, and equality of opportunity in third level education, Uni4U is delivered in partnership with three Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools (DEIS) primary schools in the city: Scoil Bhríde in Shantalla, Scoil Chroí Íosa in Mervue and Radharc na Mara in Presentation Road. Students from 4th, 5th and 6th class are selected by their teachers to participate on this programme over a three-year period. During their participation, students are exposed to and immersed in University life, spending 6 weeks on campus during term (4th, 5th and 6th class), and participating in specifically designed Easter (6th class) and summer camps (5th class), engaging students in university taster modules, discussion-led classes, and a range of fun interactive activities all based on campus. The focus of the programme is to engage the students in a positive and fully interactive exposure to life on campus.

Uni4U aims to promote the value of education, and to develop the participant's interpersonal, academic, and confidence skills. It also aims to expose both students and parents to opportunities offered by education, demystifying third level education and enabling families to envision a future in third level education. Since 2005 approximately 1570 pupils have participated on the programme, whilst annually over 80 pupils take part on the programme. In 2021 the programme took place remotely and over 200 students participated.



## 2.2 University of Sanctuary

In 2021-2022, the University of Sanctuary (UoS) Steering Committee focused on welcoming 12 new 'Sanctuary Scholars' to the University of Galway as part of the UoS Scholarship Programme. The scholarship programme is currently in its third 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 30 students from 19 different countries to the University to date. To support this cohort of incoming scholars on their educational journey, scholars are paired with support and academic mentors, with mentors receiving bespoke training developed in collaboration with community partners.

In addition to the scholarship programme, the UoS focused on supporting students experiencing technological inequalities resulting from the pandemic. In collaboration with the Insight Institute for Data Analytics, the Galway Chamber of Commerce, Camara Education Ireland and Trinity Access, the UoS Steering Committee provided 40 refurbished laptops to regional Irish Traveller and Roma support groups, as well as 12 devices to a local direct provision centre through the Tech2Students initiative. Sanctuary Scholars who were not eligible for the Government's Laptop Loan Scheme also received laptops resulting from collaborative efforts between the Access Centre, Student Services, the Chaplaincy, and the Hardiman Library.

The UoS Steering Committee commenced 2022 preparing for an ENLIGHT webinar which took place in February. ENLIGHT is a cross-European partnership between 9 universities which aims to undertake a fundamental transformation of European higher education, empowering learners as globally engaged citizens to promote equitable quality of life and sustainability. A webinar in February was well attended with over 80 attendees and served to highlight the University of Galway's efforts to welcome 'Sanctuary' cohorts to the University. Plans for future collaboration are ongoing between member universities.

With the outbreak of war in Ukraine, much focus turned to offering support to Ukrainian citizens while remaining conscious of those already seeking International Protection in Ireland. In this regard, Mary Dempsey, the Vice-Dean for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) in the College of Science & Engineering (CSE), and Prof. Afshin Samali, Professor of Cancer Biology in the CSE, facilitated a mini open day for 20 Afghan refugees in March. Two further information events were held in April and May, providing information on pathways to education and employment to broader audiences.

Over the summer months, efforts turned to delivering two Education Transition Programmes in collaboration with the Access Centre's Traveller Education Officer. The first programme, the Educational Transition Project (ETP) for Irish Traveller Students, was developed by the Access Centre to build on current initiatives and work directly with community organisations in supporting members of the Irish Traveller community to progress to higher education. The programme is multi-disciplinary and is designed to support students to achieve their desired educational goals, whether they are school leavers or mature students. It represents an important intervention in ensuring Irish Traveller students access higher education. The programme commenced in early July 2022 and was delivered in person four days a week over three weeks. The UoS Summer Programme, which is in its fourth year in existence, returned to in-person delivery after two years online, is open to International Protection Applicants, refugees, vulnerable immigrant groups and Irish Travellers, and has been developed in collaboration with the Access Centre, the Careers

Development Centre, University of Galway's Chaplaincy, Flirt FM, the College of Business, Public Policy & Law, and the English Language Centre following consultation with the programme's intended participant groups. The programme is designed specifically to provide learning and skill development to facilitate participants' full participation in education, employment, and Irish society more broadly. The programme aligns to the University's core strategic values of Respect and Openness. Each participant on the programme received a Certificate of Participation from the Vice President Engagement, Dr Paul Dodd. The end of the two programs coincides with the opening of the University of Sanctuary Scholarship Programme, and will comprise 23 fee waivers across the four Colleges at both undergraduate (Level 8) and postgraduate (Level 9) levels.



