



Univers'Emploi Transition to Employment:

Irish Evaluation Summary Report

Trinity College Dublin
&
University College Cork

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Introduction

As a result of national strategies, the number of disabled students participating in third level education in Ireland has grown significantly in the last decade from 450 in 2000, to over 6,000 in 2010 (Ahead 2010). Consequently, the number of disabled graduates entering the labour market is at unprecedented levels.

The Disability Support Services in TCD and UCC assist students with developing self-awareness, self-determination and self-advocacy skills, and supports students in the acquisition of transferable skills. Despite this support, the transition to employment can be particularly challenging for students with sensory and physical disabilities and those with mental health difficulties

Leonardo Project - Univers' Emploi

TCD and UCC became partners in the Leonardo funded employment transfer project 'Univers' Emploi' in 2010. The project aimed to enhance the employability skills of students with high end disabilities and each partner country piloted an employment support framework in the needs assessment process on a sample of 20 students

Starting Process:

A survey of students entering their final year of study in TCD and UCC was conducted to determine the level of interest in participating in this pilot, and issues and concerns about the transition to employment. It was agreed that those with physical, sensory, significant illness (SOI), mental health difficulties and Asperger's Syndrome (AS) would be the focus of this pilot as these students were identified as having significant difficulties in preparing and gaining employment.

In TCD the website <http://www.tcd.ie/disability/projects/Phase3/Leonardo.php> was developed to disseminate information, and in UCC the website <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dss/projects/Leonardo/> was developed. Additionally, a guide for all stakeholders (student, university and employers/mentors) was produced to ensure all were aware of responsibilities in participating in this project.

National Sample:

Twenty six students were identified for the l'Univers Emploi pilot in Ireland. This sample comprised of seven students with mental health difficulties, six with physical disabilities, four with vision impairments, three with Asperger's Syndrome, three with a hearing impairment, two with SOI, and one with dyspraxia.

Four students withdrew indicating deteriorating illness and overwhelming academic responsibilities as reasons for withdrawal. All students determined that academic responsibilities had to take priority over the transition to employment process as grades achieved in their final year of undergrad or post grad studies were crucial for their future career prospects.

Needs Assessment:

TCD and UCC consider the inclusion of employability to the Needs Assessment of students with disabilities to be a most beneficial aspect of participation in the l'Univers Emploi project. This concept was previously not included in the Needs Assessment process for students with disabilities in Ireland and as a result of participation in this project, Needs Assessment form were revised to include the employment element of the Atrhus Model.

Pilot process:

Students who agreed to participate in the pilot were invited to meet the pilot core team in their home university for an assessment of employability needs and to discuss employment ambitions and concerns.

Career Coaching:

A practical approach was taken to career coaching in the Irish context. This is in contrast to approaches in partner countries that involved counselling for psychosocial difficulties using Integrative and Behavioural Therapy.

UCC contracted a Career Coach from Employability Cork, an employment agency for people with disabilities, who set up individual meetings with students. In TCD, follow-up meetings were arranged in-house with a qualified Careers' Advisor.

Students met careers coaches an average of 3-4 times, primarily for assistance with the preparation of applications, cover letters and CV's, and the identification of possible opportunities for work placement or employment. The level of career coaching that students required varied from case to case. As all students were at a different point in their transition, they had diverse needs and a one-size fits all approach was unfeasible.

Facilitating Strategies:

An integrated model of support was used in both Irish Universities. This model combined academic guidance, disability advice, career coaching and guidance in employment from a mentor.

Academic Guidance:

Academic guidance was provided to participants to assist them to complete their degree programme whilst participating in the pilot.

Disability Advice:

Each participant met frequently with their Disability Advisor who reviewed the Needs Assessment, Transition Plan and addressed any queries that the student may have had.

Guidance to Employment – Employment Mentor:

Eight students in UCC were linked to a mentor or mentors from within a relevant organisations or companies associated with their career aspirations defined in their employment transition plan. To date, one participant has completed work placement and therefore completed the mentoring process. In TCD, all students were assigned mentors from TCD's Occupational Therapy Service and nine students made further links in with practitioners in their chosen fields.

Students determined that the mentoring process was a really beneficial component of the project. It is noteworthy, in Ireland, 50% of mentors were identified within the public sector. This correlates with figures in partner countries.

Feedback from Stakeholders

Methodology:

The pilot was evaluated through qualitative analysis. Semi-Structured interviews were conducted with students, mentors and disability/career professionals participating in the project.

Benefits of the Project - Students Perspectives

- **Transition Plan:** The inclusion of employability into the needs assessment was of considerable benefit to students, as it allowed them to focus on their future goals and to plan in respect of the skills and preparation necessary for successful transition to employment.
- **Transition Process:** As a result of participation in the pilot students report increased knowledge and skills in context of employment: They were as follows::
 - Enhanced communication and interpersonal skills
 - Greater degree of self-awareness, self-confidence and self esteem
 - Interview skills
 - Increased organisational and time management skills
 - Greater knowledge of the soft skills necessitated in employment context such as team working, project work, problem solving skills
 - Understanding of dress codes necessary in the workplace
 - Greater understanding of the rights and entitlements of people with disabilities in the workplace
 - Enhanced awareness of different work place cultures for example some students noted stark difference in mentoring from mentor in private and public sector workplaces
- **Learning Outcomes and Personal Development:** As a result of their participation in the project, students feel more positive about the challenges faced in the transition to employment.

- **Disclosure:** As a result of their participation in the project, students report a greater awareness of their legal rights in terms of disclosure and work place supports. However, students felt that disclosure will be an ongoing issue within their career, with the decision to disclose being context specific.

Challenges Experienced by Students during Participation in the Project:

- **Time Management:** Due to the level of academic commitments it was difficult for students to commit to the transition to employment process as many had to prepare for final year examinations and complete several course assignments
- **The Extent of Mentoring Needed:** Some students required more coaching and mentoring than others, and some disability types are more reliant on supports in College than others. Some students reported the difficulty in setting time to properly engage with mentoring process.
- **When should transition planning start?** Students involved in the pilot reported that they would like to see planning for the transition to employment begun earlier in the students' academic career.

Benefits of the Project – University Professionals

- All the University professionals felt that the use of the employment focus was beneficial in the needs assessment process and each University intends to embed this approach in the needs assessment of all students with disabilities entering higher education in their respective institutions
- Greater communication evolved between career services and disability services as result of the project
- Important networks were developed between University professionals and employers/ mentors positive to disability
- Many of the University Disability and Career Professionals remarked an Enhanced understanding of the challenges experienced by students managing the transition plan and greater awareness of the importance of building the skills for employment earlier in the academic experience of students with disabilities.

Challenges experienced by University Professionals during the Project

- Time constraints of the project – a short timeframe to record and work with the participating students and still manage the workload of their own respective duties and responsibilities

Benefits of the Project recorded by Mentors working with Students

- Greater understanding of the everyday challenges experienced first-hand by the students with disabilities
- Realisation of the ability of students with disabilities

- Project changed assumptions some mentors had of the ability of students with disabilities
- Enhanced liaison between mentors and Universities involved in the project
- Realisation that the mentor needed to focus on empowering student to acquire the knowledge and tools necessary to manage the workplace rather than helping the student

Challenges Experienced By Mentors

- Time constraints of companies who are experiencing many challenges in employment context in Ireland
- The short time frame of the mentoring process meant that some mentors were under pressure to see significant results in the mentoring process especially with the students with mental health problems
- Some mentors also commented on need for greater sensitisation of disability in preparation for involvement in project

Recommendations

Students, university professionals and mentors all reported the need to start the employment focus earlier in the academic experience of students with disabilities attending higher education

1. Some students and staff reported that the employment focus should begin in second level before the student with a disability chooses the degree programme as many students said they were not aware of the employment options following specific degree programmes
2. Embed Employment focus in Needs Assessment of all students with disabilities entering higher education in Ireland
3. Build on networks developed with professionals within Universities i.e. career and disability professionals to enhance understanding of issues and challenges experienced by students with disabilities managing the transition plan
4. Build on networks developed with Employment mentors and with Employability Cork,- agency which focuses on finding employment for people with disabilities
5. Work within University contexts to ensure more degree programmes have core modules focussed on employment. Currently, UCC has employment focus on only 60% of degree programmes
6. Development of transition to employment specialist supports in both universities (see main report for full details of proposal (page 51)
7. UCC is exploring recognition in form of a 5 credit module of employment/volunteering during student's academic programme. This approach will also encourage the development of employment related skills and soft skills necessitated in the world of work.

Proposal for Dissemination Strategy

1. Both universities will host seminars internally with relevant stakeholders to publicise the findings and future strategic directions in transitioning to employment for disabled graduates;
2. National report and final four country report will be disseminated to relevant internal and external stakeholders;
3. Report will be presented to the National Access Office in the HEA to influence future strategic directions (HEA will be producing new national plan in 2013);
4. Report and findings will be presented to the national Disability network (DAWN), a representative body of 21 HEI, this will allow for dissemination and implementation of employment element into the agreed national needs assessment form used by all HEI in DAWN.
5. Relevant presentation of findings will be sought at national conferences to ensure findings are disseminated.

Appendix – Detailed description of the Proposal of Structure for Presenting Research Results.

The Irish Context

1.1 Introduction:

As a result of national and Higher Education strategies, the number of disabled students participating in third level education has grown significantly. The last decade has seen student numbers rise from 450 in 2000, to over 6,000 in 2010 (Ahead 2010). Consequently, the number of disabled graduates entering the labour market is at unprecedented levels. There are few studies relating to the status of graduates with disabilities in the Irish labour market, and there is no national data through the HEA First Destination Survey (HEA 2010) that provides an indication of the employment levels of disabled graduates.

