



National Plan for Equity
of Access to Higher
Education 2008-2013
MID-TERM REVIEW

HEA

Higher Education Authority
An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas

December 2010

Published by the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education,
Higher Education Authority

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Summary of main achievements 2008-2010

1 Institution-wide approaches to access

- Work underway on integrated access plans in all higher education institutions funded by the HEA
- Three annual returns of Equal Access data completed, with ongoing improvements in the process and response rates, including completion of an external audit
- Arrangements in place to introduce core access funding for all higher education institutions in 2011
- Professional development opportunities in place for core staff working on equality of access
- A range of useful access-related research reports and evaluations published

2 Enhancing access through lifelong learning

- 4,000+ new students participating in courses promoting labour market activation
- 145 people participating in up-skilling programmes, supported by the European Globalisation Fund
- HEA position paper on open and flexible learning published
- New policy on access courses developed
- A new website on part-time options in the institutes of technology, www.bluebrick.ie, in place
- New section for students on www.hea.ie
- New curriculum unit on options in further and higher education for Transition Year students (second level)

3 Investment in widening participation in higher education

- Progress on equal access with core funding and €24m funding allocated 2008-2010 via the Strategic Innovation Fund and a Dormant Accounts Fund
- Ongoing conferences, seminars, media coverage on access-related issues.

4 Modernisation of student supports

- Expansion of www.studentfinance.ie to include a new online facility for student grants
- September 2010 over one million visits to www.studentfinance.ie
- Equal Access data are used to make allocations of the Student Assistance Fund
- First national intercultural education strategy launched

5 Widening participation in higher education for people with disabilities

- Rise in numbers of students with sensory disabilities participating in higher education
- A disability officer in place in all higher education institutions
- A Charter for inclusive teaching and learning, and good practice guidelines being disseminated
- An improved allocation model for the Fund for Students with Disabilities introduced
- Irish contribution to OECD study *Pathways for Disabled Students to Tertiary Education and Employment* completed.

Summary of participation figures 2010

(see pages 21-24 for further details)

National participation rate (includes mature students)	2004 55%	2010 72%*	2013 65%
2010 target was 61% *See additional information on page 20			
National participation rate (17-to 19-year-olds)	2004 44%	2010 53%	

Equal Access Data – Number and % of New Entrants from Target Groups								
	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		% national population: Census 2006	
	No.	% NE	No.	% NE	No.	% NE		
Mature Students*	3,758	10.9%	4,188	11.1%	5,402	13.5%	66%	Age 25-64 ***
Target Socio-Economic Groups**								
Non Manual	3,730	10.8%	3,573	9.5%	3,831	9.6%	20%	Age 17-19
Semi-Unskilled	3,730	10.8%	4,024	10.7%	3,212	8.0%	11%	Age 17-19
Students with Disabilities	1,389	4.0%	1,777	4.7%	2,386	6.0%	5%	Age 17-35
Travellers	33	0.1%	24	0.1%	27	0.1%	0.9%	Age 18-22
Total Target Groups	12,639	36.6%	13,586	36.1%	14,858	37.1%		
Total New Entrants*	34,533	100%	37,611	100%	40,059	100%		

* Full-time, undergraduate, new entrant and mature entrants to HEIs returning EA data. Excludes occasional students

** % of respondents to Equal Access Survey from target socio-economic groups as a proportion of all new entrants

*** Completed education, not HE qualified, Census 2006

Number of students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities	2006 466	2010 668	2013 932
The 2010 target was 699 students			

Mature students (full-time)	2006 12.8%	2010 13.6%	2013 20%
The 2010 target for full-time mature students was 17%			

Mature students (full-time and part-time combined)	2006 18%	2010 18.9%	2013 27%
The 2010 target for full-time and part-time mature students was 23%			

Flexible/part-time provision (all students)	2006 7%	2010 14.1%	2013 17%
The 2010 target for all students was 12.5%			

Increase in 'non-standard' entry routes (from further education, via HEAR and DARE and by mature students)	2006 24%	2010 25%	2013 30%
The 2010 target for non-standard entry was 27%			

Introduction

This mid-term review of the *National Plan to Achieve Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013* reports on progress to date on the objectives and action points set out in the plan, and on the participation targets that were set for 2010.

The review also identifies ongoing challenges affecting implementation of the plan to date, followed by an agenda of work for 2011-2013.

Achieving equality of access to higher education requires ongoing, focused work throughout the education system, by a range of groups, agencies, organisations and public servants. The national access plan identifies key partners who are working to achieve the national access goals. These include higher education institutions; the Department of Education and Skills; the Higher Education Authority, within which the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education (National Access Office) is located, and the agencies and groups represented on the National Access Office advisory group. In addition, teachers, guidance counsellors and representative agencies working in pre-school, primary, post-primary and further education and training play an essential role, as well as those contributing to educational equality issues within higher education and in public and private research agencies.

The content of this review draws on feedback from these partners, through commentary, progress reports, strategy statements, current policies, recent research publications and proposals for improved communication and partnership in the future. In addition, the review draws from a survey of recent progress and new initiatives on equality of access internationally.

Context for the review

National context

The difficulties in the Irish economy form the main backdrop to implementation of the National Access Plan since publication in July 2008. The ongoing social and economic challenges we currently face have been well-documented, and although other developed countries throughout the world are facing similar challenges, our circumstances as a small island with an open economy, along with the consequences of imprudent lending and speculation practices in the majority of our main banks have made the road to recovery particularly challenging. Like other countries, however, the role of education in helping us back to a position of growth and prosperity is widely recognised. Policy and strategy statements, including publications such as *Tomorrow's Skills. Towards a National Skills Strategy* (2007); *Building Ireland's Smart Economy* (2008); and *Innovation Ireland. Report of the Innovation Taskforce* (2010) underline the importance of investment in education for individuals, families, communities and our economy and society as a whole. For those working to promote equality in education there is nothing new about this point; education has long been recognised as a force for social inclusion, for better health among individuals, a better quality of life, better employment, and for national economic and social prosperity.

Events such as the public service moratorium on staff and the reduction in public monies for services have forced a reappraisal of what we do to promote equality of access, how we do it and for whom. Everyone has had to take steps to prioritise resources and recipients of those resources. The availability of strong data to support evidence-based policy and practice has become more important than ever before. So too has the need for a clear, practical rationale and associated outcomes to guide work and to demonstrate clearly what we aim to achieve.

During 2009-2010, work has been underway on a new national strategy for higher education. When published, this new strategy will provide fresh impetus to everyone who is working to develop a world-class higher education system in Ireland, for the benefit of all of our citizens and for our economy.

This review shows that, despite difficult circumstances, we have made some progress. We have not, however, achieved the majority of the participation targets set for 2010. And a recent publication on progression by the HEA shows that considerable work remains to ensure that students of all backgrounds get the support they need to successfully participate in and complete their undergraduate studies. At the same time, demand for higher education has never been higher, with the overall number of full-time new entrants increasing by almost 5,000 since 2008. A major challenge before us is to respond to the demand for re-skilling opportunities among those who have become unemployed while also remaining fully focused on achieving the access targets set for those disadvantaged

by social and economic circumstances, people with disabilities, older people who have missed out on opportunities to access higher education in the past, and vulnerable minority groups. We now need to look ahead to the 2013 targets and find innovative ways to meet our goals. This progress review shows that good examples of practice and success are part of our system. Over the next two years we need to further develop that good practice into a collective approach that achieves strong results.

