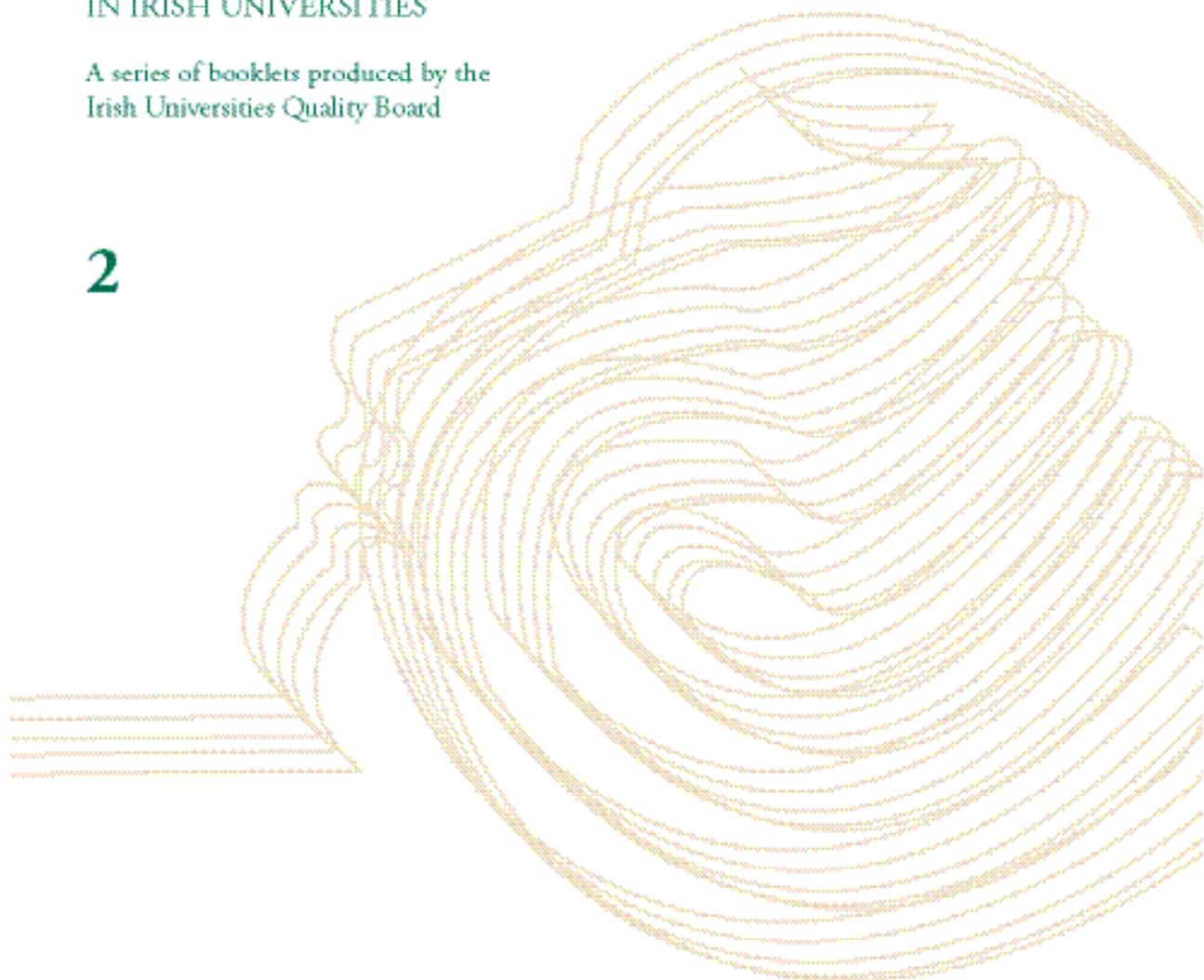


GOOD PRACTICE

IN THE ORGANISATION OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN IRISH UNIVERSITIES

A series of booklets produced by the
Irish Universities Quality Board

2



IRISH UNIVERSITIES
QUALITY BOARD

National Guidelines
2006

Irish Universities Quality Board

The Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) was established by the seven Irish universities in 2002 to increase the level of inter-university co-operation in developing their quality assurance procedures and processes, in line with best international systems and to represent the Irish university quality assurance system nationally and internationally. IUQB has been delegated the statutory responsibility for organising the periodic review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance systems in place in the seven Irish universities.