*Participants on the UoS Summer Programme after receiving their Certificates of Participation*

## 2.3 Mincéirs Misl'd in Education

In 2021/22, through funding from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, the Access Centre's Mincéirs Misl'd in Education Project developed an Irish Traveller community embedded and culturally inclusive model to empower Irish Travellers to identify and overcome barriers to access, progression, retention, and success in higher education. This was to address the ongoing low participation of Irish Travellers in third level education. The project was co-designed by Access Centre staff, Irish Travellers, Irish Traveller organisations and students, academic staff, and representatives from Tusla – Child and Family Agency, as well as the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb) and Union of Students in Ireland (USI).

The five Irish Traveller organisations partnering the project were: Involve CLG, Galway Traveller Movement, Mayo Traveller Support Group, Sligo Traveller Support Group and Western Traveller and Intercultural Development Centre.

This initiative had six key strands;

1. Community embedded partnership with the University and Irish Traveller community.
2. Research and data collection to provide a detailed, evidence-based understanding of barriers to access, progression, and retention in higher education for Irish Travellers.
3. Development of Traveller Culture Awareness Training (Online) for teaching staff and students with a 'Traveller Ally' digital badge on completion.
4. Empowerment of Irish Traveller students during transitions to HE from post-primary and further education through the design, development, and implementation of the Mincéirs Misl'd in Education programme of supports.
5. Supporting the development of evidence-based teaching and learning methods as well as Irish Traveller student recruitment and support strategies.
6. Supporting Traveller leadership, initiatives and events that enhance a sense of belonging in education both internally and externally of University of Galway.

### Some of the highlights of the MMIE project include:

The recruitment of a Traveller Education Officer based in the Access centre who met with prospective Irish Traveller students and their families to advise on academic, financial, wellbeing, mentoring and career development supports including pathways into further and higher education.

The recruitment of Education Outreach Workers from the 5 participating Irish Traveller Organisation. The Education Outreach Workers work closely with the Traveller Education Officer to assist in the delivery of education and outreach work to Irish Travellers in the community and contribute to the work of the MMIE committee.

Grinds4Mincéirs offering one-to-one grinds to Irish Traveller students who were sitting the Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied (Year 2) in the catchment area. Subjects included: English, Irish, Maths, Science, History, and languages including exam preparation with a visit to the University's Undergraduate Open Day and Revision Week on campus in semester two.

The Educational Transition Project (ETP) for Irish Traveller students which built on existing initiatives in the Access Centre and involved working directly with community organisations in supporting prospective members of the Irish Traveller community to progress to higher education. ETP is a multi-disciplinary project, designed to support Irish Traveller students to achieve their desired educational goals.

The Traveller History & Culture School Visits which were open to post/primary schools and further education colleges. The visit included a presentation by the Traveller Education Officer on pathways and supports in higher education while discussing Irish Traveller history and culture with Irish Traveller historical related items.

The institutional rollout of the Michael McDonagh Award for Traveller Ally Excellence, which recognises the outstanding efforts of University of Galway staff who have shown leadership in engaging the public in Irish Traveller history and culture, encouraging the full participation of Irish Travellers in education and advancing Irish Traveller human rights. It is named in honour of the late Michael McDonagh, who advocated on behalf of the Irish Traveller community for over fifty years.

A research report which provides an evidence-based understanding of barriers to access, progression, and retention in education for Irish Traveller's barriers (forthcoming in 2023).