International context

In a January 2010 submission to the group working on a new national strategy for higher education, it was noted that we need to continue looking outwards for encouragement and ideas on what other countries are doing to advance equality of access. A preliminary survey of policy and practice in a range of countries in the EU and internationally produced interesting findings. On an EU-wide basis, performance-based funding to promote equity of access and efficiency is being encouraged on the basis that student support schemes (including those in countries with free access to higher education) are insufficient to ensure equal access and chances of success for all students. Member States have been encouraged to examine their mix of student fees and support schemes in the light of their efficiency and equity. Innovative curricula, teaching methods and programmes are also being promoted, including broader employment-related skills for those not coming through the traditional routes of entry into higher education.

There is also interesting practice in individual countries. The UK has introduced a range of recent initiatives, including a recruitment campaign for teachers from minority backgrounds in England and Wales through targeted advertising, mentoring programmes and grant support. Student progression from further and higher education is being strengthened through expanded lifelong learning networks. And over the past year in England, higher education institutions have been submitting new widening participation 'strategic assessments' in order to receive continued funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The recently completed review of higher education funding and student finance (the Browne review), while not yet implemented, proposes substantial new commitments to access on the part of higher education institutions, as well as a comprehensive new grant system for families with low incomes.

In Norway, a country similar in size to Ireland, it is widely accepted that education has played a major role in the development of the economy as well as in ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable groups. The focus of national policy has been on the design of universal and equitable measures so that fewer targeted measures are necessary. There is a particular focus on getting early-years education right and higher education is playing a role through the expansion and development of teacher training programmes. Measures are also being

developed to assist students from immigrant backgrounds, including courses and modules to support access to higher education and on the recruitment of more students from minority backgrounds to colleges of education.

Increasing participation in higher education is also a priority in Denmark, with a number of recently introduced measures to improve quality and strengthen standards¹. Measures supporting this policy include the allocation of funding to strengthen the quality of higher education; reforming shorter-cycle courses to make them more attractive to young people and targeted to the needs of the labour market, strengthening teaching capacity and improving retention, including linking performance funding for institutions to the number of students completing their studies.

Further afield, in Australia the government has adopted most of the recommendations from a recent review of higher education (the Bradley review) and earlier this year new legislation was enacted to implement change. The new measures include changes to systems of funding for students and institutions and the establishment of a new quality and regulatory agency². New targets have been set for increased participation by 25-to 34-year-olds and by students of low socio-economic status. New ways of measuring students' socio-economic status (SES) are also being developed and additional funding (calculated as a percentage of teaching and learning grants) will reward universities that attract and support more students from low SES backgrounds and that work in partnership with schools and vocational education and training providers to encourage retention of low SES students in pre-tertiary education.

In the United States, a new community college fund is supporting development of new partnerships with businesses to expand course offerings and develop more transparent educational and career pathways for both the unemployed and students in the workplace. New measures are also being developed to improve systems of dual enrollment in high school and university, to improve credit transfer among colleges and to clarify pathways by aligning the entrance requirements of schools, colleges and the higher education sector. The national online grant application process system is also being modernised and simplified to support unemployed workers in accessing further and higher education.

These examples of practice in other countries are helpful to us in a number of ways. They confirm that many of the things we are already doing are being replicated elsewhere, which adds to our confidence that we have the right approach. They also provide encouragement and ideas on new initiatives to build on success.

1 Denmark's National Reform Programme – Contribution to the EU's Growth and Employment Strategy (2008)

2 <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/bd/2008-09/09bd175.pdf>

There are five objectives in the national access plan:

- (i) Institution-wide approaches to access
- (ii) Enhancing access through lifelong learning
- (iii) Investment in widening participation in higher education
- (iv) Modernisation of student supports
- (v) Widening participation in higher education for people with disabilities

Progress during 2008-2010 is reviewed for each of the five objectives, and accompanying action points, and with regard to the participation targets which were set for 2010. Goals on which work has not yet begun are also mentioned and a summary table of progress for each objective is included in Appendix 1.

Objective (i) Institution-wide approaches to access

This objective sets out actions to be achieved on access plans within higher education institutions, building the capacity of access personnel, supporting good practice, and research and national and international dialogue and initiatives on the access agenda.

During 2008-2010, higher education institutions began developing access plans for local implementation. Such plans are essential to make progress on access targets and goals nationally. A review of those plans received shows that, although it was requested that access plans be an integral part of overall institutional strategies, in some instances this is the case and in others it remains a separate statement. One reason for this is that some institutions are mid-way through implementation of their strategic plan and it was not possible to build in an access plan immediately. However, it is intended that all access plans will become an integral part of institutions' strategies and the HEA will continue to work with institutions on this objective.

Higher education institutions also submitted a progress report on their work on access and lifelong learning over the past four years. The reports provide information on current practice, and new developments and achievements around the country. The reports provide evidence that progress has been made since 2006 and that an innovative range of initiatives on access and lifelong learning are underway in higher education institutions. These include for example, more part-time and flexible learning options; new Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies; expansion of progression options from further to higher education via the Higher Education Links Scheme; positive discrimination for disadvantaged students via the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE); mathematics, writing, study skill supports and assistive technology for all students; mentoring programmes for undergraduates; screening of first year students to identify learning needs and provide early intervention; and teaching qualifications for new

staff that includes diversity training. The reports also highlight issues arising for institutions. These include a concern that support provided through the Strategic Innovation Fund and other discretionary funding could end in the current economic climate, leaving institutions struggling to achieve their commitments on access. In addition, there is a concern that financial support for individuals is being eroded to the point of preventing low-income families participating in higher education.

Building capacity and supporting good practice

There has been ongoing participation in professional development among access personnel in higher education institutions (including disability directors and officers, mature student officers, staff working on inclusive teaching and learning). Individual institutions have put in place development opportunities for their staff, including, in some instances, promotional opportunities. A continuing professional development programme leading to an NFQ Level 9 special purpose award was introduced by University College Dublin in partnership with the national network of access officers Access Made Accessible (AMA) in September 2008. The programme – Higher Education Access: Equality in Policy and Practice – which was also supported by the HEA, will run for the third time in 2011. Participants include those working in further and higher education and in the community.

Research, dialogue and new initiatives

A range of useful evaluations, research reports/articles and related dialogue have also been produced over the past two years. These include publication of two reports commissioned by the HEA and carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) on the cost of participating in college and on the low participation in higher education by students from a 'non-manual' socio-economic background (2010). A research report on higher education access courses, commissioned by participating higher education institutions, was published in 2009. This report in turn contributed to work during 2009-2010 by a HEA Taskforce on a new policy on access courses. And a large-scale national conference and associated publication on lifelong learning in disadvantaged communities *Life is for Learning, Learning is for Life* was completed by Pobal in 2010.

In September 2010, the first national strategy for intercultural education was launched by the Department of Education and Skills. The strategy spans the entire education system and offers an opportunity for new dialogue and collaboration to promote interculturalism in education. A study tracking the progression, retention and success of students with disabilities in nine higher education institutions was published in Autumn 2010 by Pathways to Education, a joint access initiative of University College Cork and Cork Institute of Technology. The study shows that students with disabilities are high achievers, with over 90% of entrants graduating successfully.