Sectoral Projects

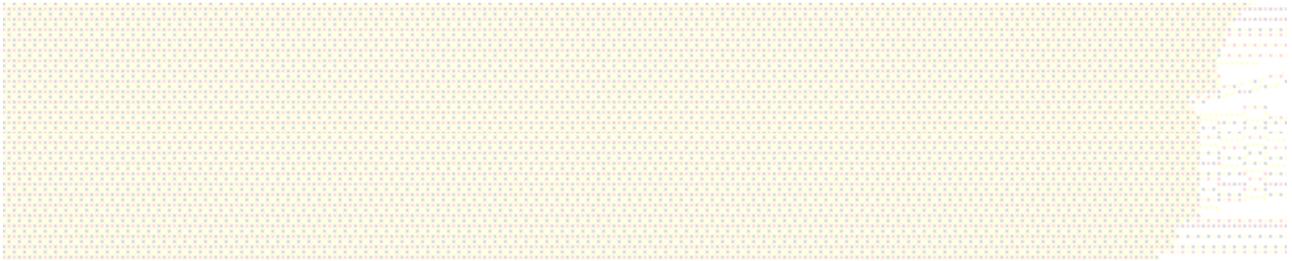
This booklet is one of a series produced by IUQB. The aim of the series is to establish and publish good practice for Irish universities in the key areas of Teaching and Learning, Research and Strategic Planning/Management. This is in keeping with the IUQB aim to increase the level of inter-university co-operation in developing quality assurance processes. The booklets are the result of inter-university projects on topics selected, organised and driven by the Board with the close collaboration of the universities, and funded by the Higher Education Authority Quality Assurance Programme, funded under the National Development Plan 2000-2006. The selection of the projects is based on recommendations for improvement contained in the reviews of departments and faculties required by the Universities Act 1997.

Previous Booklets in the Series:

No 1: *Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* (2005)

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Preface

Student Support Services play vital roles in university life, contributing to the academic, social, financial and personal support of students and potential entrants to enable them to succeed and flourish in higher education. However, with the increase in the number and diversity of students entering third-level education in Ireland, the role that Student Support Services plays has become ever more complex and important. In order that universities can continue to successfully support students during the course of their university life, it is crucial that the manner in which Student Support Services are organised and integrated is carefully considered. This booklet provides guidelines to assist the universities in this endeavour.

Introduction

Background to the Project

In recent years, several factors have increased the importance of high standards and consistent practice in the provision of student support services, and of mechanisms to ensure standards and quality.

- A. Changes in the expectations and demands of society in general, and of students in particular, have placed greater emphasis on the quality of the student experience.
- B. Continually increasing student diversity.
- C. The ever-increasing emphasis placed on education as a driver of economic and social development has resulted in marked increases in the numbers of students in all Irish universities. The number of students in the seven Irish universities rose by approximately 22% in the five-year period from 1998/1999 (c. 71,000)¹ to 2003/2004 (c. 86,500)². This underlines the importance of formal policies, regulations and guidelines, and the improvement of supports of all kinds, for students.
- D. The measures proposed in these guidelines are already well established in other countries.^{3 4}
- E. There has been a general increase in the need to assure internal and external stakeholders of the quality of services provided.
- F. The EUA review of universities has highlighted the importance of considering student support services as part of the university as a whole.⁵
- G. Academic Units are now reviewing the quality of student support services provided to them as part of their QA/QI processes.

Project outline

Aim:

To improve the organisation and effectiveness of Student Support Services in all Irish universities.

Objectives:

- 1 To establish current practice, nationally and internationally
- 2 To identify good practices
- 3 To prepare a national code of good practice

¹ Calculated from the HEA Annual Report 1998/99. Available at www.hea.ie.

² Calculated from the HEA Annual Report 2003/04. Available at www.hea.ie.

³ Universities UK (2002) *Student Services: Effective approaches to retaining students in higher education*. Available at www.universitiesuk.ac.uk.

⁴ UNESCO (2002) *The role of student affairs and services in higher education: A practical manual for developing, implementing and assessing student affairs programmes and services*. Available at www.unesco.org.

⁵ The EUA Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities was undertaken in 2004 and the reports were published in 2005. The review was jointly commissioned by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). The reports are available at www.hea.ie and www.iuqb.ie.

Activities

Compilation of Current Practices

In February 2003, two draft documents generated by an EUA study⁶ in which University College Dublin (UCD) was a partner, were circulated to Quality Officers in each university. The documents in question dealt with categories of Student Support Services and with the principles underlying Student Support Services. Those responsible for the provision and delivery of Student Support Services were asked to supply information and compile a report on current practice within their universities. In some instances, this was provided in the format of a 'swot-like analysis'. The resulting reports were collated and a summary document describing the sectoral situation was prepared. This document was updated and refined in early 2005, and formed the basis of a section in the Interim Report⁷ as described below.