Taking a national view at the employment of people with disabilities in Ireland, it is clear that this sector of the population find the task of securing employment more difficult than others. According to a report written by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2008, only one out of three Irish people with a disability has a job, one of the lowest rates in the OECD. This low employment rate of people with disabilities has changed little between 1998 and 2008, despite Ireland's strong job creation. It is also significant, as indicated by the OECD, that as a direct result of these low employment figures, people with disabilities in Ireland face a very high poverty risk.

In 2010, T.C.D. and U.C.C. were asked by the HEA to participate in an OECD study 'Pathways for Disabled Students to Tertiary Education and Employment'. The resulting report 'Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Tertiary Education and Employment' (OECD, 2011) provided significant new knowledge and insight into effective policies and practice to support people with disabilities, as they move from school into post-secondary education or employment. This document, together with changes in the economic climate, prompted the development of phased approach to the Student Journey, resulting in a clear strategy for assisting disabled students and graduates to determine their needs in the employment arena.

The focus of this research strand is an investigation into the experiences of disabled students as they transition into employment. It examines the personal, occupational and environmental issues that disabled students deal with as they prepare for participation in the labour market. Ultimately the objective is to pilot and evaluate the final stage of the T.C.D. transition tool, developed within the DS to assist disabled students through each stage of transition, pre-entry, within College, and into the world of work. Finally it will identify issues from the perspective of employers and employees that arise in the employment of disabled students.

The Disability Support Services (DS) in T.C.D. and U.C.C. assists students with developing self-awareness, self-determination and self-advocacy skills as an enabling strategy, and supports students in the acquisition of transferable skills that can be developed across all three phases of the student journey as outlined in our strategic plan. The DS aim to develop clear and effective support systems at all stages in the student journey from college entrance, through college to graduation and into employment. The DS Services in both Universities aims to encourage students to work independently from the beginning of their college career, whilst providing guidance in the achievement of such independence. A holistic approach is taken in the provision of supports for students with sensory and physical disabilities, those with significant on-going illnesses, students with mental health challenges and students with specific learning difficulties with a view to assisting students to make a successful transition to employment. Despite the supports put in place for students with disabilities, the transition to employment can be difficult and students need to begin preparing for employment from the beginning of their college career and most certainly prior to their final year in college.

T.C.D. and U.C.C. recognise that employment is a necessary progression for students with disabilities on a financial, personal and social level. Consequently, the Universities have developed strategies to improve employment prospects for students with disabilities for example by participating in the l'Univers Emploi initiative. The OECD states that in Ireland, frequently, students are not targeted at the beginning of their studies in higher level education allowing them time to develop the skills necessary for employment. Further, the OECD states that insufficient links are

made to allow students to prepare for their future social and professional inclusion. Transition policies are required which will optimise the progression of students with disabilities to employment. In order for successful transition to the labour force to occur it is necessary that higher education institutions show the additional commitment and attention to the professional future of students with disabilities as they do for the general student population. Higher Education Institutions need to create links with employers and encourage them to recruit students with disabilities.

Leonardo Project - Univers'Emploi:

This is an innovative employment transfer project that builds on the employment strategy developed by the University of Aarhus (Denmark); the aim of this project is that each partner country will create an employment tool to assist universities to embed employment elements into the needs assessment process. To achieve these goals, this project will compare the Aarhus model with the practices of other partner countries, and thus build a scalable and transferable methodology linked to national contexts. The pilot study is based on a sample of 20 students per country, and mobilizes actors in the university, the world of business and, if necessary, the sector of vocational rehabilitation.

Starting Process:

A survey of students entering their final year of study in T.C.D. and U.C.C. was conducted to determine the level of interest in participating in this project, and issues and concerns about the transition to employment. High-level results include 48% (n44) of those surveyed in T.C.D. were interested in full-time employment and participation in the pilot, compared with 82% (n28) of a smaller sample in U.C.C. Disclosure of disability was the most significant issue for respondents in both universities (55% TCD, 46% UCC). Lack of disability awareness in the workplace (43% T.C.D., 20% U.C.C.), and negotiating reasonable accommodations (27% T.C.D, 20% U.C.C.) were the next most important issues.

Selection of students to participate in the project was agreed by each participating country, and graduates with physical, sensory, significant illness (SOI), mental health difficulties and Asperger's Syndrome (AS) were the focus of this pilot. These

students were identified as having significant difficulties in preparing and gaining employment.

Dissemination of Information:

In T.C.D. the website <http://www.tcd.ie/disability/projects/Phase3/Leonardo.php> was developed to disseminate information and to report on outcomes of each stage. Additionally, a guide for all stakeholders (student, university and employers/mentors) was produced to ensure all were aware of responsibilities in participating in this project.

In U.C.C. information was provided on the Univers' Emploi project on the Disability Support Service website, <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dss/projects/Leonardo/>. An information leaflet was provided to all stakeholders involved in the project and all final year students were invited to attend an information day in U.C.C. Subsequently, information days were held with Employability Cork and AHEAD (Association for Higher education Access and Disability).

1.2 Sample:

U.C.C.:

Eleven students participated in the Univers' Emploi project in U.C.C. This sample comprised of four students with mental health difficulties, three students with vision impairments, three students with physical disabilities and one student that is hard of hearing.

Out of the eleven students that consented to participation in the project, three students did not continue with their participation and withdrew after a number of weeks. The reasons indicated by students for withdrawal from the project include, illness and an overwhelming number of academic responsibilities. Frequently, students determined that academic responsibilities had to take priority over the transition to employment process. This determination is understandable given that all participants in the project were taking the final year of an undergraduate degree programme or a postgraduate degree.

T.C.D. :

Fifteen students participated in the Univers' Emploi project in TCD. This sample comprised of three students with mental health difficulties, three students with Asperger's Syndrome, three students with physical disabilities, two students with significant on-going illnesses, two students who are hard of hearing, one student with a visual impairment and one with dyspraxia.

Out of the fifteen students that consented to participation in the project, one student did not continue with their participation and withdrew after a number of weeks. Another student obtained an offer of a graduate job during the course of the pilot and at that point ceased engaging.

As with UCC, students frequently determined that academic responsibilities had to take priority over the transition to employment process.

1.3 Needs Assessment and Invitation to Participate:

T.C.D. and U.C.C. considers the inclusion of the employment concept to the Needs Assessment of students with disabilities to be a most beneficial aspect to participation in the Univers Emploi project. This concept was previously not included in the Needs Assessment process for students with disabilities in higher level education in Ireland. As a result of participation in this project, a new Needs Assessment form was drafted to include the nine dimensions of assessment as indicated in the Aarhus Model.

In U.C.C. students were invited to attend a briefing session held by the Disability Support Service, providing information relating to the Univers' Emploi project. At this briefing session, eleven students decided to participate. These students were then asked to meet the Disability Support Officer and the Careers Advisor for an assessment of needs to include aspects relating to employment.

In T.C.D., a survey of students entering their final year of study and postgraduates was conducted to determine the level of interest in participating in this pilot. Following this, students were identified for the pilot. Fifteen students responded to an invitation

to attend a meeting with the Disability Service in to discuss employment ambitions, concerns and transition to employment. Some students responded to emails following the survey, others joined the pilot after speaking to their Occupational Therapists or Disability Officers.

1.4 Purpose of Assessment and Coaching:

U.C.C.:

Upon completion of the assessment of needs with all eleven participants, the Disability Support Service contracted a Career Coach from Employability Cork, an employment agency for people with disabilities. The Career Coach, Aileen O'Driscoll, set up individual meetings with students where she could discuss the Needs Assessment, the Transition to Employment Plan and identify the skills that student's may need to acquire to prepare for the transition to employment. Primarily, Aileen assisted students with the preparation of applications, cover letters and CV's. Aileen identified possible opportunities for work placement or employment that would suit participants in the Univers' Emploi project. The level of career coaching that students required varied from case to case depending on the amount of previous work experience the student had. In many cases numerous sessions with the Career Coach were required.

T.C.D.:

Following the introductory meeting, a report was sent to students, outlining next steps to be taken in the employment process. This action plan approach allowed the student to work on tasks such as dealing with disclosure, attending the Careers Service for specific supports, for example engaging in a mock interview, CV preparation or exploring employment options. Follow-up meetings were arranged with all students together with referral to mentors, email and phone contact, with an average of three meetings per student. A student-centred approach was taken from the outset, with the student setting the direction for employment guidance. For some students this meant identifying a mentor, for others it meant accessing guidance on disclosure and supports within the workplace. As all students were at a different point in their transition, they had diverse needs and a one-size fits all approach was unfeasible.

Facilitating Strategies:

In order to assist the student to participate in the Transition to Employment project, an integrated model of support was used in both Irish Universities. This model combined the following strategies:

- ✓ **Academic Guidance**
- ✓ **Disability Advice**
- ✓ **Career Coaching**
- ✓ **Guidance in Employment – Employment Mentor:**

Academic Guidance:

Academic guidance was provided to participants to assist them to complete their degree programme and academic responsibilities whilst participating in the Transition to Employment project. It was found, in the Irish context, that as participants are in the final year of their degree programme or undertaking a postgraduate programme of study, it was increasingly difficult for them to participate in the project. The successful completion of their studies and the prioritisation of academic responsibilities meant that some participants were forced to withdraw from the project. Thus, it is determined that students should be included in the transition to employment process prior to their final year of study.

Disability Advice (University Counsellor):

Each participant met frequently with their Disability Advisor who reviewed the Needs Assessment, Transition Plan and addressed any queries that the student may have had.

Career Coaching:

U.C.C. participants met with a Career Coach from Employability Cork who assisted the student with applications for work experience and employment. T.C.D. participants met with an in-house career coach who performed the same duties. The Career Coach also helped the student to review and/or develop their CV. Information was provided to the student in relation to reasonable accommodations and disclosure of disability was discussed. A practical approach was taken to career coaching and advice in the Irish context. This is in contrast to approaches in partner countries that

involved counselling for psychosocial difficulties using Integrative and Behavioural Therapy.