A number of other useful studies and evaluations have also been completed with support from the Strategic Innovation Fund. These include an evaluation of the impact of the UCD New Era initiative to widen participation in 2009 and a study in Letterkenny IT on pro-active screening of incoming new students to identify those who would benefit from additional learning supports.

Two action points on which work has not yet begun include development of a research network on access and hosting of an international conference. It is planned that these initiatives will be achieved in the second phase of implementation of the plan.

Objective (ii) Enhancing access through lifelong learning

This objective sets out actions to be achieved on part-time and flexible learning; workforce up-skilling; further development of access/progression routes to higher education, including work with second level schools to encourage and promote educational opportunities among disadvantaged students.

A number of initiatives to promote part-time and flexible learning have been developed over the past two years. In the institutes of technology, www.bluebrick.ie was launched in 2009 to improve information on part-time options and help students navigate their options. The site was accessed by almost 40,000 users in 2010, including those looking for courses to enhance labour market opportunities. The number of part-time, short duration, distance and e-learning programmes has more than quadrupled in the institutes of technology since 2008.

Also in 2009 the HEA published a position paper on *Open and Flexible Learning* which outlines ways in which flexible learning can be practically progressed in higher education institutions. The paper also advocates parity of treatment for part-time students in public funding allocations. Funding to promote labour market activation in 2009 (€5m for higher education) and 2010 (€6m approved for higher education) has resulted in an increase in part-time programmes, with 1,700 participating students in 2009-2010 and 2,400 expected in 2010-2011. Students on undergraduate programmes are not charged tuition fees and can retain social welfare support while completing their course. In addition, support from a European Globalisation Fund is enabling 145 ex-employees from the companies Dell, Waterford Crystal and SR Technics³ to participate in higher education programmes during 2009-2010, with additional participants expected during 2011.

³ These companies moved their operations from Ireland in 2008-2009. The EGF was established to help workers in the EU who were made redundant because multi-national firms moved to countries with a lower cost base.

Access/progression routes to higher education

In September 2010 a HEA Taskforce on access courses finalised new policy advice for the Department of Education and Skills on access/foundation courses. It is recommended that new, enhanced partnership agreements are developed between further and higher education providers on access provision and on routes of progression from further to higher education. More general routes of access from further to higher education were assessed in 2009; a study completed by the National Access Office showed that at least 3,000 students progressed in the previous year to higher education via routes such as the Higher Education Links Scheme, the Pilot Scheme for institutes of technology, and through other informal routes agreed between local further and higher education providers.

For school leavers, the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) were launched nationally in 2009. These supplementary admission routes discriminate positively towards students who have been disadvantaged due to their socio-economic circumstances (HEAR), or because of disability (DARE). Eligible students can compete for entry to higher education programmes in the seven universities, the Dublin Institute of Technology and a number of other colleges on reduced Leaving Certificate points. They can also draw on additional financial, academic and pastoral supports while in college. In October 2010, 1,009 students accepted a place via HEAR and 385 students accepted a place via DARE.⁴ These final figures mask the high level of demand for access through the supplementary routes – 8,401 students applied through HEAR and 2,324 applied through DARE.

A new curriculum unit for Transition Year/senior cycle students *Exploring Options in Further and Higher Education* was launched for all schools in September 2010. The unit was developed as part of a collaborative initiative between the NCCA, the National Access Office and a working group of higher education access officers and second level guidance counsellors. It is expected that the unit will benefit in particular students who do not have family experience of further or higher education, students with disabilities and students from minority backgrounds who need help navigating the Irish education system. The unit and accompanying materials are published on the HEA website.

In collaboration with its advisory group, the National Access Office launched a new student section on the HEA website in January 2010. This initiative aims to assist both potential and current students to locate key information on all aspects of higher education. It also complements information available on www.studentfinance.ie.

One action point on which work has not yet begun is an early second chance strategy for 17-to 22-year-olds. It is planned that this work will be advanced as part of the second phase of implementation.

⁴ 1,009 students in 2010 represent a 32% increase in the number of students who entered higher education via HEAR in 2009. 385 students amount to a 44% increase in entry via DARE in 2009.

Objective (iii) Investment in widening participation in higher education

This objective identifies actions to be achieved on access funding for higher education institutions, including the Strategic Innovation Fund, the Dormant Accounts Fund, philanthropy and performance funding. There is also an action point on advocacy.

Plans are now in place to fully implement the access element of the HEA recurrent grant allocation model for universities as well as the first phase of access funding for institutes of technology. The funding changes will be introduced in January 2011. To support this work, an external audit of Equal Access data⁵, which underpins the core access allocation, was completed in June 2010. The audit report is published on the HEA website. It contains a number of conclusions and recommendations, the principal one being that Equal Access data are robust and appropriate for use in funding allocations.

Twenty-two projects that are either fully or partially focused on access and lifelong learning have been funded to date through the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF). A full list of projects is set out in Appendix 2. An interim report for the HEA on the Fund concluded that the access agenda has advanced as a result of the investment. This conclusion has been underlined by the progress reports received by higher education institutions. Good examples of practice include the institutes of technology Bluebrick project, the REACH project led by Athlone Institute of Technology, the equity of access initiative led by the Irish Universities Association, the Trinity Inclusive Curriculum project in Trinity College, the Recognition of Prior Learning project led by Cork Institute of Technology and the Pathways to Education assistive technology project led by University College Cork. During 2010, a new collaborative approach was agreed between institutions with access-related projects, this collaboration will continue for the coming years.

Since February 2009 monies from the Dormant Accounts Fund⁶ are also supporting a range of projects in the institutes of technology. Progress to date includes expansion of outreach work with primary and second level schools in disadvantaged communities, mathematics workshops, new services and supports for mature students, the Traveller community and students with disabilities. School projects include after-school activities, summer programmes and programmes promoting scientific, creative and technological discovery. Boosting pre-entry guidance, information and post-entry support for mature students is a significant element of the overall initiative. Five institutes are also working directly with young Travellers. A full list of projects supported by Dormant Accounts funding is included in Appendix 3.

⁵ Equal Access data is collected from all full-time new entrants to higher education at registration. Information includes the socio-economic status of new entrants, whether they have a disability, and their ethnic/cultural background.

⁶ Dormant accounts legislation in Ireland enables unclaimed funds lodged in financial institutions to be disbursed to projects and programmes designed to alleviate poverty and social exclusion.

Advocacy

A wide range of partners contribute to advocating and promoting the importance of access. The many inputs at local, regional and national level include an international conference hosted in April 2010 by Pathways to Education, a joint access initiative of University College Cork and Cork Institute of Technology, which was supported by the Strategic Innovation Fund. And a HEA conference in October 2010 provided up-to-date data on student progression. There were many access-related contributions to the group working on the 2010 national strategy for higher education, including a submission from the National Access Office and advisory group. There were also regular articles, editorials, and other references in the print and internet media on access and lifelong learning, authored by a wide range of people working both within and outside the education system.

Two action points on which work has not yet begun are on performance funding and promotion of philanthropy. It is planned that these actions will be advanced as part of the next phase of implementation.