## 2.4 Embedding Access and Inclusion Project

This project is led by the Access Centre and funded by the HEA through its Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) Strategic Initiatives funding. The purpose is to drive excellence in teaching and learning and the built environment for the benefit of all students, but specifically for students with disabilities. The project incorporates five pillars that aim to create an inclusive environment across all stages of the student lifecycle:

**1. Embedding UDL:** Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a design approach to teaching, learning and assessment for universal accessibility and inclusion. By considering the needs of students most at risk of exclusion and designing teaching and learning activities to reach and support them, all students stand to benefit, and no students are disadvantaged. As part of University of Galway's core values of Respect, Openness, Sustainability and Excellence, UDL has been identified as a priority in the Strategic Plan 2020 to 2025.

A UDL co-ordinator was appointed in January 2022 with responsibility for coordinating and collaborating with internal and external partners on UDL activities including workshops, training and professional development opportunities and advocacy.

Ally accessibility software was purchased for our VLE system through the funding in 2021 and renewed for the academic year 2022/23.

Another 27 staff were awarded the UDL digital badge. To date 104 staff have received digital badges, with 6 trained facilitators of UDL. Shannon College of Hotel Management celebrated 8 teaching staff attaining the badge.

**2. Accessible Campus:** Enhancing the physical accessibility of the campus and buildings is a key pillar of this project.

Stage 1: An accessibility audit of campus highlighted gaps in the provision of emergency evacuation facilities and planning for students with mobility restrictions. To address this a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) process, directly informed by the principles of universal design, was devised, and implemented.

Stage 2: The project brief also required the compilation of data on the physical accessibility of campus routes. To this end the project partnered with the Insight SFI Research Centre for Data Analytics on its Crowd4Access footpath-mapping project to map campus routes for accessibility, making University of Galway the first HEI to do so. Staff and students, including University President, Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, came together to map the accessibility of the campus.

**3. Assistive Technology:** Over the past four years, the number of students registered with the Disability Support Service has increased considerably. Increasing the amount of assistive technology support for students with specific learning needs provides independence and accessibility, allowing for greater independence and autonomy, as well as increased engagement with the learning process.

The first Autism sensory space was installed as part of the project. The space, which is open to all students, staff, and visitors, brings the University one step closer to achieving the ASIAM autism-friendly campus designation.



**4. Fostering Mental Health and Wellbeing:** For many students, the transfer to third-level study is a major life-event that can be extremely stressful. This pillar focused on three areas:

Project 1 – Delivery of the Decider Skills Programme. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to teach students to recognise their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, allowing them to monitor and manage their own emotions and mental health.

Project 2 – The Enhancement of Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP®), and development of Creidim, peer-support group to combine both online and face to face meet ups

Project 3 – The Delivery of an awareness campaign to promote use of JAM (Just a Minute) Cards on campus.

**5. Supporting Transitions via mentoring and placement planning:** The pillar focusses on supporting students with disabilities as they move into third-level education with all the new information, responsibility, environmental and social change that entails. The project commissioned research to examine the role and potential benefits of peer-based mentoring during this phase of the academic journey for students with disabilities.

Work placement programmes at University of Galway have expanded dramatically: 78% of programmes now include a compulsory or optional work placement element. The pillar has formalised a system of support with all colleges to assist students with disabilities and provided equal opportunities to access placement-planning support.

## 2.5 Laptop Loan Scheme

As part of a package of supports for higher and further education institutions during the 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 HEIs in terms of eligibility criteria. Other university units such as ISS, student Services, chaplaincy, CALPD and the Library have played a crucial role in the success of the scheme

Under this scheme, 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 study 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 an ICT device for their studies.

The allocation of devices was based on the target groups identified in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019:

- 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 members of the Traveller and Roma communities.
- Students who are lone parents
- Students who are members of ethnic minorities

Priority in the scheme was given to target groups, 1st year students and final year students. In the academic year 2021-2022 **158 laptops** were distributed to eligible students on a long-term basis. In addition, a further **28 students** gained access to a laptop for a temporary time as a part of our short-term/emergency scheme ran by the University's Chaplaincy.

**Table 15.** Laptop distribution by Target Group

Target Breakdown – Distributed laptops	
Access Students	33
First-time mature students	11
DARE	34
HEAR	39
FET/QQI	6
Part-Time	4
Traveller/Roma	6
Lone Parents	17
Ethnic Minorities	26
<b>Total Target Group</b>	<b>173</b>



## 2.6 Alternative Eye

Alternative Eye is a new pilot podcast series supported by the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies exploring why difference is not always what we think it is. In 2021/22, three contributors took the listener on a journey through their lived experience and explained how it plays out in everyday life and in education. We heard their unique stories and gained insights into their unseen lives, all served up with a Galway slant.