Guidance to Employment – Employment Mentor:

Assistance was provided to participants within the employment context. Once employment or work placement opportunities were sourced for the student, an Employment Mentor was identified within the relevant organisation or company. The Employment Mentor provided relevant information to the student in relation to the organisation, duties and tasks and reasonable accommodations. Frequently, students were unable to participate in employment or work placement until the end of the academic year due to examinations and completion of theses.

U.C.C. Outcomes:

In total, U.C.C. has eight students that reached this stage of the project. Mentors have been identified for all participants and at least three meetings have taken place between students and their respective mentors. To date, one participant has completed work placement and therefore completed the mentoring process.

T.C.D. Outcomes:

In total, eleven students from T.C.D. have obtained employment following graduation. All students were assigned mentors from T.C.D.'s Occupational Therapy Service and nine students made further links in with practitioners in their chosen fields. As stated, a student-centred approach was taken from the outset. Some students felt a benefit from linking with the Occupational Therapy service, or with practitioners in the field while others did not. All students were at a different point in their transition and so each followed an individual, tailored path that would complement their present needs.

Students determined that the mentoring process was a really beneficial component of the project. They have assistance with queries in relation to reasonable accommodations, disclosure and tasks and duties. The mentoring process also provides a point of contact within the organisation for any difficulties that may arise. Students have conceded that this point of contact will reduce levels of anxiety inherent in taking up employment for the first time.

It is noteworthy, in Ireland, 50% of mentors were identified within the public sector. This correlates with figures in partner countries. These work place opportunities within the public sector enabled student's access to range of human and technical and financial supports. The financial support included a package to enable student free internet access thereby enabling student to work from home.

1.5 Feedback from Stakeholders:

Detailed information in relation to feedback from all stakeholders will be provided in subsequent sections of this report (See Sections 3-6). For the purposes of assessing feedback in the Irish context, the most significant finding relates to the commitment of students to the transition to employment process. In Ireland, all stakeholders concurred that the transition to employment is time consuming and a process that requires detailed consideration. Students completing their final year in an undergraduate programme or students undertaking postgraduate study do not have enough time to dedicate to this process. It is necessary for students to devote their time to the successful completion of their degree programme. Consequently, the most significant finding, within the Irish context, determines that the transition to employment process should begin once students enter higher level education.

Tools:

Focus Groups: One day workshops and focus groups were held with AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education, Access and Disability. Such events focused on areas such as employment skills, employment opportunities, reasonable accommodations and disclosure.

Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI): Semi-Structured Interviews were used to assess the perceptions of all stakeholders participating in the project. Interviews focused on perceptions relating to expectations, commitment to the project, perception of the tools used and the overall effectiveness of the project.

Analysis of Template for Recording SSS Process: A template was devised to record the feedback provided in the Semi-Structured Interview. This assisted with the recording and analysis of all feedback and allowed for the collation of information.

Records of Meetings with Student and University Counsellor/Career Coach:

Minutes were taken at all meetings between the student and Career Coach/University Counsellor. This allowed for accurate data to be collated in terms of student needs, the development of the CV and information provided in relation to the Transition Plan. It also allowed for records to be held in relation to disclosure.

1.6 Methodology:

In terms of evaluating the Univers' Emploi project in the Irish context, it is necessary to run a qualitative analysis. The sample for this research is relatively small. Two students in U.C.C. disengaged from the project due to deterioration of mental health difficulties and one disengaged in T.C.D. T.C.D. and U.C.C. have collected and collated data from the Semi-Structured Interviews conducted with both students and professionals participating in the project. Information obtained as part of this process will be analysed using the student's life situation and learning approaches as a guideline to the most significant outcome, improving employability prospects for students with disabilities. This data will be interpreted and presented using a social constructivist approach. This approach will conceptualise the students learning, skills acquired and challenges faced during the course of the project.

1.7 Preliminary Analysis of Data:

Throughout the course of this project, student motivation in terms of the transition to employment remained high. In three cases, students withdrew from the project due to reasons of illness and an overwhelming number of academic responsibilities. With the exception of these three participants, students remained focused on the transition to employment and took part in all meetings with the University Counsellor with the objective of participating in work experience and/or employment. This high level of commitment to the project is important, particularly in the Irish context as it reflects that ambition that students with disabilities have to pursue a career of their choice despite the level of unemployment in Ireland today. This finding has been reflected in the evaluation of the project in partner countries also.

It is of further significance that students found the assessment of need and the provision of a Transition Plan to be of huge benefit to them. Students have indicated that this process allowed them to focus on the areas of employment that are of interest to them and to develop the skills necessary to acquire employment in this area. Students and Employment Mentors have indicated that such skills will be of use to them throughout their career.

1.8 Discussion:

a) Benefits of the Project:

Transition Plan: T.C.D. & U.C.C. consider that the inclusion of the employment dimension into the needs assessment process to be of considerable benefit to students with disabilities and is a dimension that will be included in all future assessments for students with disabilities. This dimension provides direction for the student's studies and will increase the participation of students with disabilities in the employment market. Preparation of the Transition Plan is a really beneficial aspect of the project. Each student prepared their Transition Plan with the assistance of a Career Coach. The student then met with staff from the Disability Support Service to ensure that they were satisfied with all aspects of the plan. It allows the student to focus on their future goals and to put plans in place in respect of the skills and preparation necessary for transition. T.C.D. & U.C.C. is aware of the need to review the transition plan regularly. It was evident that during participation in this project that students' needs change over time and that their goals and aims may have to be altered. Frequently, availability of opportunities within the area of employment that the student has chosen may not be available or due to deterioration in a student's medical condition, it is necessary to review the plan.

Transition Process: As a result of participation in the Univers' Emploi project, students have increased knowledge and skills, increased confidence and self-esteem and a greater possibility of obtaining employment was reported. The issue of disclosure is considered significant for students with disabilities. Often students are apprehensive about disclosing their medical condition to an employer and it is an area with which they need advice and support. Participation in this project provided

students with an opportunity to consider the issue and hopefully become more confident about providing information to employers.

Learning Outcomes and Personal Development: As a result of their participation in the project, students have become more positive about the challenges faced in the transition to employment. They have also acquired many skills that will assist them in to the future.

b) Challenges Experienced During Participation in the Project:

Time Management: T.C.D. & U.C.C. is aware that time management for students is a major challenge for this project. Students with disabilities participating in the project have significant demands on their time and completing their studies successfully is of paramount importance. Consequently, students find it difficult to invest time in the transition to employment process particularly in the second semester of their final year in higher level education.

Understanding the Extent of Mentoring Needed to Enhance Employability

Skills: It is evident from the evaluation of this project that students were unprepared for the transition to employment. They required career coaching, training in terms of skills such as CV preparation and letter writing. Students needed to identify areas of interest to them in terms of employment and time was spent on researching available opportunities within the employment market.



Characteristics of participants and organisations

2.1 Student and Mentor Characteristics:

Table One:

Student	University	Female/ Male	Study	Disability	Mentor	Female/ Male	Company	Public	Private	Organisation
S1	UCC	M	Masters – Social Sciences	Mental Health	M1	M	Government Department	√		
S2	UCC	M	Humanities	Mental Health	M2	M	Government Department	√		
S3	UCC	M	Social Sciences	Blind	M3 M3A	M M	IT Sector		√ √	
S4	UCC	M	Masters – Social Sciences	Physical	M4	M	Government Department	√		
S5	UCC	M	Social Sciences	Physical	M5	M	Non-Profit	√		
S6	UCC	M	Masters – Social Sciences	Physical	Student withdrew from project					
S7	UCC	F	Masters – Social Sciences	Blind	M7	F	Government Department		√	
S8	UCC	F	Humanities	Vision Impairment	M8	F	Transportation sector		√	
S9	UCC	F	Humanities	Hard of Hearing	M9	F	Social Care sector		√	
S10	UCC	M	Masters – Social Sciences	Mental Health	Student withdrew from project					
S11	UVV	M	Health Sciences	Mental Health		M	Pharmaceuticals		√	

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2.2 University Counsellor and Disability Employment Agency Characteristics:

Table Two:

Post	University	Female/Male	Position Held	Organisation
University Counsellor	UCC	F	Disability Advisor	Disability Support Service UCC
Career Coach	UCC	F	Career Coach	Employability Cork



2.3 Student and Mentor Characteristics TCD:

Table Three:

Student	University	Female/Male	Study	Disability	Mentor	Female/Male	Current Status – July 2012	Public	Private	Organisation
S1	TCD	F	Doctorate – Engineering and Science	Asperger's Syndrome	M1	F	Job offer to begin post-doctorate	√		
S2	TCD	F	Languages	Blind / Vision impaired	M2	F	Employed		√	
S3	TCD	M	Social Sciences	Dyspraxia and mental health	M3	M	Seeking employment			
S4	TCD	F	Humanities	Physical Disability	M2	F	Internship offer.			√
S5	TCD	F	Health Sciences	Physical disability	M3	M	Employed	√		
S6	TCD	F	Social Sciences	Significant On-going illness	M2	F	Paid Internship			√
S7	TCD	F	Masters - Humanities	Physical Disability	M3	M	Writing up thesis			
S8	TCD	M	Social Sciences	Significant on-going illness and mental health	M3	M	Temporary Employment	√		
S9	TCD	M	Engineering and Science	Deaf / hard of hearing	M2	F	Internship 6 months		√	
S10	TCD	F	Social Sciences	Mental Health	M4	M	Employed.		√	
S11	TCD	M	Humanities	Asperger's Syndrome	M1	F	Internship and offer of masters	√		
S12	TCD	M	Engineering and Sciences	Asperger's Syndrome	M1	F	Employed		√	
S13	TCD	M	Engineering and Science	Mental Health	M1	F	Disengaged with pilot.			
S14	TCD	F	Humanities	Mental Health	M4	M	Employed		√	
S15	TCD	F	Health Sciences	Deaf / hard of hearing	M2	F	Seeking employment			

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1.4 University Counsellor and Disability Career Coach Characteristics TCD:

Table Four:

Post	University	Female/Male	Position Held	Organisation
University Counsellor	TCD	M	Disability Advisor	Disability Support Service TCD
Career Coach	TCD	F	Career Coach	Disability Support Service TCD

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3. the project

Commitment and perception of

3.1: Perception of the Students:

The Process of Initial Mobilization of Actors:

T.C.D. and U.C.C. invited students to attend a briefing session providing details in relation to the transition to employment. At this briefing session, students were invited to participate in the project. Most commonly, students indicated that they wished to participate in the project due to lack of previous employment experience and skills, current levels of unemployment in Ireland, concerns over disclosure and a lack of information provision on future opportunities once study was complete.