Objective (iv) Modernisation of student supports

This objective identifies actions to be achieved to improve financial supports for students from under-represented groups, including information, support for part-time participants, the Student Assistance Fund, entitlements for minority students and opportunities to study abroad.

Since its launch in January 2008, www.studentfinance.ie has become a primary source of information for students and their families. The site won an eGovernment award in 2009 and by September 2010 over one million visits had been made to the site. A new online facility for student grant applications was developed by the Department of Education and Skills and added to the site in Autumn 2010.

Reforming the student grants schemes

Over the past two years significant progress has been made towards reform of the national student grant schemes. Subject to enactment of new legislation by 2011 it is planned to select a single authority to manage student grants. This authority will be tasked with providing financial support in a timely way to eligible students, enhancing the accessibility of financial support as well as improving the overall efficiency of the schemes for the State.

Part-time opportunities in higher education

Although financial support for eligible part-time students is not yet a feature of Irish higher education, provisions that may enable this in the future are to be included in the new

student support legislation. There has also been some positive progress as a result of national labour market activation initiatives. 1,700 students participating on part-time labour market activation programmes in 2009-2010 were provided with free or subsidised tuition along with continued social welfare support for the duration of their course. Qualifications in business, finance, green technologies and a range of other relevant areas were provided. 2,400 people are participating in similar part-time courses during 2010-2011. In addition, from 2011, the HEA core annual grant will support part-time provision, including distance and e-learning, in the institutes of technology as well as the universities.

Student Assistance Fund

Since its introduction in 1995, the Student Assistance Fund has been allocated on the basis of overall student numbers in individual institutions. The national access plan includes a commitment that Equal Access data will be used to inform allocations of the Student Assistance Fund. From September 2010, allocation of the Fund draws on Equal Access data. Twenty-five percent of the Fund is being allocated using the data in 2010-2012, and 50% of the Fund will be allocated in this way in 2011-2012. At present it is not planned to increase the percentage allocation beyond 50% as available information on Fund recipients show that there is an ongoing need for discretionary funding for all students among all social backgrounds.

Entitlements for ethnic minority students

www.studentfinance.ie includes information on the financial supports that are currently available to eligible students from ethnic minority groups. The 2010 national strategy on intercultural education highlights the need for ongoing work on the entitlements of ethnic minority students in higher education. The higher education contribution to the strategy was informed in part by a working group of representatives from higher education institutions. This group was convened in 2009 to consider what educational supports could be provided to the group of vulnerable young people from countries outside Ireland, often referred to as 'separated children'. With support from the Dormant Accounts Fund the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown is running Project Orange; this project aims to address information gaps on higher education for parents from ethnic minority backgrounds. Galway-Mayo Institute of technology has integrated measures for students from ethnic minority backgrounds into its mature student support programme.

Three action points on which work has not yet begun are support needs of low-middle income families, development of community-based funding, and opportunities to study abroad. It is planned that these items will be advanced during the second phase of implementation.

Objective (v) Access for people with disabilities

This objective identifies actions to be achieved for people with disabilities, including developing disability services in higher education institutions, enhanced funding arrangements, part-time options, and promoting good practice in teaching and learning, as well as improving the coherence of supports for students with disabilities across the education system and contributing to international research.

Having a disability officer is generally acknowledged to be an essential starting point in developing a comprehensive disability service in a higher education institution. Information gathered by the HEA in 2009 showed that all higher education institutions now have at least one part-time staff member overseeing disability support and accommodations.

Fund for Students with Disabilities

The Fund for Students with Disabilities supported 4,964 students in 2009-2010 and this trend is continuing upwards. As numbers grew, there were increasing delays in the administration of the Fund, in particular in allocating funding to new entrants who need support from their first weeks in college. To resolve this issue, and also to support further strategic development of disability supports in higher education institutions, the allocation model for the Fund was amended with effect from September 2010. There is now greater local decision-making by disability/access services, using detailed new criteria developed by the National Access Office. A single per-capita allocation now applies to all approved students with disabilities in higher education, with additional funding available for sign language, personal assistance and transport as required. Institutions now have clarity much earlier in the academic year on funding eligibility and have flexibility in the allocation of resources to approved students. To support the new approach the National Access Office has also put in place supplementary advice and monitoring arrangements.

Framework for inclusive teaching and learning

In September 2009 the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) published a Charter for inclusive teaching and learning in higher education. The Charter was developed in consultation with a wide range of partners, including EU representatives. It provides a framework for inclusive teaching and learning practices, and includes recommendations on reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, as well as a range of other recommendations on good pedagogical practice that will benefit all students. AHEAD has been promoting the Charter in further and higher education institutions during 2010 and work will continue during 2011. Work on developing alternate formats is also underway, and examples of good practice have been gathered from other EU countries.

Irish participation in OECD study

Ireland has been a participant in an OECD study entitled Pathways for disabled students to tertiary education and employment. The study, which is due to be complete by the end of 2010, will provide significant new knowledge and insight on effective policies and practice to support people with disabilities as they move from school into post-secondary education and on to employment. Irish contributors to the study include students and disability officers, AHEAD and other agencies representing people with disabilities, the Department of Education and Skills, and the National Access Office.

One action point on which work has not yet begun is support for students with disabilities who are part-time participants in further and higher education. It is planned that this goal will be advanced during the second phase of implementation.

Progress on 2010 participation targets

The national access plan set a range of participation targets for achievement, in two stages. The first stage is now, and the second in 2013. An analysis of progress on the targets set for 2010 shows that, with two exceptions, the targets have not been met. The outcome calls for a significant refocusing of effort on the part of the HEA, higher education institutions and other supporting agencies to ensure that ground is regained by 2013.

National participation rate

The first overall target in the national access plan is on the national participation rate. For several decades this target has been set by recording the number of full-time new entrants to higher education and dividing this figure by an estimate of the numbers of the population in the 17-to 19-year age group. Therefore the figure for new entrants includes mature students and other students outside the 17-to 19-year age range. 40,816 full-time students entered higher education institutions for the first time in 2009-2010. As there has been a steady increase in mature student entry to higher education over recent years, when the number of new entrants is revised to include only those 17-to 19-years of age, the participation rate is estimated to be 53%. This is a more accurate estimate of the proportion of 17-to 19-year-olds who access higher education at present in Ireland.

National participation rate (includes mature students and others outside 17-to 19-year age range)	2004 55%	2010 72%	2013 65%
2010 target was 61%			
National participation rate (17-to 19-year-olds)	2004 44%	2010 53%	

Socio-economic background

The national access plan set national targets for entry for the socio-economic groups who are particularly under-represented in higher education. These groups are the non-manual group, which was estimated to have an entry rate of 27% in 2004 and the combined semi- and unskilled manual groups which had an entry rate of 33%. For 2010, the target to be achieved for the non-manual group was 37% and the target for the semi- and unskilled manual groups was 41%. Analysis of progress for 2010 is not possible at present, however, due to the 4-year gap since the last Census and significant changes in the composition of the national population. As an interim measure, Equal Access data which has been gathered annually since 2007 by the majority of publicly-funded institutions are presented. Further analysis of entry rates will be completed in 2011 and in 2012, by which time a more recent national Census will have been completed. The Equal Access data indicate that progress on access to higher education for the target groups remains slow.