Workshops

Each university was asked to hold a workshop to obtain inputs to this project from its staff and relevant officers. As part of its workshop, each university was requested to address the following:

- (i) Define Student Support Services within the institution,
- (ii) Identify the explicit and implicit links between service providers, and
- (iii) Define what is believed to be the 'case' for Student Support Services, to whom the 'case' should be made and the political context within which the 'case' is being made.

The resulting reports were collated and form part of the Interim Report.⁸

The Interim Report

As a major input to the Experts' Conference (see below), an Interim Report⁹ was prepared. This 80-page, comprehensive report brought together much data and information never before collated and provides a concise but detailed overview of current student support service practices in the Irish universities.

Experts' Conference

A national conference with international speakers entitled 'Good Practice in the Organisation of Student Support Services in Irish Universities' was held in Dublin in March 2005. There were presentations on practices in two other countries (USA and the UK), breakout sessions and a plenary discussion.

⁶ UCD was engaged with European partners on a quality culture project on behalf of the EUA (EUA Quality Culture Project Network 3 Report, Student Support Services, 2003).

⁷ IUQB (2005) Interim report on Good Practice in the Organisation of Student Support Services in Irish Universities. Available at www.iuqb.ie.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

The Consultation Process

A draft copy of the guidelines was modified with the benefit of feedback from three sources:

- a Focus groups with students and student union representatives from the universities.
- b A series of experts, with extensive international experience, who were invited to provide input.
- c Other interested persons and professionals from the universities and other organisations.

Acknowledgements

This project was supported by the Quality Assurance Programme, organised by the HEA and supported under the National Development Plan 2000-06. The IUQB would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the Irish Universities Association (IUA) to this project.

Using these Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of these Guidelines is to facilitate the review and improvement of policies, regulations, procedures and documentation governing the organisation of Student Support Services in Irish Universities. The intention is that each university will see this document as containing agreed statements of good practice that it should take into consideration so as to improve its own relevant systems.

The Sections

Each guideline section starts with some paragraphs that outline the main relevant issues and refer to points raised during the workshops held at the seven universities, to practices in Ireland and other countries cited in the Interim Report and at the Experts' Conference of March 2005, and to relevant publications. The purpose of these sub-sections is to place in context the specific guideline items that appear on odd-numbered pages.

Each guideline item is in the form of a non-prescriptive statement that represents 'good practice'. In most cases there are many ways in which a particular 'good practice' may be achieved and it is recognised that diversity in this respect may exist. However, every university should accept that any policy, regulation or procedure that is ineffective in achieving or maintaining a 'good practice' should be reviewed and improved or replaced as soon as is practicable. It is essential that each university has appropriate quality assurance mechanisms in place to identify and rectify such 'deficiencies'.

Glossary of Terms

While we acknowledge that the usage of the terms "traditional" and "non-traditional" students is unsatisfactory, we use them in this booklet in an effort to differentiate between the general student population of 18 to 21 year-olds commencing university straight from school and other, often under-represented categories of students.

Description of Student Support Services

A descriptive overview of Student Support Services provided in Irish universities is given in appendix 2.



Guiding Principles

Policies, regulations and guidelines for Student Support Services should:

- Recognise the “dignity, uniqueness, potential and worth of each individual” and
- Develop “the whole person, including the importance of intellectual, social, emotional, ethical and spiritual elements”.¹⁰

Policies, regulations and guidelines should arise from well-considered aims and objectives and should be informed by reflection on practice and experience. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that *“In order for any part of the higher education enterprise to be of top quality and to be consistently applied, it must be founded on a set of principles and values that takes into consideration the expressed needs and choices of its clients (the primary clients are students).”*¹¹

The aims and objectives for the development of policy and the provision of Student Support Services are directly or indirectly related to matters such as:

- Enhancing the individual student experience by providing professional services which support the holistic development of the person, thereby enabling all students to achieve their full academic and personal potential;
- The integration of all of higher education's resources in the education and preparation of the whole student;¹²
- Equality and fairness, with inclusive provisions for an increasingly non-traditional student population;
- The delivery of student affairs and services “in a manner that is seamless, meaningful, and integrated with the academic mission of the institution”;¹³
- The building of practices and policies upon “sound principles and research, and carried out by partnering with the entire campus community”;¹⁴
- The premise that “higher education and student affairs and services, as integral partners in providing services and programmes, must be student-centred and include students as partners and responsible stakeholders in their education.”¹⁵

¹⁰ Woodard, D., Love, P. and Komives, S. (2000), *Leadership and management issues for a new century*. San Fran.