Initial Commitment:

Both Irish partners, U.C.C. and T.C.D., acknowledge a strong commitment on the part of students participating in the project. A significant finding emerged, however, in relation to time management. This issue was a major challenge for this project. Students with disabilities participating in the project have significant demands on their time and completing their studies successfully is of paramount importance. Consequently, students find it difficult to invest time in the transition to employment process particularly in the second semester of their final year in higher level education. Consequently a number of students withdrew from the project, whilst others postponed their participation in work placement/employment until after their end of year examinations were complete.

Expectations:

Initially, students reported that they were unsure what to expect at the outset of the project. The majority of students reported that they expected to meet with a Career Coach and eventually be placed in work experience or employment. Students in both universities were assisted with skills such as CV preparation and interview preparation once they consented to participate in the project. Once this support

was put in place and students became more confident in their abilities, they stated that they expected to become more confident with the transition process. All students further indicated that they expected to complete their degree programme successfully.

Dissemination of the Project:

Provision of Information: Students in both universities, T.C.D. and U.C.C. were provided with information in hard copy and electronically. Information was made available to participants on the Disability Support Service website and a briefing session was held for all participants in relation to the project. During the evaluation process, students reported that they had received sufficient information to participate in the project and had adequate opportunities to voice any queries that arose.

Knowledge about the Role of Stakeholders: Initially, students reported that they were unsure about the role of all stakeholders but that this was explained to them during the initial stages of the project. Students further reported that if they approached one stakeholder for assistance and had inadvertently requested information from the incorrect person, they were referred on to the correct stakeholder for assistance.

Nine Dimensions of Assessment: Students indicate that in both universities, the nine dimensions of assessment were considered and explained during participation in the project. At individual meetings with the University Counsellor and Career Coach, students had an opportunity to discuss expectations, motivations and aims. In terms of skills, strategies and development, this was also discussed in detail.

Provision of a Transition Plan: Students reported in all cases that they were provided with a Transition Plan. Participants worked closely with a Career Coach

and the University Counsellor to assist with this plan and their input was taken in to consideration at all times.

Information in Relation to Employment Opportunities: All students reported that they were supplied with sufficient information in relation to employment opportunities in their chosen field. Such information was provided by Disability Support Services, Career Advisory Services and Career Coaches. Students indicate that prior to the provision of this information; they were unsure as to what opportunities were available or would be suited to them.

Information in Relation to Ethics and Culture in Organisations: All participants indicated that they were supplied with information relating to the ethics and culture of various work organisations. However, in many cases it was stated that this information was unnecessary as it was too basic or did not apply to the work environment as it was a small company.

Reasonable Accommodations: The provision of reasonable accommodations was discussed with all participants. Information relating to grant provision was also provided. Whilst reasonable accommodations were not required in all cases, the majority of students were confident about discussing this issue with their employment mentor. All participants are provided with reasonable accommodations throughout the course of their studies and so they are confident about requesting supports to be put in place.

Were Stakeholders Supportive in their Role: Participants found that all stakeholders to be supportive in their role. Students were able to meet frequently with all stakeholders and if they had any queries or concerns, they were quickly resolved.

Perceptions on the project:

Involvement: Participants in both universities reported that they felt fully involved in the project at all times.

Disclosure: The issue of disclosure is considered significant for students with disabilities. Often students are apprehensive about disclosing their medical condition to an employer and it is an area with which they need advice and support. Participation in this project provided students with an opportunity to consider the issue and hopefully become more confident about providing information to employers. The majority of students decided to disclose their condition upon taking up work placement and employment as part of this project.

Management of the Transition Phase: Participants report that they are now more prepared to make a successful transition to employment. Students indicate that they have learned many skills due to participation in the project that will prove useful to them throughout their career. Students further indicate that the opportunity to become involved in work experience has improved their confidence and ability to obtain work placement and employment once their studies are complete. Overall students state that participation in the project was a really positive experience.

Skills and Development: As a result of participation in the project, students indicate that they have become more confident in their ability to successfully pursue a career of their choice. As a result of participating in work placement, students have acquired skills and experience in an area of employment suited to their studies. Participants state that they are now more confident and independent. They have also acquired practical skills that will stand to them throughout their career such as CV preparation and letter writing skills. The transition to employment will not seem such a daunting process for students who have participated in the project.

Commitment along the Project:

As previously indicated, both T.C.D. and U.C.C. acknowledge a strong commitment on the part of students participating in the project. It is imperative that the issue of time management is addressed, however. This issue was a major challenge for this project. Students with disabilities participating in the project have significant demands on their time and completing their studies successfully is of paramount importance. Consequently a number of students were unable to focus on the transition to employment process and withdrew from the project whilst others postponed their participation in work placement/employment until after their end of year examinations were complete.

3.2: Perception of the University Counsellor:

The Process of Initial Mobilization of Actors:

The University Counsellor in both T.C.D. and U.C.C. were briefed on the project by the Disability Support Officer. University Counsellors were provided with a hand-out on the objectives of the project and the names of the students selected for the project

Initial Commitment:

University Counsellors stated that they were eager to see how the employability context could be built into the assessment process for students with disabilities. They indicate that as staff persons working with students with high end needs they are conscious of the challenges these students face in accessing employment and hence hope this project improves their options

Expectations:

University Counsellors state that it is essential that students with disabilities receive career coaching and mentoring in order to explore employment options and gain the skills required to look for work in a competitive job market. University Counsellors expected that the outcomes from this project would demonstrate how the provision of such supports directly impact on the future employment prospects of students with disabilities.

Dissemination of the Project:

Provision of Information in Relation to the Role and Responsibilities of Stakeholders: The University Counsellor in each Higher Education Institution (HEI) was provided with information relating to the role and responsibilities of all stakeholders by the Disability Support Officer.

Support and Resources Provided: Training was provided in the use of the Aarhus Model of Assessment. Information was also provided about the project in electronic format to all University Counsellors.

Concept of Employability: Amended templates have been created so that the employability concept will be included in to the assessment of need for all students in to the future.

Provision of the Transition Plan: University Counsellors inputted into the transition plan with the selected students and worked with students to assist them achieve their goals.

Information Provision Relating to Employment Opportunities: University Counsellors worked closely with the Career Coach who was contracted to work with the designated students within the project. The Career Coach did the

exploration work with each individual student, working on CVs, covering letters and interview techniques. Employment opportunities were also identified for students participating in the programme.

Information Provision Relating to Ethics and Culture in Work Environments:

Where necessary, students were advised about the ethics and culture of various work environments.

Provision of Reasonable Accommodations: Where applicable, reasonable accommodation were provided. Accessibility was addressed and disability awareness was provided to mentors in companies. Assistive technologies are also provided where necessary.

Communication Strategies: Weekly meetings were held between disability staff and Career Coaches on progress with students. Each student was seen by the Career Coach on bi-weekly basis for a mentoring process where the transition plan was regularly reassessed.

Perceptions on the Project:

Development of Employment Skills:

University Counsellors report that participation in this project has allowed for the development of the student's employment skills. This was brought about by linking the student with a Career Coach, who has provided the student with training in areas such as CV preparation and letter writing skills. A Transition Plan has also been put in place. The Transition Plan was readjusted frequently as many students have personal and academic challenges that impinge on their development. Some students have had to withdraw from the project for the moment due to deteriorating health problems and others had to put placement on hold as academic demands were overwhelming.

Development of Student's Independence and Professional Efficiency:

According to University Counsellors, the project's focus on building the concept of employability into the assessment of the students' needs is excellent. Disability Support Services have benefited from adapting the Aarhus Employability Model into the initial assessment of needs. The involvement of the Career Coach has made a major difference as emphasis is placed on reviewing the Transition Plan and meeting students individually with a view to building their confidence and personal and interpersonal development skills together with employability skills

Commitment Along the Project:

University Counsellors have remained committed to the project at all times. They state that it is imperative to maintain networks developed as part of their participation in this project. University Counsellors do recognize, however, the difficulties experienced by participants in this project to complete their academic programme successfully whilst focusing on the transition to employment.

3.3: Perception of the Mentor:

The Process of Initial Mobilization of Actors:

In respect of U.C.C., Employability Cork has developed a number of networks with employers as part of a Leonardo project in Cork City. Consequently, it was decided that the Career Coach from Employability Cork would initially approach employers to inquire if they would have available opportunities for students participating in the project. Ten work placement opportunities were provided for nine participants and ten Employment Mentors were identified. In T.C.D. as mentioned all students were at differing stages of the transition to employment and as we linked them up mostly with Occupational Therapists to work on transitioning and to act as mentors this process, these professional mentors are ideally suited as occupation is key to their work.

Initial Commitment:

Employment Mentors gave their full commitment to the project. They feel that this project offers benefits to any work organization as they gain the experience and knowledge of a graduate with a disability at a minimum cost. It is an opportunity for an organization, particularly in the public sector to achieve targets set out by the Government in relation to the employment of people with disabilities. Mentors state that it has an added benefit for the student also as they may obtain financial support in return for their knowledge and expertise.

Expectations:

This is another area where significant findings were evident. Mentors often stated that they had over-ambitious expectations about the students “readiness” for employment. It became clear after initial meetings with the student that academic commitments had to take precedence over the transition to employment process and in many cases, work placement opportunities were deferred to the completion of end of year examinations.