Equal Access Data – Number and % of New Entrants from Target Groups								
	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		% national population: Census 2006	
	No.	% NE	No.	% NE	No.	% NE		
Mature Students*	3,758	10.9%	4,188	11.1%	5,402	13.5%	66%	Age 25-64 ***
Target Socio-Economic Groups**								
Non Manual	3,730	10.8%	3,573	9.5%	3,831	9.6%	20%	Age 17-19
Semi-Unskilled	3,730	10.8%	4,024	10.7%	3,212	8.0%	11%	Age 17-19
Students with Disabilities	1,389	4.0%	1,777	4.7%	2,386	6.0%	5%	Age 17-35
Travellers	33	0.1%	24	0.1%	27	0.1%	0.9%	Age 18-22
Total Target Groups	12,639	36.6%	13,586	36.1%	14,858	37.1%		
Total New Entrants*	34,533	100%	37,611	100%	40,059	100%		

* Full-time, undergraduate, new entrant and mature entrants to HEIs returning EA data. Excludes occasional students

** % of respondents to Equal Access Survey from target socio-economic groups as a proportion of all new entrants

*** Completed education, not HE qualified, Census 2006

Mature students

In Ireland, a large proportion of the population over 30 years of age do not hold a higher education qualification. The national access target for mature students is for those people over 23 years of age who are first-time new entrants to higher education. Despite growth in the overall numbers of over-23s in the student population, the 2010 target of 17% of mature new entrants has not been achieved. The 13.6% figure does mask, however, an increase in absolute numbers of mature new entrants, as shown in the Equal Access table above, 5,402 entered in 2009-2010, compared to 4,188 the previous year.

Target share of mature students (full-time)	2006	2010	2013
	12.8%	13.6%	20%
The 2010 target for full-time mature students was 17%			

A further target for mature students, full-time and part-time combined was also set, and, similar to the full-time figure, while there was a slight increase in the percentage of participation by mature students, the 23% target was not met.

Target share of mature students (full-time and part-time combined)	2006	2010	2013
	18%	19%	27%
The 2010 target for full-time and part-time mature students was 23%			

Flexible/lifelong learning targets

Three individual flexible/lifelong learning targets were set in the national plan. These included flexible/part-time provision among all students, which include full-time 'occasional' students and all part-time undergraduate students, as well as those completing programmes with an e-learning component; a target increase in 'non-standard' entry routes and a lifelong learning target as monitored by Eurostat. Analysis of the data show that the 2010 target for flexible/part-time provision was exceeded, with 21,525 students participating in such modes.

Target share of flexible/part-time provision (all students)	2006	2010	2013
	7%	14.1%	17%
The 2010 target for all students was 12.5%			

The 2010 target for non-standard entry routes was based on student entry via the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE), mature entrants, the estimated number of entrants from access courses in further and higher education, and those progressing from other further education programmes. An analysis of data for 2009-2010 show that while there was a small increase on 2006 figures, the target of 27% was not reached.

Increase in 'non-standard' entry routes (from further education, via HEAR and DARE and by mature students)	2006	2010	2013
	24%	25%	30%
The 2010 target for non-standard entry was 27%			

The most recently available Eurostat data for Ireland is for 2008. No improvement has been recorded on participation in lifelong learning among 25-to 64-year-olds, based on the Eurostat definition.

Lifelong learning target: Persons aged 25-64 participating in education and training	2006	2010	2013
	7.3%	7.3%	17%
The 2010 lifelong learning target was 12.5%			

Students with disabilities

The national disability target is for students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities. The participation rate of young people with sensory, physical or multiple disabilities in higher education was estimated to be 16% in 2008, which is unacceptably low by comparison with the average participation rate of 55%. An individual target was set for each category. Table 4 shows the overall target for the categories combined.

Students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities	2006 466	2010 699	2013 932
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Data from the Fund for Students with Disabilities for 2009-2010 shows that 668 students with sensory, physical and/or multiple disabilities are now participating in higher education. This corresponds to 96% of the 2010 target. The table also shows the detailed numbers for each group.

Category of Disability	2010 target	Students, FSD 2009-10	Actual as % of target
Physical/mobility impairment	285	235	82%
Deaf/hard of hearing	189	173	92%
Blind/visual impairment	98	116	118%
Multiple disabilities	127	144	113%
TOTAL	699	668	96%

Implementation to date – ongoing challenges

The national action plan identifies eight particular challenges which must be overcome if Ireland is to improve equality in higher education. They include the need for more mainstreaming of access in higher education institutions; more resources; for fully joined-up strategies across the education system and among Government departments to tackle educational disadvantage and social exclusion; and the need for more and better use of data to advance our work. Other challenges identified include catering for the needs of those in the workforce; focusing on persistently low participation in higher education by students from low to middle income backgrounds; ensuring that the educational needs of immigrants are addressed, and also paying attention to a growing gap in achievement between females and males, especially the under-25s.

The progress reports from higher education institutions as well as updates from a range of partner agencies and networks provide some evidence that we are moving in the right direction. We cannot say, however, that the challenges identified have yet been overcome, and the results on the participation targets for 2010 show that we now have to refocus our efforts significantly if we are to meet our targets for 2013. On the matter of resources, the 2010 progress reports highlight ongoing reliance on discretionary sources of funding such as the Strategic Innovation Fund and the Dormant Accounts Fund, particularly in institutes of technology. The reports also show a wide variation in scale and approach on how barriers to participation are being tackled. Regarding mainstreaming, the continued lack of an integrated access plan in some institutions as well as some evidence that access services and personnel are currently being diminished suggests that access remains on the margins in a number of higher education institutions.

There is also a need for further development of our data collection and analysis capacity, both locally and nationally, so that there is greater information and clarity on the profile of potential students in local and regional communities, what outcomes are to be achieved, and adequate means to monitor progress. This was an important objective earlier in the decade, however, in the current economic climate, such outcomes and the means to evaluate progress are vital.

Although the focus on those in the workforce has shifted significantly in the past two years to providing up-skilling and re-skilling opportunities for approximately 300,000 (*source: most recent Quarterly National Household Survey*) currently unemployed people in Ireland, the need for viable opportunities to participate in part-time higher education programmes is as great as ever.



The ideal of creating joined-up strategies to tackle educational disadvantage is rational and sensible, yet making it a reality is difficult. There are barriers between different parts of the education system and our State services that have proved quite intractable. Our current economic situation puts any wastefulness caused by parallel services and policies into stark relief, and underlines the need for us to work together more effectively, and to make the best use of available resources.

The work agenda for 2011-2013 that is set out overleaf aims to continue the progress on the objectives and actions in the national action plan, and taking account of the particular circumstances and challenges that now face us.

Work agenda 2011-2013

Actions for 2011-2013 build on work completed over the past two years and aim for further progress on the goal to establish equity of access as an integral part of higher education policy and practice. The actions are grouped under the five objectives of the plan, with a number prioritised in bold font. New action points, that supplement those published in 2008, are marked with an asterisk *.