¹¹ See footnote 4.

¹² NASPA and ACPA (2004) *Learning Reconsidered: A campus-wide focus on the student experience*. Available at www.naspa.org.

¹³ See footnote 4.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

1.0 The case for Student Services

There is increasing evidence that higher education must address the basic personal needs of students by providing a comprehensive set of out-of-classroom services and programmes commonly referred to as student affairs and services. These efforts should be designed to enable and empower students to focus more intensely on their studies and their personal growth and maturation, both cognitively and emotionally. They should also result in enhanced student outcomes. Another important rationale for these efforts is economic, because investments in students and student affairs and services provide a healthy return to national economies as the investments help to ensure students' success in higher education and their subsequent contributions to national welfare.

From: *The role of student affairs and services in higher education (UNESCO)*¹⁶

This quotation sums up much of the value of Student Services. As the university community and the nation have become increasingly diverse, with over 50% of school-leavers entering third-level education and with more international, mature, access and postgraduate students being registered, so the needs for which the university has to cater have diversified. The university has become an environment more broadly representative of the general population and, as a result, the numbers of students entering university with personal difficulties have increased. Most importantly, these difficulties may be amplified by academic pressures. More students are also balancing study with part-time work and this can create additional stress. *The College Lifestyle and Attitudinal National (CLAN) Survey (2005)*¹⁷ provided ample evidence of the need for Student Support Services in universities.

Extensive support services have now become an integral part of university life, carrying out vital functions which enable staff and students to fulfil their primary duties of teaching, learning and research. Student Services are necessary to enable students to reach their full academic and personal potential; they allow them to overcome obstacles to learning by supporting the learning environment, and they provide many opportunities for personal development and growth. While some services are particularly important for students with problems, collectively they support all students and contribute substantially to the development of well-rounded individuals.

Traditionally, any unit that is not directly involved in teaching or supervising students in an academic context but is involved in the development of students and assisting their progression through university is a support service. Support services facilitate and enable a positive learning experience and academic excellence, in line with the mission of a university and in partnership with academics. However, some services also contribute directly to the academic curriculum e.g. careers and counselling, both of which, in some universities, design and deliver aspects of the curriculum relating to the development of students. There are several broad service areas: (a) welfare and guidance, covering health, counselling, spiritual development, advice, financial aid, careers; (b) extra- or co-curricular activities (clubs, societies, Students' Union, life-skills workshops); (c) accommodation, childcare and catering.

¹⁶ See footnote 4.

¹⁷ Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health and Children (2005) *The Health of Irish Students: College Lifestyle and Attitudinal National (CLAN) Survey. A Qualitative Evaluation of the College Alcohol Policy Initiative.* Available at www.healthpromotion.ie.

1.0 The case for Student Services (cont'd)

The roles of Student Services can begin before a student reaches university: they may have a key role in attracting students to a particular university, with sport and societies being factors that influence Irish students' choices, while other support units, such as accommodation and health, may influence the choices of international students. As Student Services play an increasingly prominent role in university publicity to second-level students, mature students and international students, more awareness is generated and student expectations are raised, and they now expect support services as standard. Once the students arrive, these expectations have to be met. As students arrive on campus, orientation activities are crucial in providing information and peer support, promoting social integration for all students (but particularly for rural, access and international students), and reassuring students when they may be at their most vulnerable.

Good Student Services in the areas of health, counselling and advice are vital for retention and enhanced learning experiences; without them, more students would leave without completing their programmes. It is also important that services are provided within and by the university, rather than in the broader community, so that they are student-centred and responsive to the particular needs of the academic community. Integration is easier for students in on-campus accommodation, which for this reason alone should be developed further. Involvement in clubs, societies and the Students' Union helps students develop their organisational, management and leadership abilities, and their skills in communication and teamwork, making them both more responsible citizens and more attractive to prospective employers. These are all very important transferable skills and students benefit enormously from being challenged to do things for themselves.

Student Services can be of particular importance for international students as they can play key roles in creating a welcoming community atmosphere. Graduates who have benefited from a high-quality student experience and who have engaged in student activities are also likely to be more loyal to their institution in later years and to remain engaged through alumni associations. In many cases, a relationship with the institution is maintained by a continuing relationship with a club or society.

In addition to their problem-solving and developmental dimensions, Student Services play a vital, proactive role in developing institutional policies. Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) can influence the general direction of university policy and strategy from a student-centred perspective by liaising with student leaders and bringing concerns to senior management and by raising awareness of the effects that policy decisions may have on student life. Policies such as bereavement protocols, student mental health policies, health promotion policies, student charters, alcohol policies and drugs policies are all developed by Student Services. The SSAO can also alert senior management to developing issues that affect students, both within and outside the institution, and can track social trends both institutionally and nationally.