Dissemination of the Project:

Provision of Information in Relation to the Role and Responsibilities of

Stakeholders: The Employment Mentor in each organisation was provided with information relating to the role and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

Support and Resources Provided: Disability Awareness Training was provided to all Mentors. Information was provided in relation to the provision of reasonable accommodations and grant provision. Assistive Technology was provided to organisations upon request.

Provision of the Transition Plan: Mentors were provided with copies of the Transition Plan to allow them to work with students to achieve their goals and objectives.

Information Provision Relating to Ethics and Culture in Work Environments: Where necessary, mentors advised students about the ethics and culture of the organisation.

Provision of Reasonable Accommodations: Where applicable, reasonable accommodation were provided. Accessibility was addressed and disability awareness was provided to mentors in companies. Assistive Technologies are also provided where necessary.

Communication Strategies: Regular meetings were held between Career Coaches and Mentors on progress with students. As some students postponed their work placement until they had completed examinations, many participants only met with their Employment Mentor on two or three occasions. Communication between stakeholders depended on what level the student was at in the transition process.

Perceptions on the Project:

Mentors state that participation in the project is a positive experience with mutual benefits for both employers and students. Employer's benefit in terms of obtaining the knowledge and experience of graduates with disabilities, whilst meeting obligatory targets set by the Government to increase the numbers of people with disabilities in employment. Students, on the other hand, obtain skills and experience in employment whilst sometimes obtaining financial support.

Commitment along the Project:

Employment Mentors remained committed to the project and the transition to employment process for students with disabilities at all times. Mentors took cognisance of the academic challenges facing students and afforded them flexibility in terms of completing work placement and employment. Frequently, students had to postpone appointments, which were always accommodated. Many requests to defer the work placement to the end of examinations were granted. At all times advice, assistance and reasonable accommodations were provided.

Cooperation and partnership / joint-venture

4.1 Perception of the Students:

Characteristic of Partnership between University and Companies: Students found that the partnership developed between the university and the employer to be hugely beneficial to them. A placement was organized for them in a field of their choice and as it was a co-operative relationship, support and advice was always available.

Cooperation Relations between the Stakeholders: Students deemed that effective communication skills were used amongst all stakeholders and that all parties were supportive in their role.

a. Perception of the University Counsellor:

Characteristic of Partnership between University and Companies: University Counsellors determined that the networks developed between the University and Employers were very beneficial. They suggest that through the development of such networks, employment opportunities may be created for graduates with disabilities whilst also providing valuable opportunities for the labour market.

Cooperation Relations between the Stakeholders: According to University Counsellors, effective communication and co-operation was used by all

stakeholders during participation in the project. Co-operation relations were developed initially by hosting briefing sessions for University Counsellors and students and then University Counsellors and Employers. Regular meetings were subsequently held so that all parties could provide updates on progress.

b. Perception of the Mentor:

Characteristic of Partnership between University and Companies:

Employment Mentors state that the partnerships that have developed as a result of the Transition to Employment project are mutually beneficial. Employers have provided students with employment skills and experience but have also gained the knowledge and experience that a student with a disability brings to an organization. Such networks lay foundations for communication between universities and employers in to the future.

Cooperation Relations between the Stakeholders: Co-operation relations between all stakeholders were developed through attendance at briefing sessions and information days. Regular contact was maintained between all parties for the provision of progress reports. Mentors maintain that such strategies were completely effective.

Guidance methodology

5.1 Perception of the Students:

Implementation of the Guidance Methodology

Students considered that the nine dimensions of assessment were explained and that each area was taken in to account during participation in the project. At individual meetings with the Disability Support Officer and the Career Coach, the student had an opportunity to discuss expectations, motivations and aims. In terms of skills, strategies and development, this was discussed in detail with both the Career Coach and the Mentor.

General and Academic Expectations/Progress: This was discussed in detail with students. Much time during discussions was dedicated to academic commitments.

Cognitive Expectations: Student's expectations were discussed.

Learning Process: Each student's learning process was always taken in to consideration.

Motivation: Student's motivation and possible barriers to participation were taken in to consideration.

Social Relationships: Student's perception of social relationships and implications in terms of work environment was discussed.

Language and Culture: Ethics and cultures of various work environments were explained to all students.

Life Strategies: Life strategies were taken in to consideration as part of the nine dimensions of assessment. Student discussed this aspect with the Career Coach as part of Transition Plan.

Self-Esteem: Self-esteem was considered in respect of all students. Participation in the project has led to an increase in students' self-esteem.

Personal Development: Participation in the project has allowed for a growth in personal development. This is an important factor in the transition to employment and was always taken in to consideration as part of the nine dimensions of assessment.

Appropriation of Tools:

The nine dimensions of assessment were explained to each student. Students found the implementation of this tool to be beneficial as it is a holistic approach to the transition process taking all aspects of the student's development in to consideration. Additional supports were also put in place for students as required such as academic support, technological support, employment skills and training and the provision of reasonable accommodations.

Appropriation of the Guidance Methodology:

Students reported that the guidance methodology provides a beneficial framework from which supports may be put in place during the transition to employment process.

Quality of Relation within the Mentor/Student Pair:

All students reported that the mentoring process was most beneficial to them. Participants found Employment Mentors to be supportive within their role at all times.

Adaptions Done in Order to Facilitate the Participation of the Students to the Project:

Students were always facilitated so that they could successfully participate in the project. Reasonable accommodations were put in place when required. In some cases students requested to postpone work placement until after the end of year examinations. This request was also accommodated. In cases where the placement found for the student was unsuitable due to its location, alternative placements were found for the student.

5.2 Perception of the University Counsellor:

Implementation of the Guidance Methodology

University Counsellors considered that the nine dimensions of assessment were explained to each student and that each area was taken in to account during participation in the project. The following areas were discussed:

- ✓ Expectations
- ✓ Motivations
- ✓ Aims
- ✓ Skills
- ✓ Strategies
- ✓ Development

General and Academic Expectations/Progress: Academic responsibilities were prioritized at all times.

Cognitive Expectations: University Counsellors have taken the students expectations in to consideration at all times.

Learning Process: Each student's learning process was always taken in to consideration.

Motivation: University Counsellors encouraged all participants and student motivation was considered during participation in the project.

Social Relationships: Student's perception of social relationships and implications in terms of work environment was discussed.

Language and Culture: Ethics and cultures of various work environments were explained to all students.

Life Strategies: University Counsellors considered life strategies as part of the nine dimensions of assessment.

Self-Esteem: Self-esteem was considered in respect of all students. Participation in the project has led to an increase in students' self-esteem.

Personal Development: Participation in the project has allowed for a growth in personal development. This is an important factor in the transition to employment and was always taken in to consideration as part of the nine dimensions of assessment.

Appropriation of Tools:

The nine dimensions of assessment were taken in to consideration in the case of each student. University Counsellors found the implementation of this tool to be invaluable as it considers all aspects of the student's development and progress within the transition to employment process. Additional supports were also put in place for students as required such as academic support, technological support, employment skills, training and the provision of reasonable accommodations.

Appropriation of the Guidance Methodology:

University Counsellors reported that the guidance methodology provides a beneficial framework from which supports may be put in place during the transition to employment process.

Quality of Relation within the Mentor/Student Pair:

University Counsellors reported that the mentoring process was beneficial for all students making the transition to employment. University Counsellors found Employment Mentors to be supportive within their role at all times.

Adaptions Done in Order to Facilitate the Participation of the Students to the Project:

Accommodations were made for students so that they could successfully participate in the project. Reasonable accommodations were put in place when required. In some cases students requested to postpone work placement until after the end of year examinations. This request was also accommodated. In cases where the placement found for the student was unsuitable due to its location, alternative placements were found for the student.

5.3 Perception of the Mentor:

Implementation of the Guidance Methodology:

Mentors report that the guidance methodology provides a beneficial framework from which to develop a Transition Plan. As the Mentoring process has not commenced in some cases, Mentors cannot fully evaluate this stage of the process.

Appropriation of Tools:

Mentors reported that the Guidance Methodology provides a beneficial framework from which supports may be put in place during the transition to employment process.

Appropriation of the Guidance Methodology:

As previously mentioned, the Mentoring process has not commenced in some cases so Mentors cannot fully evaluate this stage of the process. They expect that

the appropriation of the Guidance Methodology will be of considerable benefit to students.

Quality of Relation within the Mentor/Student Pair:

The relationship between Mentors and students is still being established. To date Mentors reported that they are making good progress with all students. They find that it is a mutually beneficial relationship where all parties can avail of a learning process.

Adaptions Done in Order to Facilitate the Participation of the Students to the Project:

Students were always facilitated so that they could successfully participate in the project. Reasonable accommodations were put in place when required. In some cases students requested to postpone work placement until after the end of year examinations. This request was also accommodated. In cases where the placement found for the student was unsuitable due to its location, alternative placements were found for the student.

6. The effects of the project

6.1 For the Student:

Effect at the Personal Level (Towards Oneself):

As a result of participation in the project, students have become more confident in their ability to successfully pursue a career of their choice. As a result of participating in work placement, students have acquired skills and experience in an area of employment suited to their studies. Students report increased confidence

and independence. They have acquired practical skills that will stand to them throughout their career such as CV preparation and letter writing skills.

Effect at the Personal Level (Concerning Social Aspects):

Students report an increased confidence in terms of socialization.

Professional Level/Dimensions:

Students report that the experience of participating in a professional project has been most beneficial for them. They have acquired additional knowledge and skills that will be useful to them in making the transition to employment.

Acquired/Gained/Reinforced Aptitudes:

Students are now more competent in the skills required for applying for employment. They have an increased proficiency in time management, task completion and socialization in the work environment.

6.2 For the University Counsellor:

Effect at the Personal Level (Towards Oneself):

University Counsellors determined that they are now more conscious of the needs of students with disabilities in making the transition to employment.