Institution-wide approaches to access

- **The HEA works with higher education institutions to ensure that integrated access plans are in place and being implemented. The plans include detailed quantitative and qualitative targets and outcomes that each institution is working towards, as well as mechanisms for annual evaluation of progress.**
- **Following the 2010 audit of Equal Access data, work continues to further enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of the information gathered, supplemented by further work on national targets.**
- **A research network for access and lifelong learning is put in place with assistance from the national networks of access officers, humanities, social science and other interested schools/departments in higher education institutions, as well as other research-based organisations.**
- *Reports on Equal Access data are completed annually and a composite report with analysis of Equal Access data 2007-2011 (five years) is published in 2012.
- Professional development initiatives continue, to include a review of the numbers, skill-base and expertise of access personnel (including disability officers, mature student officers, staff working on inclusive teaching and learning).
- An international conference on equality of access and lifelong learning in Ireland is hosted in 2012.

Enhancing access through lifelong learning

- ***A new national definition of lifelong learning in higher education is explored, drawing on good practice in other EU countries. It is proposed that a new definition would provide clarity and focus on what constitutes lifelong learning in higher education, what learners should be considered 'lifelong learners' and how provision of lifelong learning can be better co-ordinated and supported for the benefit of learners.**

- ***All higher education institutions are contributing to labour market activation. Progress draws on a clear strategy that maintains focus on traditional under-represented groups while also contributing to economic recovery. Comprehensive data collection and monitoring are an integral part of the approach.**
- ***A new participation target is set for students from the Traveller community, in consultation with national Traveller groups and the Department of Education and Skills.**
- ***The Student Record System is adapted to gather additional data on part-time participation, those participating on labour market activation programmes and those progressing from routes other than the Leaving Certificate.**
- The HEA examines the needs of young adults – particularly young men – in the 17-to 22-year age group who are not currently benefiting from higher education, with a view to developing an early second-chance strategy for this cohort.
- ***The 2010 policy on access courses/modules is implemented (subject to approval by the Department of Education and Skills), with further evaluation work on participation in higher education by mature students.**

Investment in widening participation in higher education

- **Access funding is provided to all institutions as part of their core grant, informed by Equal Access data. The development is accompanied by agreements between the HEA and institutions on outcomes and targets to be achieved and regular evaluation of progress.**
- ***The HEA evaluation of community-based access initiatives is published and informs further development of community-based access initiatives.**
- The Strategic Innovation and Dormant Accounts Funds continue to support access initiatives, with opportunities to further enhance progress through partnership and sharing of expertise and resources. Both funding sources are subject to ongoing monitoring of targets and outcomes by the HEA.

Modernisation of student supports

- **The student grants system is reformed through new legislation, changes to the method for allocating financial support to students, and access to online application systems for all students.**
- ***A review of who benefits from the Fund for Students with Disabilities is carried out. The study includes exploration of access to the Fund by those with specific learning difficulties.**
- **Opportunities for learners to participate in part-time higher education programmes are further developed, supported by the HEA core annual grant to higher education institutions as well as the Strategic Innovation Fund and funding to promote labour market activation.**
- New opportunities to study abroad are developed for students disadvantaged by social and/or economic circumstances.

Widening participation in higher education for people with disabilities

- ***Disability targets for 2013 are reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently ambitious and reflect the overall increase in numbers of students with disabilities in higher education.**
- **Ongoing work is undertaken to ensure that the Fund for Students with Disabilities is used as progressively as possible to support students, including those participating in part-time education.**
- *The Teaching Council is assisted in developing a new policy for students with disabilities to access teacher education, to include a quantitative participation target for people with disabilities in the teaching profession.
- *The National Access Office works with the Department of Education and Skills and further education and training providers to set disability targets in further education and training.
- The AHEAD Charter for inclusive teaching and learning, as well as initiatives on alternate formats, continue to be disseminated and supported.
- Work continues on improving coherence between different levels of the education system for students with disabilities.

National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education

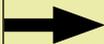
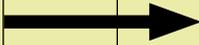
Summary of action points and timetable 2011-2013

Implementation of the National Access Plan is reviewed annually. Action points in bold type will be prioritised in 2011.

1 Institution-wide approaches to access

Action points	Partners	2011	2012	2013
The HEA works with higher education institutions to ensure that integrated access plans, targets and outcomes are in place and being implemented.	Higher education institutions, HEA	→		
Following the 2010 audit of Equal Access data, work continues to further enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of the information gathered.	Higher education institutions, HEA, Office of the Data Protection Commissioner	→		
A research network for access and lifelong learning is put in place.	Higher education institutions, research agencies and individuals, HEA	→		
Reports on Equal Access data are completed annually and a composite report with analysis of Equal Access data 2007-2011 (five years) is published in 2012.	Higher education institutions, HEA	→		
Professional development initiatives continue, to include a review of the numbers, skill-base and expertise of access personnel.	Higher education institutions, HEA	→		
An international conference is hosted on equality of access and lifelong learning in Ireland.	HEA, National Access Office advisory group		→	

2 Enhancing access through lifelong learning

Action points	Partners	2011	2012	2013
A new national definition of lifelong learning in higher education is explored, drawing on good practice in other EU countries.	HEA, National Access Office advisory group, adult education representatives			
All higher education institutions are contributing to labour market activation.	Higher education institutions, HEA, Department of Education and Skills			
A new participation target is set for students from the Traveller community.	National Traveller groups, higher education institutions, HEA			
The Student Record System is adapted to gather additional data on part-time participation, those on labour market programmes and those progressing from routes other than the Leaving Certificate.	Higher education institutions, HEA			
The HEA examines the needs of young adults – particularly young men – in the 17-to 22-year age group who are not currently benefiting from higher education, with a view to developing an early second-chance strategy for this cohort.	Unemployment groups, National Access Office advisory group, HEA			
The 2010 policy on access courses/modules is implemented (subject to approval by the Department of Education and Skills).	Higher education institutions, further education and training providers, Department of Education and Skills, HEA			

3 Investment in widening participation in higher education

Action points	Partners	2011	2012	2013
Access funding is provided to all institutions as part of their core grant, informed by Equal Access data. The development is accompanied by agreements between the HEA and institutions on outcomes and targets to be achieved and regular evaluation of progress.	Higher education institutions, HEA	→		
The HEA evaluation of community-based access initiatives is published and informs further development of community-based access initiatives.	Community groups and networks, Pobal, HEA	→		
The Strategic Innovation and Dormant Accounts Funds continue to support access initiatives, with opportunities to further enhance progress through partnership and sharing of expertise and resources. Both funding sources are subject to ongoing monitoring of targets and outcomes by the HEA.	Higher education institutions, Department of Education and Skills, HEA	→		

4 Modernisation of student supports

Action points	Partners	2011	2012	2013
The student grants system is reformed through new legislation, changes to the method for allocating financial support to students, and access to online application systems for all students.	Department of Education and Skills, VECs and local authorities, HEA	→		
A review of who benefits from the Fund for Students with Disabilities is carried out. The study includes exploration of access to the Fund by those with specific learning difficulties.	Further and higher education providers, NCSE, AHEAD and disability groups, professional bodies, Department of Education and Skills, HEA	→		
Opportunities for learners to participate in part-time higher education programmes are further developed, supported by the HEA core annual grant to higher education institutions as well as the Strategic Innovation Fund and funding to promote labour market activation.	Higher education institutions, Department of Education and Skills, HEA	→		
New opportunities to study abroad are developed for students disadvantaged by social and/or economic circumstances.	Higher education institutions, HEA	→		