In summary, high-quality Student Services can support recruitment, improved access and retention, students' intellectual, physical and emotional development and health, add value by allowing students develop extra skills and foster graduate loyalty. These are core activities which facilitate the academic mission and which need to be integrated into it. Student Services help individual students to gain the maximum benefit from university life and are essential in allowing university education to fulfil its multiple objectives (personal, social, economic and cultural).

2.0 Institutional organisation

2.1 Background

The evolution of Student Services in Ireland is in a transitional phase. Up to very recently, such services in most Irish universities existed in relative isolation from each other. They reported to the Registrar/Vice-President for Academic Affairs, whose primary responsibility was and continues to be, teaching and learning; or to other senior administrators, whose primary responsibility might be financial, or buildings management. Services grew organically, in response to demand, but were constrained by available resources, with little systematic planning. The growth in numbers and in the diversity of students led to the need for more specialised services and universities responded to these new demands by increasing the types of services provided and appointing appropriate professionals.

2.2 Current Situation

Only one Irish university had a central structure in place from its very beginning, with a single Director of Student Affairs, to which Student Services reported. In very recent years, however, there have been clear moves towards a more centralised structure for Student Services, either by the appointment of a vice-president for student services, or by the creation of a senior post such as 'Dean of Students' or 'Director of Student Services'. These posts have been filled by senior members of academic staff or by someone with a student service background, and are sometimes part-time. Hereafter, this senior person will be referred to as the Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO).

Typically, the SSAO has overall responsibility for student health and welfare, counselling, sport, societies, liaison with Students' Union, chaplains, childcare, student financial assistance and 'First Year Orientation'. An ombudsperson role is often included, facilitating the resolution of student grievances where these cannot be dealt with through the usual channels, as is involvement in student discipline. Careers, disability and access personnel may also report to the SSAO, but in some universities report to other vice-presidents or to the Registrars. In particular, international student advisers generally report to the International Office. However, even where such an officer reports to someone other than the SSAO, s/he tends to be integrated with Student Services at an operational level.

Other services, such as accommodation provision and catering are provided in all universities and are clearly student services, but they generally report to 'university commercial services' or are outsourced.

2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

2.3 How do services interact with stakeholders?

2.3.1 How do services interact with senior management?

The establishment of SSAO posts has been accompanied by a more integrated model of Student Services, with greater connections among the services. Formal interactions are usually via committees. Typically there is a committee (e.g. Student Services Committee, Welfare Committee, Heads and Officers Group) made up of representatives from the various services and, in some cases, external members. This committee is chaired by the SSAO or another senior figure in Student Services and may report to the Academic Council or (perhaps indirectly) to the Governing Authority. In some cases, it is a formal subcommittee of Governing Authority.

The SSAO provides leadership in the management, co-ordination and development of student services, the development of policies, and in the integration of Student Services with the academic goals of the university. S/he also advocates the needs of students to the institution and champions the cause of Student Services, particularly during resource allocation and strategic planning exercises. The SSAO works closely with the Students' Union in identifying student needs and responding to them and is particularly cognisant of the needs of non-traditional students. Overall responsibility for the management of some facilities (e.g. of the Student Centre) can also form part of this role. The SSAO also works with academic and other institutional leaders to ensure that the student environment is conducive to successful learning, and personal and social development. In addition, an important aspect of the role is the on-going evaluation of services and research into best practice.

Throughout the consultative process used in the preparation of this report, the need for Student Support Services to be tied in to both the strategic plan of the university and the objectives of the Universities Act was stressed. This in turn highlights the need for a clear, integrated, strategic plan for Student Services with a vision and mission statement that is in keeping with the overall strategy of the university. It was suggested that, in regard to implementing this practice, the development of "vision and change must be from the top-down and from the bottom-up - ensuring shared vision/ownership". Within each university's strategic plan, it was remarked that emphasis should be placed on both incoming and outgoing students.

It also became clear during these discussions that there is a need for individual service units to develop strategic plans (e.g. the development of a strategic plan for access); with the adoption of specific objectives such as "...for a health promoting university". Such discussions also recognised the necessity for supportive national strategies in many areas. One such example was to do with Access students where it was felt that there is a need for "mutual recognition of Foundation courses between different universities and the continued development of collaborative links with other higher educational institutions and community organisations. "

2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

Guidelines - How do services interact with senior management?