The aim of Alternative Eye is to hear about personal experiences on various themes relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion in the life of the College. The three episodes in the pilot cover the areas of autism, adapting to work and education with dyslexia combined with working memory disorder, and navigating the world with a physical disability. The intention is to build on this series in the next academic year and explore additional aspects of diversity in our College. It is hoped that the material will also support teaching, learning and research related to these themes.

Alternative Eye was devised and produced by award-winning independent audio producer Orla Higgins. The episodes featured on our campus station Flirt FM 101.3 and are also available at the following link:

<https://flirtfm.ie/articles/alternative-eye/>

## 2.7 Medical Opportunities for Sanctuary Transition Years (MOST) Pilot Programme

The Medical Opportunities for Sanctuary Transition Years (MOST) project was developed as a pilot by the School of Medicine. It was informed by the experience of a previous outreach programme, delivered by the School of Medicine in secondary and national schools in Connemara – known as the Clár Ambasadóireachta na Scoile Leighis (Connolly & Kelly 2017), as well as the recent College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences Widening Participation Report (Kelly et al., 2019) and a review of the uptake of University of Sanctuary scholarships within the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. Delivery of the pilot was supported by the Access Centre via the UoS Schools of Sanctuary programme and the Traveller Education Officer.

The primary aim of the MOST pilot was to establish the feasibility, acceptability, and impact of a mentoring programme for secondary school pupils interested in Medicine. It was principally aimed at students who would meet the eligibility requirements for University of Sanctuary Scholarships- i.e., International Protection applicants, refugees, vulnerable immigrant groups and Irish Travellers.

Four students took part in the pilot, three of whom were Irish Travellers; three were Transition year students and one was in Leaving Certificate year. The pilot was delivered online and consisted of eight interactive one-hour sessions, delivered over a ten-week period. Each student was assigned an individual mentor, who was a senior member of the School of Medicine Staff. Mentors were chosen to best match the interests of the participating students. In doing so, one additional mentor from outside the School of Medicine became involved as a co-mentor. Each student was offered three one to one meetings with their mentors. Students were encouraged to engage with reflective writing to explore their motivation to do medicine. The reflective writing formed the basis of the one-to-one mentoring sessions.

The other sessions were delivered in groups by senior School of Medicine staff, Consultants, General Practitioners, doctors in postgraduate training and medical students. Through the group sessions participants were given the opportunity to learn the same materials as junior medical students, including basics of history taking, communicating with patients, how to conduct and interpret investigations, how to make a preliminary diagnosis and management plan, as well as learning about how to apply to medicine and what the medical course entails. Each week a different theme was presented, for example: "A Day in the life of a patient," "A day in the life of a medical student," "A day in the life of a GP."

Feedback from the participating students was positive:

*"I would try to encourage anyone interested in medicine to talk to you as it would encourage them to pursue a career in medicine"*

(Transition Year participant)

*"I liked learning new things about medicine and I got to talk to doctors about their lives and work. I don't know many students who have had such an opportunity"*

(Transition Year participant)

*"I had a fun time doing it, and I learned a lot. It helped solidify my goal in my mind" (Leaving Cert participant) "Everything covered felt worthwhile"*

(Leaving Cert participant)

## 2.8 Attract-Transition-Succeed (ATS) Mentoring

In 2021-22 the Access Centre's ATS Mentoring programme continued to match current/former undergraduate students with new entrants to full-time undergraduate study. Over 2,500 first year new entrants received a mentor this year. The overall aim of the ATS Mentoring Programme is to provide peer mentoring to new entrants to ease the transition to University life. Mentors and mentees are matched based on entry route, chosen course of study and/or career path, providing students with an important source of social capital and peer support as they begin their academic journey. Of the just under 200 students who volunteered to become mentors on the programme this year, the following outlines the number of ATS mentors who entered via the different WP entry routes:

**Table 16.**

Entry Route	
<b>DARE</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HEAR</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>FET/PLC</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Mature</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Mature Access</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>School Leaver Access</b>	<b>5</b>

## 2.9 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
- FETAC
- 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 C5,000 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: C5,000 per year
- Tier 2 Bursaries: C2,000 per year
- Tier 3 Once-off payments of C1,500

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: 9 Tier 1 Bursaries (C5,000 per year) were awarded, 16 Tier 2 Bursaries (C2,000 per year) were awarded and 7 Tier 3 Once-off payments of C1,500 were awarded.