5 Widening participation in higher education for people with disabilities

Action points	Partners	2011	2012	2013
Disability targets for 2013 are reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently ambitious and reflect the overall increase in numbers of students with disabilities in higher education.	Higher education institutions, AHEAD and other disability groups, professional bodies, Department of Education and Skills, HEA	→		
Ongoing work is undertaken to ensure that the Fund for Students with Disabilities is used as progressively as possible to support students, including those participating in part-time education.	Further and higher education providers, disability groups, professional bodies, Department of Education and Skills, HEA	→	→	→
The Teaching Council is assisted in developing a new policy for students with disabilities to access teacher education, to include a quantitative participation target for people with disabilities in the teaching profession.	Teaching Council, teacher education colleges/ departments, Department of Education and Skills, NCSE, AHEAD, disability groups, HEA	→	→	
The National Access Office works with the Department of Education and Skills and further education and training providers to set disability targets in further education and training.	Further education providers, Department of Education and Skills, HEA	→		
The AHEAD Charter for inclusive teaching and learning, as well as initiatives on alternate formats, continues to be disseminated and supported.	Further and higher education providers, AHEAD, HEA	→	→	
Work continues on improving coherence between different levels of the education system for students with disabilities.	Primary, second level, further and higher education providers, the Department of Education and Skills, National Council for Special Education, AHEAD and other disability groups, professional bodies, HEA	→	→	→

Appendix 1

Tabular summary of progress on action points in the National Access Plan

In this tabular summary, progress is summarised using colour. Green means the action has been achieved, orange means that work is underway, red that work on the action has not yet started.

Objective (i) Institution-wide approaches to access

Action points

Institution-wide access plans	Orange
Building capacity (access personnel)	Green
Supporting good practice	Orange
Recognising good equality practice	Orange
Research network on access	Red
International conference on equity and excellence in higher education	Red

Objective (ii) Enhancing access through lifelong learning

Action points

Expansion of part-time/flexible learning opportunities	Orange
Student supports for part-time learners	Orange
PATH – Programme for access to higher education	Orange
Diversification of entry routes to higher education	Orange
An early second-chance strategy for 17-to 22-year-olds	Red
Workforce up-skilling	Green
Promotional campaign	Green
Transition year module on access to further and higher education	Green

Objective (iii) Investment in widening participation in higher education

Action points

Institutional funding for access	Orange
Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF)	Green
Performance funding	Red
Philanthropy	Orange
Advocacy	Green
Dormant accounts funding for the institutes of technology	Green

Objective (iv) Modernisation of student supports

Action points

[Support needs of] low and lower-middle income working families	<i>Red</i>
Part-time support	<i>Orange</i>
Developing awareness of the available supports	<i>Orange</i>
Student Assistance Fund	<i>Orange</i>
Millennium Partnership Fund	<i>Red</i>
Entitlements of ethnic minority students	<i>Green</i>
Opportunities to study abroad (principally Erasmus)	<i>Red</i>

Objective (v) Access for people with disabilities

Action points

Disability Officers	<i>Orange</i>
Reasonable accommodations (to be made by higher education institutions for their students)	<i>Orange</i>
Support [for students with disabilities] in part-time higher education	<i>Red</i>
Funding to support students with disabilities	<i>Orange</i>
Coherence between different levels [of the education system]	<i>Orange</i>
Participation in international (OECD) study on students with a disability	<i>Green</i>
Developing alternate format	<i>Orange</i>

Appendix 2

2008-to date: Projects on access and lifelong learning supported by the Strategic Innovation Fund

Strategic Innovation Fund Cycle 1 – Access and lifelong learning

Lead HEI	Project Title & Objectives	Partner HEIs	Current Status
AIT	ASCENT Regional Assessment and Resource Centre This project was established to develop a regionally-based needs assessment service and centre to facilitate greater access and retention for people with disabilities in higher education.	GMIT, ITS, LYIT, NUIG	Merged into SIF II 'REACH' project
CIT	Education in Employment The objective of the project is to provide third level education and training opportunities for those currently in employment. There are five strands: 1 Work-based learning 2 Recognition of prior learning (RPL) 3 Opportunities for crafts persons 4 Education and training for non-Irish nationals 5 Project management, review and reporting.	GMIT, DIT, AIT, DKIT, IT SLIGO, LYIT, UCC, NUIG	Merged into SIF II 'REAP' project
IUA	Widening the base for high-quality student recruitment The project objective is to reform and mainstream existing supplementary admissions routes for under-represented groups of students. The two routes in question are the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and the Supplementary Admissions Route for Applicants with a Disability.	All Unis	Completed. SIF II 'Equity of Access' project builds upon SIF I project
LIT	Work-based learning programmes Work-based learning initiatives will be developed in partnership with employers, in selected pilot courses where there is a recognised need to up-skill the workforce.	No partner	Completed SIF II project on Work-based Learning builds upon.
NUIG	Outreach/access initiatives across BMW and Co. Clare The objective of this project is to widen access and participation and promote lifelong learning across the Border Midland and Western Region and Co. Clare. This region has dispersed population, living mainly in small towns and rural areas. The region's infrastructure is 'comparatively poor'; it has 'a relatively small share of the national third-level infrastructure'.	NUIG, AIT, DKIT, GMIT, LYIT, NUIM, St Angela's College, Sligo.	Completed

Lead HEI	Project Title & Objectives	Partner HEIs	Current Status
NUIG	<p>Feasibility Study to develop Irish language and Irish Medium Education</p> <p>A feasibility study to provide the basis for the sustainable development of aspects of Irish language and Irish medium education.</p>	NUIG, NUIM, LYIT	Completed
NUIM	<p>Strategic Alliance between NUIM and IoTs</p> <p>This project aims to develop strategic alliances with IoTs in adjoining regions in order to strengthen the overall contribution of higher education beyond metropolitan areas. Strategic alliances will be developed at Dundalk, Carlow, Waterford, Athlone and Tallaght.</p>	IoTs	Completed
UCD	<p>Widening Participation</p> <p>This project has been established to set new goals for the access and widening participation interventionist models at UCD – by increasing participation by part-time learners in arts, science and engineering programmes.</p>	NUIM	Focus on mainstreaming
UL	<p>Shannon Consortium: Strand 1: Shannon Regional Learning Gateway (SRLG)</p> <p>The SRLG will build on each institution's community-based initiatives to create regional pathways and to raise educational aspirations. It will target marginalised communities, mature students, socio-economically disadvantaged and students with disability, and will seek to optimise opportunities, resources and services for these students.</p>	LIT, IT Tralee	Completed
UL	<p>IDEAS (Individualised Digital Education Advisory System) The objective of this two-year project is to provide an information portal for single, accredited modules designed to enable the continuing professional development of work-based students up to and including postgraduate masters and professional doctorates through easy online access to guidance, information, and administrative assistance.</p>	UL, LIT, IT Tralee, CIT, DKIT, NUIG	Completed