Effect at the Personal Level (Concerning Social Aspects):

University Counsellors report that one of the major benefits of this project derives from the networks that have been developed with employers in the area. This

networking can be improved upon and developed over the coming years to improve the employment prospects of students with disabilities.

Professional Level/Dimensions:

As mentioned previously, the professional networks that have been developed as part of this project will prove useful to University Counsellors seeking employment opportunities for students with disabilities.

Acquired/Gained/Reinforced Aptitudes:

University Counsellors are now more proficient in the assessment of needs for students making the transition to employment.

6.3 For the Mentor:

Effect at the Personal Level (Towards Oneself):

Employment Mentors are now more aware of the needs of students with disabilities entering employment.

Effect at the Personal Level (Concerning Social Aspects):

Whilst the mentoring process for students with disabilities is still in its initial stages, Mentors now have a greater understanding of the abilities and qualities that students with disabilities bring to the work environment.

Professional Level/Dimensions:

The professional dimensions evident from participation in the project will not be evaluated until all students have completed work placement.

Acquired/Gained/Reinforced Aptitudes:

Mentors are now more proficient in the following areas:

- ✓ Disability Awareness
- ✓ Assessment of Needs for Students with Disabilities
- ✓ Provision of Reasonable Accommodations

7. Conclusion

7.1 Added Benefits of the Programme:

Networks Developed: As a result of participation in this project the Disability Support Service have developed professional networks with employers that will assist them with the provision of work placement/employment opportunities for students with disabilities in to the future.

Transition Plan: T.C.D. & U.C.C. considers that the inclusion of the employment dimension into the needs assessment process to be of considerable benefit to students with disabilities and is a dimension that will be included in all future assessments for students with disabilities.

Transition Process: As a result of participation in the Univers Emploi project, students have increased knowledge and skills, increased confidence and self-esteem and a greater possibility of obtaining employment was reported.

Disclosure: The issue of disclosure is considered significant for students with disabilities. Often students are apprehensive about disclosing their medical condition to an employer and it is an area with which they need advice and support. Participation in this project provided students with an opportunity to

consider the issue and hopefully become more confident about providing information to employers.

Learning Outcomes and Personal Development: As a result of their participation in the project, students have become more positive about the challenges faced in the transition to employment. They have also acquired many skills that will assist them in to the future.

Development of a Transition sustainable model proposal: TCD & UCC thinks the transition from education to employment is the most daunting for students with disabilities. Apart from the fact that it is a very competitive market (and will remain so for the foreseeable future), the disabled student has an even greater persuasion job on their hands to ensure the employer sees them as the best candidate for the job. Accordingly, the institution has to go beyond the existing level of careers support for such a student and that the role of the careers professional is not just advisor but perhaps advocate for the person as well as providing tailored, personal support for that first year after graduation as they settle into the workplace.

University and national strategic direction should have a labour market focus and guidance and career support of a more in depth kind should become a critical feature of it. The issue is how to achieve this effectively. A proposal is outlined below which would lead to strategic development in the transitional journey to employment that is transferable across colleges and could also act as a shared service. It would result in the appointment of specialists for a minimum period of about three years. The length of the appointment is important because relationships with companies have to be built up and sustained and we have to show greater success outside the current WAM internship employers, not just because the internship is for a fixed term but also because SME companies are an important source of jobs. But TCD & UCC thinks the appointment could be shared between a number of institutions because the level of support required is going to depend on the severity of the disability and in fact this “shared service” might fit in with the current HEA Landscapes thinking. TCD has strong working relations with

DCU and DIT with UNILINK offering services there so the project could be offered between these three HEI and reviewed to determine if workable after year 1 onwards. UCC has similar strong working relationships with CIT, UL and other southern higher education institutions.

TCD & UCC Proposal - Students with disabilities and entry to the labour market - transition to employment process for disabled students

The Disability Service philosophy at TCD & UCC has evolved over the last ten years and now firmly belongs within a 'social model' of disability with the premise that people with disabilities have a right to actively participate in, and contribute to College, as equals. The social model recognises that people with disabilities are prevented from achieving their full potential by the attitude of society, as well as environmental obstacles such as restrictions in their access to public transport, entertainment and public places, and in education and employment.

For example, a key element of the TCD Service's *Strategic Outreach, Transition, Retention and Progression Plan 2011-2014* is progression into employment and key objectives and actions have been identified for this phase in conjunction with the College's Careers Advisory Service.

The transition from education to employment is the most daunting for students with disabilities. Apart from the fact that it is a very competitive market (and will remain so for the foreseeable future), the disabled student has an even greater persuasion job on their hands than their able bodied colleagues to ensure the employer sees them as the best candidate for the job. Accordingly, the institution will have to go beyond the existing level of careers support for such a student and the role of the careers professional will not just be as an advisor but will involve an element of advocacy for the person as well as providing tailored, personal support for that first year after graduation as they settle into the workplace. Hence, both Services are

proposing a more intensive set of supports to facilitate this crucial stage in the student journey.

The kernel of this proposal is the appointment of a full-time specialist careers adviser whose sole focus would be career planning, obtaining work experience placements and finally, full-time employment for students with disabilities. The appointment would be for a minimum period of three. The length of the appointment is important because relationships with companies have to be built up and sustained and we have to show greater success outside the current WAM internship employers, not just because the internship is for a fixed term but also because SME companies are an important source of jobs. This approach is based on the principle that an academic program combined with work experience, is relevant to, and desirable for, effective employment preparation. Periods of work based learning, particularly during College vacations allow students with disabilities to acquire experience in their areas of career interest, while academic semesters are devoted primarily to fundamental and theoretical studies. These practical experiences and academic studies complement one another.

The motivation, responsibility, and opportunity for insight gained through a work experience placement can be of significant value to the student's future. It is envisaged that this type of support service would extend beyond the student's journey through College and would be available to alumni.

The role of this specialist adviser would include the following:

- Meeting with intending students and their parents prior to entry to College to identify needs and discuss how the College experience will aid labour market entry
- Periodic meetings with the student throughout their time in College to discuss the evolution of career aims and the acquisition of relevant experience.
- Developing work experience placements as well as job opportunities and securing potential employers

- Arranging recruiting interviews for students with disabilities
- Providing professional career guidance to students
- Maintaining work experience and full-time employment records
- Monitoring work experience placements by visiting or telephoning students and employers on the job
- Working with the students before, during and after their work experience to help maximize the students' whole education/career experience
- Providing support to the student in the first year after graduation as they settle into employment
- Working with other HEI to develop similar model of support for disabled students and dissemination of good practice via reports & web

Benefits to the student

- Needs assessment process will include transition to employment stage thus allowing student to discuss disability & employment issues
- Each work situation is developed and/or approved by the College as suitable;
- The student is engaged in productive work rather than merely observing;
- The student receives remuneration for the work experience;
- The student's progress on the job is monitored by the College;
- The student's performance on the job is supervised and evaluated by the employer. The supervisor will oversee the student's work and discuss expectations for the placement with the student and, on a regular basis, give the student feedback on how he/she is doing, including areas of strength and areas which require improvement.

Benefits to the employer

- It is an excellent way to evaluate potential employees
- Support available to employer on disability and reasonable accommodation implementation
- Students bring fresh, innovative ideas to an organisation.

This proposal as outlined would lead to strategic development in the transitional journey to employment that is transferable across colleges and could also act as a shared service. We believe the appointment could be shared between a number of institutions because the level of support required is going to depend on the severity of the disability and in fact this “shared service” might fit in with the current HEA Landscapes thinking.

7.2 Challenges Experienced During Participation in the Project:

Time Management: T.C.D. & U.C.C. is aware that time management is a major challenge for this project. Students with disabilities participating in the project have significant demands on their time and completing their studies successfully is of paramount importance.

Understanding the Extent of Mentoring Needed to Enhance Employability

Skills: It is evident from the evaluation of this project that students were unprepared for the transition to employment. They required career coaching, training in terms of skills such as CV preparation and letter writing. Students needed to identify areas of interest to them in terms of employment and time was spent on researching available opportunities within the employment market.

Appendix 2 – Selection of Quotes from TCD Student participants

Motivation for participation in the pilot

I think any support for future and employment planning for people with disabilities is helpful. I wanted the opportunity to talk with someone who would help me plan my decisions for the future. Family and friends will listen to you but do not understand careers and disability related issues.

I am a mature student who has been out of the work environment for the last 5 years. I was glad of the opportunity for support. I have not been in work since developing my disability and there is not a lot of support out there for mature students with disabilities reentering the workplace. There is an expectation that you have all the answers yourself but as you grow older you actually realise just how little you do actually know and how much help you could use.

I have a recently acquired disability. That is a daunting experience, as is the transition from College. I wanted support and there was a void where that support would be. The pilot filled the void.

Student Expectations regarding the pilot

I expected help applying for jobs and managing disability within the work place. I also expected careers advice, advice on managing aptitude tests for graduate positions, CV and interview tips. I was also very interested in mentoring opportunities. I want to go into business and am concerned about how my disability could impact my performance on the job,

I expected guidance on graduate applications, meetings and e-mail contact. From a work placement I hoped to get experience for about 4 to 5 months in an organisation relevant to my hoped for career path (e.g. in a law firm or the civil service. I did not expect a career job, just experience.

I expected guidance on the right way to go about getting a job. Disclosure baffled me and talking about it helped. I expected work placement to be a massive learning opportunity I have always learnt best by doing.

Student Expectations regarding academic responsibilities in final year.

I actually expected my academic responsibilities to be easier than they were this year. I had spent last year in Paris, and thought that with fluent French and modules I loved this year would be easier. But it was so much work!

Academically I knew this year would be tough. It would involve a lot of study. I spent my third year in the USA, where they use a lot of continuous assessment so I was in the habit of studying steadily instead of cramming - that made it easier. But I did have to put in 14 hour days in the library. I managed them by taking long breaks.