- The Senior Student Affairs Officer of the university (SSAO) is a member of senior management.
- The SSAO is responsible for leadership, strategy, policy development and co-ordination in Student Services and Affairs.
- Student Services are an integral part of the University Strategic Plan with an emphasis on incoming, current and graduating students.
- The strategic plan for Student Services incorporates a vision and objectives that are complementary to the University Strategic Plan.
- Individual Student Support Services have operational plans that align with and complement the overall plan for Student Services.
- There is a university committee, with clearly defined terms of reference, where representatives of student service units share a common platform and where policy can be developed.
- Clear internal processes and structures facilitate the development of policies, allow for 'bottom-up' contributions, and provide the opportunities and the means to get policies implemented.
- Student representatives and individual students are involved and make inputs into matters and decisions pertaining to Student Services.
- University policies and structures foster strong and regular links between Student Services, academic staff and management.
- University policies support and foster external (national and international) links with other universities student service units, and with other relevant agencies, bodies and institutions.
- The universities, individually and collectively, encourage the development of national strategies and policies for relevant Student Support Services.
- The IUA and individual universities are aware of future considerations and emerging trends that will impact upon student affairs and support services, and are proactive with regard to them.

2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

2.3.2 How do services interact with each other?

A debate on the structure of Student Services emerged during the consultative process i.e. “integrated versus dispersed management structures”. It was widely agreed by those working in Student Services that students favour integrated services and that while services are unique they can work well together. Representatives from some services felt that they had not enough time for internal, strategic management. In this context, the on-going process of restructuring that is current in many universities was seen as an opportunity to improve services and link them more strongly with the academic activities. Restructuring can also provide services with an opportunity to review their own internal structures and processes, reporting structures and organisational issues. Representatives from some services emphasised the need for:

- Better use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) systems,
- Closer communication between services,
- The need for more cohesive structures, or a more centralised structure,
- A review of the structure of Student Services committees.

Close communications between services is seen as essential for providing quality services. Many services have established good internal/external communication, have a good profile among students and staff and strong working relationships. However, some of these very same service providers stated that they also viewed inter- and intra-service communication issues as requiring further improvement. It is also perceived that not all directly relevant data on internal ICT systems are accessible to individual services.



2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

Guidelines - How do services interact with each other?

- Where all Student Support Services are not formally part of a single reporting structure, measures are in place to ensure close liaison between them.
- To ensure a balancing of students' and commercial interests when relevant services (e.g. catering) are being out sourced (or contracts renewed), the SSAO has a significant role in decisions, and in monitoring prices and quality of service.
- Adequate ICT systems and appropriate training are in place to support the work of student support staff.
- Student support service staff have direct on-line access to all relevant and appropriate student data.

2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

2.3.3 How do services interact with students?

There was full agreement during the consultative process that student representation on Student Services committees and student participation in decision-making are vital. Students should, in particular, have a major say in how money designated to clubs, societies and Students' Union activities is allocated. This is in keeping with a similar recommendation made by the HEA in 1998¹⁸.

With regard to student awareness of Student Services, it emerged during the course of this Project that services felt the need for more marketing and promotion to ensure that services and their associated activities are well-known within the universities. An example of this is in the case of service provision to postgraduate students. Although they have more experience of university life, postgraduate students are often less aware of the services available, which is compounded by the perception that the services are just for undergraduate students.

Statements such as “Students don't know about the Student Services” and “there was a call to integrate initiatives offered by Student Services and academics” and “students need to know where these supports can be accessed” occurred frequently during discussions. This lack of awareness is critical, as Student Services could play more effective roles in addressing problems of student retention. A related matter which arose was how ICT communication methods could be used more effectively to communicate with students, e.g. websites, e-mail, texting and the availability of electronic forms for students to download. It was recommended, however, that electronic communications should be reviewed in terms of how effective they are in making students aware of the range of support services available to them.

An additional important area identified is that of evaluation, tracking and surveying mechanisms. These can be used to ascertain the usage of services in terms of numbers, and diversity and they can act as quality and performance measures of the services being provided. Such mechanisms could also be used to estimate how many students are aware of particular services, which is of particular concern in light of the increasing number of non-traditional student groups (International, Mature, Access, Disability and postgraduate students), and the diversity of problems and difficulties facing students.

¹⁸ HEA (1998) Provision for Student Services within £250 Charge: Framework of Good Practice.

2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

Guidelines - How do services interact with students?