Strategic Innovation Fund Cycle 2 – Access and lifelong learning

Lead HEI	Project Title & Objectives	Partner HEIs	Current Status
AIT	<p>Regional Assistive Technology Connection to Higher Education (REACH)</p> <p>This project is to facilitate greater access for people with disabilities/ specific learning difficulties. The initiative seeks to promote the progression and achievement of individuals with SLD from second level through to third level education and to address the lack of information on assistive technology interventions.</p>	LYIT	Ongoing
ITB	<p>Eastern Regional Alliance Access project: ‘Transitions’. Research on the concept of ‘readiness’ for college in both social and academic frameworks. It aims to address retention and progression issues at participating institutes of technology.</p>	IT Carlow, DKIT, IT Tallaght	Terminated
IT Carlow	<p>Eastern Regional Alliance (ERA) access project: Consolidating Services for increased capacity.</p> <p>Support for activities which promote balanced regional, economic, and social development. It aims to increase the number of flexible programmes offered to meet the needs of lifelong learners and to aid in overall learner retention.</p>	ITB, DKIT, IT Tallaght	Terminated
NUIG	<p>Online Mental Health</p> <p>This portal will improve access to mental health services and psycho-educational supports for an increasingly diverse student population. It will develop effective, evidence-based and relevant mental health services for students.</p>	TCD, DKIT, UCC	Ongoing
IUA	<p>Equity of Access</p> <p>This project aims to build on the IUA-SIF 1 Access Project. It will implement nationally-agreed indicators of educational disadvantage and utilise these to accurately direct pre-entry, admission and post-entry activities at those students. The new structured approach involves a radical overhaul of the existing access system.</p>	All Unis, DIT & IOTI	Ongoing
UCC	<p>Bridges to Learning is a partnership project which focuses on schools, community-based groups, and voluntary/statutory agencies, and is designed to raise educational aspirations. It seeks to increase the number of disadvantaged, mature students and students with disabilities accessing third level programmes.</p> <p>Connections aims to provide a model for regional partnerships to deliver on the national access agenda. The project will also help to inform national access and widening participation policy by reviewing and evaluating data from collaborating institutions</p>	CIT	Ongoing

Lead HEI	Project Title & Objectives	Partner HEIs	Current Status
UL	<p>Regional Learning Gateway, established in SIF Cycle 1, will be extended to Clare and Kerry. Interventions for younger learners will focus on socio-economically disadvantaged areas in Limerick plus a disadvantaged area in Tralee. The consortium aims to work with specific cohorts of learners in primary and secondary schools with a view to achieving a long-term impact.</p> <p>Targeting Social Disadvantage, the Shannon Consortium will bring its services to disadvantaged areas in the region over the 3-year period 2008-2010. The proposal has three clearly identified projects: (1) developing a new educational landscape; (2) students supporting students; and (3) the Class of 2014.</p>	LIT, MIC-UL, IT Tralee	Ongoing
CIT	<p>Roadmap for Employer-Academic Partnership (REAP)</p> <p>The aim of the project is to facilitate the research, development and validation of a higher education/employment partnership model and roadmap. It will identify learning needs within workplaces, draw up a comprehensive plan for partnership between employers and HEIs, and verify the effectiveness of the strategy through a diverse range of demonstrator collaborative activities.</p>	DIT, WIT, IT Tallaght, UCC IT Sligo, AIT, NUIG	Ongoing
TCD/ ITB	<p>Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance (DRHEA) – Widening Participation</p> <p>The Widening Participation strand within the DRHEA proposed the establishment of a <i>Higher Learning Network (HLN)</i> which will link DRHEA institutions with other providers across the greater Dublin region. Initial efforts will focus on the needs of adult learners within the workforce or wider community who wish to enter or progress further in higher education. It will also cater for the diverse ethnic communities who now live in our city and wish to access higher education or add to qualifications gained in their native countries.</p>	TCD, UCD, DCU, NUIM, DIT, IADT, ITB, IT Tallaght	Ongoing
IOTI	<p>Address the Needs of the Knowledge Economy - Supported Flexible Learning</p> <p>The IoTs and DIT commit to mainstreaming supported, flexible learning within and between their institutes as an innovative and complementary mode of delivery. This aims to expand the number of people in the workforce engaged in education and development.</p>	All IoTs and DIT	Ongoing
LIT	<p>A Work-based Learning approach to progression for craft persons on the National Framework of Qualifications</p> <p>This will address the needs of craft persons progressing to Level 7 and 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications, in a manner which suits their learning styles.</p>	IT Carlow	Ongoing

Appendix 3

2009-to date: Projects on access and lifelong learning supported by Dormant Accounts Funding in Institutes of Technology

Athlone Institute of Technology	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	After-schools Club
Cycle I	Summer Camps
Cycle I	Writing Skills Programme
Cycle I	Mature Student Programmes
Cycle II	Mathematics Tutor
Cycle II	Peer Assisted Student Study (PASS)
Cycle II	Music Technology and Management

Cork Institute of Technology	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Kick-start Programme (mature students support)
Cycle I	The Finish Line Programme (Mature student support)
Cycle I	Science for Life Programme
Cycle II	'Helping Hand' - Support for Entrants from DEIS schools

Dublin Institute of Technology	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle II	Progression to Higher Education via Further Education
Cycle II	Supporting Transition to Higher Education

Dundalk Institute of Technology	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Part-time access programme – Enhanced FETAC links
Cycle I	Learning support for access students

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Access for students with sensory disabilities
Cycle I	Outreach for Travellers
Cycle I	Mature Student Support (inc. students from ethnic minority backgrounds)
Cycle II	'One Stop Shop': Drop-in Service for Adult Guidance and Information
Cycle II	Enterprise Challenge Project

Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Pre-entry Supports for DEIS schools
Cycle I	Outreach for Travellers
Cycle I	Support for students at high risk of non-completion
Cycle II	Creative Arts Initiative for Local DEIS Schools
Cycle II	Digital Media Initiative for Local DEIS Schools

Institute of Technology Blanchardstown	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Project Red
Cycle I	The Yellow Brick Project (Primary Schools Access Programme)
Cycle I	Project Orange – Informing Ethnic Minority Parents about Higher Education
Cycle I	Fun with Maths
Cycle I	School Leavers Mentoring Scheme
Cycle II	The New Adult Learner: Information, Guidance & Support
Cycle II	Young Women and Technology
Cycle II	Universal Design for Academic and Support Staff

Institute of Technology Carlow	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle II	Access South Leinster
Cycle II	Support to Traveller Children

Institute of Technology Sligo	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Community STEPS – pre-entry supports for early school leavers
Cycle I	Enterprise Challenge
Cycle I	Extension of ‘Breaking the Mould’
Cycle II	Summer school for first year entrants identified as experiencing socio-economic disadvantage

Institute of Technology Tallaght	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Extension of RAPID
Cycle II	Raising Expectations in West Tallaght Secondary Schools

Institute of Technology Tralee	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Traveller Community Liaison
Cycle II	Learning Support for the Emergent Adult Learner Cohort

Letterkenny Institute of Technology	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Enabling Maths
Cycle I	Collaborative Access Programme
Cycle II	LyIT Applied Writing Service

Limerick Institute of Technology	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Taster Programme
Cycle I	Extension of Active Learning Project (ALFA)
Cycle I	Enterprise Challenge
Cycle I	Mature Student Orientation/Support
Cycle II	Student Resource Programme
Cycle II	Community Access Project in Conjunction with Croom Family Resource Centre
Cycle II	Junior Graduates Programme

Waterford Institute of Technology	
Cycle	Project Title
Cycle I	Inter-generational learning
Cycle I	Mature student support
Cycle II	Targeted support to Traveller children enrolled in Junior and Senior secondary cycle

Appendix 4

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