I knew this year would be hard, as I would have to juggle transition planning and my dissertation. All my assignments this year counted towards my final mark so that gave everything a sense of importance. Nothing could go badly.

Student Expectations regarding their career.

Regarding my future goals, I am not a long term planning type of person. Having mental health difficulties make things unpredictable and you need to be adaptable. My goal after graduation is to sort my medication out, then I will seek work in the voluntary sector, with the aim of doing a Masters after a year.

My expectations for the future is to work abroad using my language skills. I expect to be kept busy and on my toes with interesting work. I hope to enjoy my work and the experience of living in different countries. I want to be happy with what I am doing.

Moving into the future I hope to work in an area of interest that gives the opportunity for career development. I do not plan ahead too much. You know the saying 'Man plans, god laughs'.

Information

I forget how I originally got involved in the pilot but I felt I had enough information. A lot of information was given face to face at meetings.

The information I was given helped me focus on aspects of transition. It made me aware that companies can be flexible and can accommodate disability. It made me more comfortable with disclosure.

Most information was given face to face. I find it better to speak through issues than to read the information.

Relationship with others in the pilot

There was flexibility. I felt I could approach the core team with any transition related query and if they are not best placed to deal with it they would direct me to whoever was. They would never say 'sorry, that's not my role'. That is the benefit of a large college. There is always someone who can help.

Individual attention made all the difference. I got regular e-mails reminding me of what I should be doing and inviting me to meet the team. I built a relationship. If I went to the Careers' Service I would have to explain my background but here my goals, expectations and former work experience is known so I don't have to explain myself all over again when seeking advice.

I knew who was there to help me specifically with careers and who was there to help me with general skills and development.

The Nine Dimensions of Assessment – The Holistic Approach

It was holistic. It was always about me and what I wanted to do. Personal aspects were dealt with more by the Counselling Service and by Unilink and so we did not go into them in detail here but we didn't need to.

All have been considered during the process, and the process had a broader focus than simply careers. I'm not sure if it was in a structured or an organic way though. From my point of view, the most important thing is that I have been listened to and taken seriously. The process has followed my needs.

Attention was given to a mix of academic and non-academic issues, and my motivations and preferences were at the centre of the process.

The Action Plan

It described what would happen next. The plan was drafted and updated after each meeting. All was verbally agreed with me before being added in.

I had a transition plan. Myself and the core team completed and updated this together. While all the ideas did not originate with myself, every action was okayed with me before being added to the plan.

I had a work plan and I had sufficient input into it. It was great because I always knew what needed to be done and who would do it.

Information on Employment Opportunities

I got a lot of information. Beforehand I only had vague ideas of what I might do next year. I did not choose to study history with a view to becoming a librarian. This helped me come to a firm decision on what I wanted to do following graduation, and this was very helpful. I also got a lot of help on disclosure and interview skills.

I have been given a lot of advice on job hunting, employability skills, disclosure and supports. Now I need to go out into the world and put it into practice!

I got as much guidance as I could at this point. I got help with my CV, with job hunting skills etc. My main focus this year was my degree so there are aspects on employment I was not yet interested in dealing with. They will come up after graduation.

Ethics and Culture of the work place

I would have been aware of this already as I have extensive work experience from before I acquired my disability. It would have been discussed in relation to why and how to disclose.

We identified issues and aspects of disclosure, and how to handle my disability in the workplace. It could be helpful to give more information on expectations though, especially for people like me who have Asperger's syndrome.

This is what you learn in College. This is what you learn through attending classes, keeping to work deadlines etc.

Reasonable Accommodations

They helped level the playing field. Accommodations were proposed by myself and the Disability officer and helped compensate for difficulties

If I was at a meeting I would have a central seat so I could see everyone and lip read. I got a special stethoscope, and there was flexibility while I awaited that stethoscope

I use a sign language interpreter and in College I use a note taker. Communication in the workplace will be difficult. I will need to use technology and will need to devise strategies for this. This has been discussed a length this year. A big company may be better able to supply these supports.

Support offered by stakeholders

The team were flexible and always met me at times that suited me.

The support was good. The fact that I had a dissertation and academic pressure was always taken into account.

I was given the right amount of pressure regarding transition over the year. I was given reminders to act on my transition plan, but the team stepped back when I was busy and stressed with my dissertation, which was very helpful.

Feeling of involvement

We developed the plans together. I was never just handed a list of actions. I had ownership and it would not have worked without my participation.

The process responded to what I said.

All actions were agreed together. And all the resources I would need are available if needed.

Disclosure

This is an ongoing issue. I am still considering it. How and if I disclose depends on circumstances. I have had a weekend job for the last four years and have never needed to disclose. But this summer I will be changing my medication. The doctor has warned of side effects. So I may need to disclose.

I disclosed in my interview for my internship as there was to be an assessment element that could be affected by my disability. It was no problem and my needs were accommodated.

I will meet that bridge when I come to it. I have been told that I can come back for further support following graduation so when I get my first real job, and have to face disclosure, I will discuss it with the team. My chosen career area values stamina, and my disability causes fatigue, so I will have to be careful about how and when I disclose.

Value of pilot as preparation for Career

I do not yet have a graduate job so to an extent this is speculative. I feel better prepared to apply for graduate jobs and more aware of my choices.

It focused my mind. Transition planning can be easy to put off. It has given me more job seeking tools and I have more avenues to pursue after graduation.

It has helped clarify my career choice and helped me understand how the world of work, and the pursuit of a masters will differ from my experience in third level.

Skills Development

I have improved interview skills and CV writing skills. I can deal with disclosure and can handle career planning.

It has given me clarity. I know how to manage my disability in the work place now. It has helped me achieve a balance between immediate academic needs and future planning.

I now have more practical knowledge of issues arising when entering employment. I am less panicked about it. It does not seem so traumatic.

Appendix 3 – A Selection of Quotes from staff within the TCD Pilot

Motivation: I think the transition from education to employment is the most daunting for students with disabilities. Apart from the fact that it is a very competitive market (and will remain so for the foreseeable future), the disabled student has an even greater persuasion job on their hands to ensure the employer sees them as the best candidate for the job. Accordingly I think the institution has to go beyond the existing level of careers support for such a student.

Role of Stakeholders: I knew what my role was, and what that of the other stakeholders were. However, there was flexibility in this role due to the nature of the pilot. It altered when the needs of students demanded it.

Information: There were clear explanations of the aim of the project, I knew my role and could see its benefits. I was able to discuss arising issues with others within the project.

Assessment of needs: All student needs were taken into account as the pilot was part of a larger scheme and between everything the student was viewed holistically.

Action plan: I met students to discuss transition and then we drafted an action plan.

Students' Aims: Students were able to steer the direction of the mentoring process based on their aims and goals. It was very student centred.

Individual student context: When I first met students we explored their past experience, subjects studied, goals, and the possible impact of their disabilities. This set the context.

Ethics and Culture: Generally the student, being in final year, were aware of this. It may be useful if starting to work with students in first year.

Reasonable Accommodations: All students went through a needs assessment process and accommodations were subsequently put in place.

Communication: The mentors and the Disability Service regularly met and discussed arising issues. There was also good communication with Careers' and

GetAhead. Ongoing work is needed to discuss how Employability fits into the whole support framework.

Skills Development: At each meeting a number of action points would be added to the transition plan. This helped focus on the skills most needed by each student at that particular time.

It provides a road map. Though time constraints are an issue. Supporting students through their final year is a full time job so that it is hard to make time for the transition too. Some categories of disability need a lot of help with the transition and this needs to begin earlier and needs to be given on a regular basis.

Appendix 4 – Selection of Quotes from UCC Student Participants

Motivation for Participation in the Pilot:

1. The Disability Support Service invited me to attend a briefing session relating to the Transition to Employment Project. It was at this event that I decided to participate.
2. I was anxious to develop employment related skills and acquire information on how to begin the process of making the transition to employment so decided to attend a briefing session held by the Disability Support Service. I found the briefing session to be very informative and decided to participate.
3. The opportunity to participate in the Transition to Employment project came at an ideal time for me. I am about to complete my studies in UCC and I am keen to acquire new skills that will assist me to find employment.

Student Expectations Regarding the Pilot:

1. I expected that if I became a participant in this project, I would meet with an Employment Coach, develop employment related skills such as CV preparation and letter writing. I also expected that if I were to be placed in an employment setting, I would be linked with an Employment Mentor who would help me to adjust to the work environment.
2. I expected that I would receive advice on how to prepare for interviews.. I wanted to meet an Employment Mentor who could assist me to make the transition in to the workplace and assist with disclosure
3. I was hopeful that through participation in the project, I may eventually develop the skills to find employment in an area related to my studies.

Student Expectations Regarding Academic Responsibilities in Final Year:

1. I had numerous academic commitments to contend with this year. While I wanted to focus on the Transition to Employment, it was very difficult as I had to prioritise deadlines for continuous assessment and examinations. Eventually, I decided that whilst I would participate in the project and meet with the Employment Coach, Aileen O'Driscoll, I would wait until after my final exams to participate in work placement. This was a difficult decision as I really want to begin the employment process but I had too many academic commitments to contend with..
2. My final year has been very difficult for me as I am trying to manage my coursework and also the implications of my disability. I have begun the Transition to Employment process but I feel that this process will be slow for me and will take a number of months to complete. Perhaps when I have finished my course, I will be able to dedicate more time to it.
3. Once I have completed my course and all academic responsibilities, I will be able to engage in this process and hopefully develop the skills to make a successful transition to employment.

Student Expectations Regarding their Career:

1. I am concerned that due to the economic climate in this country (Ireland), it will be difficult to find employment in my chosen area. I am due to complete my degree in Social Science and wish to work in the voluntary sector but employment opportunities at the moment are minimal. However, I feel that the skills I have acquired through my participation in this project will assist me,

2. I am hopeful that I will complete my degree successfully and make a successful transition to employment. This project has been a really worthwhile experience and I have learned a lot about the importance of good communication skills and self presentation skills as part of the process.