- Student representation on Student Services committees and participation in decision-making is the norm.
- The SSAO and the Students' Union officers consult regularly and, where appropriate, take joint initiatives related to student welfare, etc.
- Measures concerning the monitoring or improvement of awareness of Student Services within the student body are regular items on the agendas of relevant committees.
- To promote awareness of Student Services:
 - Maximal use is made of ICT for communicating with and assisting students.
 - Information on Student Services is provided in more than one format and includes clear and unambiguous statements of what each service offers.
 - The effectiveness of promotional material is assessed regularly.
- As an aid in attracting students, information on Student Services is included when prospective students are being addressed.
- Tracking, measuring and survey mechanisms are employed to monitor usage, diversity, numbers, service quality etc. and to obtain feedback/suggestions from students.
- Workshops or modules relating to matters of concern to Student Services are incorporated into academic programmes where this is appropriate.

2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

2.3.4 How do services interact with academics?

Student Services practitioners generally agree that integration with the academic mission of the university is crucial. In some institutions, SSAOs are ex-officio members of high level academic and management bodies such as the Academic Council, Teaching and Learning Board, Council of Deans and/or the University Management Team. Such memberships can provide opportunities to shape policy-making and to ensure that the concerns and contributions of Student Services are taken into account in academic decisions.

Integration of the academic and the student service missions are particularly relevant during recruitment, induction and orientation as these provide excellent opportunities for academic, administrative and Student Services staff to co-operate in introducing students to the institution and to their programmes of study. For example, a First Year Committee that includes academic, administrative and Student Services staff may act to facilitate policy development and decisions based on contributions from all relevant perspectives. In other cases, Student Services staff sit on departmental and school student-staff committees, co-teach modules with academic staff (on study skills, for example), or co-operate closely with academic departments on work placements. At examination times, academic and Services staff work together to support students suffering from anxiety and stress.

In this context, it is vitally important that overall student support is always seen as shared between academic, Student Services and administrative staff, and that academic staff are not disempowered by the increasing professionalisation of Student Services. Equally, it was expressed during discussions that substantive recognition is required for academic staff who are involved actively and regularly in supporting students and that this should be reflected in procedures for academic promotions. Academic and Services staff may also work together in supporting and facilitating student societies (particularly subject societies such as French Society, Engineering Society). The importance of academic staff supporting students, and, when necessary and appropriate, acting in co-operation with Student Services, is underlined by the numbers involved; in a university there are thousands of students and hundreds of academic staff in constant contact with students, while in any one student service, professional staff are often counted in low single figures.

For academic and services staff to work together in the students' interests, it is crucial that academic staff are aware of the range of Student Services on offer and can refer students to the appropriate service. Therefore, Student Services must recognise the primary importance of engaging with academic staff at every opportunity, not least to ensure that they are fully aware of the importance of the overall welfare and development of the student. During the consultative discussions, it was remarked that academic departments may need to be educated on the holistic development of the student and Student Services have a responsibility in this.

2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

Guidelines - How do services interact with academics?

- Academic staff induction and training include full and comprehensive familiarisation with all of the Student Support Services available in the institution, so that they can encourage students to make appropriate use of the services.
- Academic, administrative, support and technical staff understand and appreciate the roles of Student Services and the need for the holistic development of students, and there are mechanisms to ensure this.
- Adequate academic staffing norms and departmental/school procedures allow for the meaningful and effective provision of support for students at department/school level (e.g. tutors or mentors who are available to students in need).
- Academic staff involvement in student support is encouraged, recognised and valued.
- Student Support Services are in a position to contribute effectively to policy-making, including, where appropriate, academic policy.
- Student Support Services play an active role in encouraging inclusive teaching and learning practices.
- Activities such as student orientation are run jointly by academics, students and Student Services.
- Student-staff committees for academic units include, where practical, representatives of student support staff.
- All relevant university-wide bodies and committees (e.g. Academic Council, Faculties First Year Committee, Learning Support Group, Retention Committee) include the SSAO or a representative from Student Services.

2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

2.3.5 How do services interact with external agencies?

It is in the best interest of Student Services to develop and cultivate strong external links. These could involve working with external bodies, other institutions, international organisations and employers and can serve to optimise the expertise of Services staff. Regular collaboration between Student Services nationally and internationally keeps staff abreast of best practice and evolving trends in education, as well as with social and economic conditions that may be experienced by their home students. The interaction and collaboration of services has already acted as an agent for change in developing policies and projects (e.g. a Health Promotion model). It has also provided the opportunity for services (nationally and internationally) to take joint empirical, qualitative research initiatives on student services.