## 2.10 Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development (CALPD)

The CALPD offers a range of part-time, flexible courses providing professional development opportunities for adult learners. Offering Diplomas, Degree and postgraduate study opportunities, learners upskill in Science and Technology, Business and Management, Languages, Community Education, IT, Early Childhood Studies, and many other subject areas, whilst also working and managing family commitments.

A number of outreach initiatives are organised by CALPD each year to improve access to education for adult learners. Events include virtual information events showcasing different subject areas and facilitating drop-in sessions for potential students to inquire about the requirements needed for beginning or returning to education as an adult learner. These sessions provide an opportunity for adults to gauge what courses or subject matter most relate to their requirements, either for self-learning and improvement or for diversifying existing knowledge to allow for a change in career choice.

### **Pre-entry and Post Entry Student Supports**

Returning to education can be challenging for adult learners. In order to support the decision process and bridge the knowledge gap, learners are provided with several pre-entry support tools such as an online Student Launchpad, where they can access samples of learning material and advice about being an online learner, time management and support services at the University. A bank of detailed frequently asked questions along with comprehensive answers are also provided. Online meetings with potential applicants are organised with Course Directors and administrative staff to discuss specific course requirements and queries.

Once students apply and register for a course, transitional supports are also needed to ensure that students settle into their course of study (e.g., how to register, using Blackboard, submit assessments/use of Turnitin etc). To ensure accessibility for all learners video versions are also available. Orientation guides have been developed for each

element of the course, comprehensive orientation events are scheduled online and in-person for students. One-to-one interventions are also offered to assist students with registration, activating online services, using Blackboard, ensuring that all learners are provided with equal access to services.

A number of post-entry supports are offered to students, including a CALPD Scholarship which provides a discount on fees for students in receipt of a Department of Social Protection payment. Fully funded courses for unemployed students are also available through Springboard+. Many courses are offered through the mode of online learning. Student engagement is closely monitored through Blackboard and CALPD staff reach out to students at risk of disengaging from their course. Assessment schedules are spread out through each semester to manage the student workload and ensure student retention. Students who require additional supports are referred to the Disability Support Service for assistance. Employment opportunities and Careers Service events are circulated on a regular basis to students and are particularly beneficial for those who are unemployed or those seeking a career change.

### **Research in Online Learning and Course Design**

The Centre has recently launched a report entitled: Silver Linings: Developing a Model of Fully Online Teaching and Learning during a Global Pandemic, which documents research undertaken by a team within the CALPD, during the 2020-2021 academic year. Funding received through the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, awarded locally by the University, supported research into the development of a fully online model of module delivery, based on best practice knowledge, and theories and research relevant to adult learning and online teaching. Widening access to participation, promoting accessibility and student support to engage with online technologies, as well as tutor upskilling, are central elements of the design of the CALPD Model.

### **Maximise and amplify our impact**

The Centre consistently works towards maximising its impact in the region by developing teaching hubs in locations outside of Galway (e.g., Shannon, Ballinasloe, Midlands, Northern Ireland) to expand the reach of the University to communities and organisations on a regional and national basis. CALPD staff regularly participate in Employment Seminars and Job Expos to advertise the range of programmes and learning options available to potential students of the University.

The Centre is also keen to strengthen existing and establish new links with industry, professional bodies, community partners, educational bodies, and government led initiatives such as Springboard and the Human Capital Initiative. It continues to foster strategic partnerships with enterprise towards upskilling and reskilling workers in diverse skills areas. This engagement with external partners aims to maximise contribution to regional and national development.