1. I have learned so much through participation in this project. Prior to becoming involved in the project, I did not realise that there are opportunities out there to meet with an Employment Coach or to receive employment mentoring. The information provided to me on employment through the Disability Support Service has proved really beneficial. I have learned so much from fellow participant's also through attendance at workshops and events held by the DSS.

2. Information provided on employment throughout the Transition to Employment project was accessible and easy to understand. I also found that attending events where you could talk to other participant's really useful. It gave me an opportunity to look at the transition process in a way that I had not before. I am now more focused on acquiring new skills and securing employment.

3. I found information pertaining to employment for people with disabilities particularly useful. It is not often that one can access information relating to issues of disclosure and reasonable accommodations so I found this particularly useful.

Relationship with Others in the Project:

1. I found all stakeholders to be really supportive, particularly my Employment Mentor. She has knowledge of disability issues and was able to advise me on approaches to disclosure as well as the culture of the work environment

and what was expected of me. I also found the Disability Support Service to be very supportive. If I had any queries, I could contact the University Counsellor or the Disability Support Officer.

2. I found all parties involved in the project to be very supportive. I had regular meetings with the Disability Support Service and my Employment mentor, where any queries I had were always answered.
3. Everyone involved in the project was helpful and communicated well with me. As I am blind every effort was made to make the information accessible for me.

The Nine Dimensions of Assessment – The Holistic Approach:

1. I think that this approach is so beneficial. It takes all aspects of the student's life in to consideration. It's not just taking my studies or my career in to consideration but my lifestyle, interests and hobbies as well. The whole person is taken in to account and I really liked that aspect of the project.
2. This is such a holistic approach to employment and one that I have not experienced before. It takes aspects of my life in to consideration that I had not thought about or realised were related to the transition to employment process at all.

The Action Plan:

1. The Disability Support Service and my Employment Coach assisted me with the development of a Transition Plan. This proved so useful as I had not put thought in to what I needed to do in order to make the transition to employment once my studies are complete. Now I feel that I have a proper

plan in place and that it will be so much easier for me to make that transition.

2. I was fully involved in the development of the Transition Plan. I felt that I was fully in control of the steps that were necessary for me to take in order to put the transition to employment process in motion.
3. The Disability Support Service and my Employment Coach explained that a plan would be implemented to assist me to make a successful transition to employment. Organisational skills would not be my strongest point so I found this very useful. I was delighted that I was fully involved in this process.

Information on Employment Opportunities:

1. I had many meetings with my Employment Coach, Aileen O'Driscoll. She worked with me to clarify my career goals and provided me with information on employment opportunities that were of interest to me in my field of study .
 2. The opportunity to meet regularly with an employment coach who worked with me in a mentoring capacity was the most significant part of this project for me. I am a wheel chair user with profound disability and this was a new experience for me.
 3. I realise that obtaining employment will be difficult, especially due to the current economic climate but I am now more positive as I have become more confident in myself due to involvement in the project.
1. This information was useful but some of it was self-explanatory and I was aware of most of it from previous work experience.

2. I have worked in a number of law firms previously and so I was well aware of the ethics and culture issues in various work environments.
3. I didn't need to go in to great detail on this issue. I understand the variances in ethics and culture of different work environments.

Reasonable Accommodations:

1. Reasonable Accommodations were provided to me as I have a physical disability and would require assistance in the work environment. The organisation was very helpful. My Employment Mentor spoke to me about what accommodations I may require and then everything was put in place.
2. I am now aware of the reasonable Accommodations I will need in the workplace. I have a significant vision impairment. I will require mobility training, alternative formats for printed documents and maybe some assistance with tasks.
3. I have been reassured that once I begin employment, Reasonable Accommodations will be put in place for me. My Employment Coach has spoken to my Employment Mentor and has advised the organisation about grants that are available for the implementation of Reasonable Accommodations for me. I do not anticipate any difficulties with this provision.

Support Offered by Stakeholders:

1. I found all stakeholders to be supportive within their respective roles. The Disability Support Service was always on hand to assist me with queries and the Employment Coach was a fantastic support to me. I have yet to

meet my Employment Mentor but I anticipate that they will be equally supportive to me.

2. All stakeholders were completely supportive to me. The Disability Support Service ensured that Employment Mentors were carefully linked with students. Therefore, I found experience in an area of employment that I would like to pursue in to the future.

Feeling of Involvement:

1. I felt fully involved in the Transition to Employment project. My ideas and opinions were taken in to consideration at all times.
2. My involvement in this project was always of paramount importance to the Disability Support Service. I was encouraged to provide information and ideas and to input in to my Transition Plan.
3. I always felt fully involved in this project. I enjoyed meeting with other participant's at events held by the Disability Support Service as I could discuss ideas and find out information. I was encouraged at all times to attend events and provide an input in to my Transition Plan and Road Map.

Disclosure:

1. Disclosure of my disability is an issue of huge concern to me. I was unsure how to broach the subject with an employer or how it may be received. I have a hidden disability and an employer may not realise. I was concerned that if I did not disclose my condition and ran in to difficulties further down the line that it may be very problematic for me. After speaking to the Employment Coach and the Disability Support Officer, I now have a better

understanding of how to approach this issue and they have allayed many of my concerns. We discussed disclosure in detail.

2. I am a wheelchair user so will have to disclose my disability as it will be necessary for an employer to put reasonable accommodations in place. This is an issue that I am relatively confident about and do not anticipate any difficulties.
3. I have decided not to disclose my disability to my employer. I have spoken to my Employment Coach about this in great detail and have decided that it will not impact on my work for now. If that changes, I will reconsider disclosing my condition.

Value of Pilot as Preparation for Career:

1. I have found the Transition to Employment project to be a really beneficial experience. However, the project should be introduced in first year as I found it stressful to keep appointments with the workload I had in my final year
2. Participation in this project has been a positive experience for me. I have found that it has demystified the transition process and I have a proper plan in place. I now know what I need to do and how to pursue the search for employment. Participation in the project means that I am no longer fearful about leaving higher level education and moving on to the work environment.
3. I am so glad that I decided to participate in the Transition to Employment project. It has benefited me in so many ways. I have acquired new skills and have gained experience in an organisation of my choice. My CV is now more substantial and I feel ready to enter full time employment.

Skills Development:

1. I have acquired a number of new skills through participation in the project. I have developed my CV, practiced interview techniques and am able to correctly complete letters of application. I was unaware of how to do any of this prior to participation in the project.
2. Through participation in the Transition to Employment project, I have learned a number of new skills. My Employment Mentor worked with me to develop my confidence and self presentation skills. This has been great and I now feel more positive about my future.

Appendix 5 – A Selection of Quotes from Staff within the UCC Pilot

Motivation:

I was eager to see how the employability context could be built into the assessment process of the student. As staff persons working with students with high end needs we are conscious of the challenges these students face in accessing employment and hence hope this project improves their options for employment. The Disability Support Service in U.C.C. will include the context of employment in to all future Needs Assessments for students with disabilities.

Perception of the Usefulness of the Project:

The project's focus on building employability into the assessment of the student's needs is excellent. The Service in U.C.C. has benefited from adapting the Aarhus Employability model. The involvement of the Employment Coach from Employability Cork has made a major difference as she focuses on reviewing the Transition Plan and works individually with students building their confidence and personal and interpersonal development skills together with employability skills. These will all assist the student to make a successful transition to employment. The only difficulty that I would envisage is that student's may have to postpone the transition to employment process until after the completion of their final year of study as academic commitments must take priority.

Role of Stakeholders:

Effective communication was used amongst all stakeholders. There were weekly meeting held between staff of the Disability Support Service and Employability Cork on progress with students. Each student was seen by an Employment Coach on a bi- weekly basis for the mentoring process where the transition plan was monitored and reassessed. Meetings took place between the Disability Support Officer and Disability Advisors also.

Information: We were provided with information pertaining to the roles of all stakeholders. We were given training in the use of the Aarhus Model of Assessment. I worked closely with the Employment Coach who was contracted to work with the designated students within the project. The Employment Coach did the exploration work with each individual student, working on CVs, covering letters, interview techniques etc

Assessment of Needs:

Each student participated in the Needs Assessment process. A holistic approach was taken where the nine dimensions of assessment were taken in to consideration.

Action Plan:

I met with students and the Employment Coach so that the Transition Plan could be formulated in respect of each student. Each student had an input in to their own Transition Plan.

Students' Aims:

Each student provided us with details about their aims and goals. Once this information was provided, students were linked with an Employment Mentor in an area of employment of interest to them. There were great discussions at the group meetings between students and they learned a lot from one another on how to manage the transition to employment phase. Friendships were developed through dialogue.

Individual Student Context:

Each student provides information relevant to their specific background, education, skills and interests. This sets the context for each student and provides a framework for the formulation of the Transition Plan.

Ethics and Culture:

Generally, students indicated that they are aware of the ethics and culture in the work environment. Some students would have prior work experience which meant that they are familiar with this. We did not need to provide too much detail.

Reasonable Accommodations:

The requirement for reasonable accommodations is identified in the Needs Assessment process. If necessary, such supports will be put in place.

Communication:

Effective communication was used amongst all stakeholders. Networks were developed internally in U.C.C. and externally with organisations such as AHEAD and Employability Cork. Regular meetings were held amongst all parties to ensure that students and staff had an opportunity to discuss queries and/or difficulties that may have arisen. Through the project UCC and TCD Disability Services have worked closely and now have developed common KPIs which they have set for their respective services

Skills Development:

Through the use of the Road Map, points were made at each meeting to identify goals that needed to be attained prior to the next meeting. This provided a plan for the student and kept account of skills that were attained or that the student was now proficient in. It also provided an outline of areas that the student needed to work on or required assistance with.

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