### **Micro-creds Initiative**

CALPD recognises the importance of facilitating education through once-off/stackable credit awards to expand educational knowledge, thereby contributing to increased job opportunities, career changes, and incremental learning that allows students to build towards an overarching education path based on the individual's specific needs and requirements. CALPD recently launched its Micro-creds webpage to advertise these opportunities to prospective students: <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/courses/cpd/microcreds/> and courses are available to apply for via the University's CRM Application System.

## 2.11 Recognition of Prior Learning

The National Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education (RPL in HE) Project is a four-year collaboration sponsored by the Technological Higher Education Association and the Irish Universities Association, which works across 19 publicly funded higher education institutions (HEIs). The project is funded under the HEA's Human Capital Initiative Pillar 3 (Innovation & Agility). University of Galway is one of the 19 partner institutions and in December 2021 appointed its institutional Project Lead person. This project marks an innovative collaboration between all Institutes of Technology, Universities, and the new Technological Universities, and has transformative potential for Ireland's education system to become an international leader in RPL.

RPL is best described as a bridging mechanism for learners to access and/or advance their learning in formal education. It is also a bridge for HEIs, offering them the opportunity to engage in new and innovative ways with individuals and groups of learners from diverse learning and workplace settings.

RPL as a concept values all types of learning, regardless of where it has occurred (e.g., in formal education settings, workplaces or everyday life). Higher education applicants whose prior learning is formally recognised can be granted access, advanced entry, credit, or exemptions from modules. Thus, this project has the potential to make a significant contribution to University of Galway's efforts in widening access and participation.

The project will work towards establishing RPL as an integral part of the higher education system, widely understood, celebrated, and utilized as a flexible pathway to further learning, certification, and professional development. It will do this by building a consistent and coherent approach to RPL within and across the entire public higher education (HE) sector.

The RPL in HE project builds on earlier University of Galway RPL practice and developments and seeks to extend what has already been achieved within the University. It is designed to drive RPL systematically and strategically across Irish HE in a way that hasn't been achieved to date. Creating the conditions for a shift in mindset regarding RPL in HE is key to unlocking and embedding a culture of lifelong learning.

Learners are at the heart of this project. RPL is an adaptable and inclusive process in that it recognizes all learning, not only that which is formally accredited; and in that it welcomes all learners, especially those who have been excluded, up to now, in the formal system

## 2.12 Youth Academy



The Youth Academy at University of Galway works with high ability 4th, 5th and 6th class primary school students to support their learning and academic development. The Youth Academy aims to introduce children and their families to University life and enrich the primary school curriculum. Classes are held in October/November and February/March each year. Classes take place on campus on Saturday mornings and weeklong summer camps are also held in July. 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. The Youth Academy liaises with the Home School Liaison teachers in all DEIS schools in Galway to encourage participation. Relationships have also been established with the Irish Traveller 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 of Galway to encourage students living in direct provision centres to apply. Several children from the Eglington Direct Provision Centre in Salthill have attended Youth Academy courses and transport was provided to ensure ease of access.

The Youth Academy has recently expanded to offer courses to secondary school students. Twenty five percent of places were available free of charge in our pilot programme to medical card holders and students from DEIS schools.

## 2.13 Academic Writing Centre (AWC)

The AWC works closely with the Access Centre to ensure that underrepresented students receive support with 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 2021-22, the AWC held 95 one-on-one sessions with students registered for disability support and other students linked with the Access Centre. In total 229 one-on-one sessions took place, which represents 55% of the total visits (412). Of these sessions, 95 (23%) were for students registered for disability support, and 134 (32%) were for students otherwise linked with Access Centre, such as those who entered University of Galway as mature students or via the Access programme. In addition, the AWC held several workshops advertised exclusively for students linked with the Access Centre; 77 students attended these in 2021-22.

## 2.14 Breaking the SEAL

University of Galway's School of Education and James Hardiman Library commenced an archive engagement programme in 2015, seeking to better equip second-level students in their Leaving Certificate history studies and encourage them to pursue further history studies at University of Galway on completion of their second-level senior cycle.

Breaking the SEAL (Student Engagement with Archival Learning), invited Connacht-area DEIS school history students on-campus for a day long workshop designed to build confidence and capability among junior historians. Aside from an active learning experience, the workshop also allowed within its schedule an opportunity for students to commence their Leaving Cert non-exam element – the Research Study Report (RSR) – before departing. This immersive third-level initiative also pulled personnel from University of Galway's PME (post-primary teacher training programme), University of Galway's Access Centre (Academic Writing team) and the James Hardiman library (research skills and archive searches), allowing students to mix with faculty staff and next-generation learners in higher education. Almost 100% of participating students commenced their RSR during the workshop and returned to their respective schools more confident and better prepared for the rigours of independent research and archive engagement with structured study aims, clear research project parameters, a topic, a research question (thesis statement), primary and secondary source potential, an understanding of the RSR purpose, and a study timeline.

Each student was also invited to enter an essay-writing competition using their completed RSR. This competition culminated in a subsequent or secondary finalists' competition which (aside from the literary essay element) also allowed students to present a less-academic, more human appraisal of their research experience exploring personal motivations, connections to the essay topic, and discoveries about the research process. Upon exhaustion of project funding for Breaking the SEAL and the imposition of Covid-induced public health restrictions, the workshops ceased

and Breaking the SEAL was dissolved. In its place, Dr. Paul Flynn of the School of Education launched the Irish National History Competition as an alternative means of:

- a) celebrating second-level history scholarship; and
- b) spotlighting and sharing high-calibre second-level research.

The Irish National History Competition also expanded the participant catchment area beyond Connacht's DEIS school cohort, availing entry opportunity to all senior cycle history students throughout the Irish Republic.

Breaking the SEAL and the Irish National History Competition have thus far allowed more than 500 second-level students to "test-drive" Leaving Certificate history submissions, celebrated around 100 students as essay finalists and facilitated academic exchanges for about 20 students to Hamburg, Germany (and wider Europe) within Koerber-Stiftung's EUSTORY network.

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

In 2021/22 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.

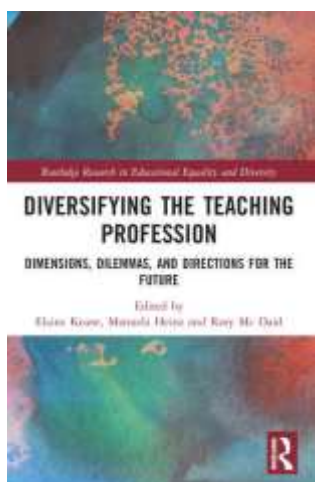
SUMS opens on Friday afternoons to facilitate Mature students and students taking Access/Foundation courses. To accommodate access students who are in full time employment and those students who have tutorials in the afternoons, SUMS increased the opening hours during 20 weeks by two hours of online support on Wednesday evenings 6 - 8pm.

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 numbers of visits to SUMS in recent years by these students and their positive feedback is evidence of the successful achievement of this objective

## 2.16 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 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 (€43,380 in 2021 /2022), 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, which is open to all students, is the Hardship and Emergency Fund, which aids students who have found themselves in an unexpectedly difficult financial situation.

## 2.17 Access to post-primary Teaching (APT) Project



The APT Project (PIs: Dr. Elaine Keane and Dr. Manuela Heinz, School of Education) is 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. This project 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 31 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 600 senior cycle students in DEIS schools. Other project activities include an annual Schools' event through which almost 1,000 post-primary students in DEIS schools have been supported about 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 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* (Keane et al., 2023) was recently published (see: <https://www.routledge.com/Diversifying-the-Teaching-Profession-Dimensions-Dilemmas-and-Directions/Keane-Heinz-Daid/p/book/9781032037349>)

## 2.18 Cell Explorers (CE)

Cell EXPLORERS ([www.cellexplorers.com](http://www.cellexplorers.com)) is a science education and public engagement programme that aims to inform, inspire, and involve the general public in science. Established in 2012, the programme uses a dual-benefit volunteer model to deliver hands-on activities to young people aged 8-15 years in the areas of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), whilst training scientists (staff and students) in public engagement. Activities are delivered at schools, science festivals, youth groups and online, by a network of 13 teams based in 10 institutions across Ireland, which are supported by the University of Galway coordinator team. The Cell EXPLORERS network is supported by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). Science Club run with a local youth group over summer 2022.



Recently, the programme has re-focused its efforts to widen participation in its activities for 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. This mission is what underpins the Giving Real Opportunities to Widen Participation in Science (GROWS) project, which is funded by the Medtronic Foundation.

In addition to revising its practice, the Cell Explorers team have also created two new activities: a molecular biology Escape room and a Science Club. The Escape Room is a hands-on interactive activity where young people (aged 12-15 years old) have 60 minutes to complete a series of biological experiments to identify a patient and 'escape' the room. Playing the game requires no previous science knowledge, and it is specifically being disseminated to schools which have DEIS (Delivery Equality of Opportunity in Schools) status.

The Science Club is a 5-week programme where young people attend a 90-minute session on a weekly basis at their local youth group. During the Science Club sessions participants engage in a series of hands-on STEM activities, guided in their discovery by CE scientist explainers. Collaboration is at the heart of Science Club, and young people are the drivers of their own STEM engagement, by participating in inquiry-based and peer-learning techniques.

In 2021-22, the University of Galway CE team directly engaged with approximately 420 young people in activities aimed at widening participation. This includes Fantastic DNA in a Box visits to DEIS schools, Fantastic DNA at Home to refugees on World Refugee Day (June 20th, 2021), Fantastic DNA on-campus workshops for Traveller Ethnicity Day (March 3rd, 2022), CE Escape room events facilitated at a local DEIS secondary school and youth groups, and a Science Club run with a local youth group over summer 2022.

## 2.19 Further Education to Higher Education Committee

In 2018, University of Galway's Further Education (FE) to Higher Education (HE) Committee was established. Meeting on a monthly basis, this group set out to foster greater collaboration between both sectors and increase the progression opportunities for students from the FET sector to University of Galway. As highlighted by the recent SOLAS report, FET in Numbers 2020, the further education sector represents a particularly diverse education sector with, for example, 1,139 members of the Travelling Community enrolled in further education and training courses and 11,376 learners with at least one self-declared disability. Prior to the group's establishment, University of Galway offered 62 places across a limited number of full-time undergraduate degree programmes to students with a recognised QQI/FET level 5 or 6 qualification. By 2018/19 this number had increased to 100. By 2021/22, this number had increased to over 230. The opening up of higher education opportunities for FET students at University of Galway has produced immediate results (see figure 4 in the first section of this report): in 2011/12, and prior to the establishment of the working group, only 43 students entered full-time undergraduate degrees through this entry pathway; in 2018/19 this number increased to 93; and in 19/20 this number increased further to 100. For the academic year 21/22, this figure has risen to 134, which represents a 211% increase from the pre-committee figure



## 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 in order 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 on 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 a project 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 C6m 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 a number of 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-varsity 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 Gavin Collins**

Gavin Collins is Vice Dean for Student Recruitment & Public Engagement in the College of Science and Engineering. Gavin holds a Science Foundation Ireland Career Development Award, and was an ERC Laureate, Fulbright Scholar (UC Berkeley), Royal Irish Academy Charlemount Scholar, Ireland-Canada University Scholar (UBC, Vancouver), Marie Curie Fellow (Max Planck Institute, Bremen); Irish Research Council Fellow; and British Science Association Media Fellow at The Irish Times.

**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 in particular is 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.

**Imogen O'Flaherty Falconer**

Imogen O'Flaherty Falconer is Vice President/ Welfare & Equality Officer in the University of Galway Students' Union. Imogen's role is to support students through any issues that might have relating to welfare and equality during their time at University of Galway.

**Cliona Ní Neill**

Cliona 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 the University of Galway an accessible campus for international protection applicants, and members of our travelling community.

**Joe Mee**

Joe Mee is Vice-President for Education in the University of Galway Students' Union. Joe's mission is to champion a culture of transparency, cooperation, and engagement within the student movement. Joe has a particular interest in ensuring that all students are supported in pursuing their educational goals.

**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).

## 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 Flagship Actions for 2025

- 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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