On a national level, it was agreed during discussions that there is a need to further develop and strengthen the networking of support services in Ireland. The recently formed Irish Universities Student Services Network (IUSSN) should serve to resolve this matter as it seeks to:

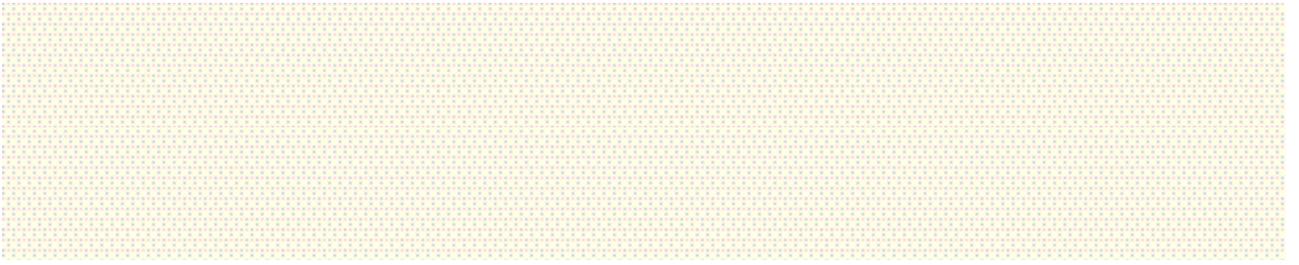
- Share information and views on policy and practice among the universities.
- Present coherent sectoral statements on the role, importance and changing needs of student affairs and services.
- Develop strategies to embed Student Services into the universities' mission.
- Contribute to the development of quality standards for the sector.



2.0 Institutional organisation (cont'd)

Guidelines - How do services interact with external agencies?

- In each university, there is active collaboration with other university Student Services and with outside partners (e.g. alumni, national student organisations, international partners, external bodies, institutions, employers and the media). This collaboration involves the sharing of best practice, policy development and quality models, empirical and qualitative research on services to students and various other initiatives.
- There is collaboration between Student Services, nationally and internationally, that facilitates the exchange of information and joint initiatives to explore ways of helping traditional and non-traditional students in need of more assistance.
- There are clear points of contact within the university for external agencies who wish to interact with students.



3.0 Diversity

3.1 Introduction

The student population in Irish universities is increasingly diverse. As well as the 18-year old Leaving Certificate student, five main groups, all of which are growing, can be identified:

- students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds
- mature students
- students with disabilities
- international students, and
- students from minority groups (e.g. travellers, ethnic minorities, refugees).

In addition, the number of postgraduate students is increasing in all Irish universities.

In reality, increased student diversity presents an opportunity to increase the learning experience of all students (and staff), both within and outside the lecture hall. In this way, universities can and do play important roles in promoting the added value associated with diversity.

It is also the case that the needs of traditional students are changing. Greater participation rates result in classes with students with a wider range of knowledge and abilities. In addition, more students are working part-time (and sometimes close to full-time) or are commuting long distances. Finally, the introduction of new modes of course delivery (modularisation, distance learning, etc.) is having an impact on the range of requirements of students in terms of support services.

Because of the associated positive social and economic benefits, it is Government policy and an explicit objective of most, if not all, Irish universities to increase student diversity. Some categories of non-traditional students are also the subject of specific Irish legislation (e.g. Equal Status Act 2000, Disabilities Act 2005) creating specific obligations on the universities as service providers (and as employers). Access to students who might not otherwise attend university has been widened by various means (Access and Retention programmes, Foundation courses etc.) and by changing and adapting modes of programme delivery. This environment has created the need for new student supports and for such supports to be available in a much more flexible way. While it was agreed during discussions by practitioners that there is a need for further customisation of services, it was stressed that this should be done in co-ordination with all the services offered. One good example is the provision of services for international students. Most universities have a dedicated International Office to provide essential services that may include the provision of supports for the students themselves, before, on and after arrival. Inefficiencies and problems can arise when such supports are not co-ordinated with other student support services provided in the university. However, the International Office and other dedicated units for targeted non-traditional groups of students (Access or Disability, for example) will continue to be essential to meet the specific requirements of these student groups.

The impact of increased diversity on Student Services is high, as non-traditional students are high service users and have greater support needs than the average 18 year-old, in terms of finance, counselling, health, careers, tutors/advisors, etc. Usage monitoring from one Irish university counselling service showed that the average referral rate is 4% but that it rises to 9% for students registered with the Disability Service, 11% for students from the UK, 14% for students participating in the various strands of the Access programme and 18% for mature students. The issues and problems that students from these groups present with are also somewhat different from those of the more traditional students and this raises the issue of additional specific training for relevant staff.

3.0 Diversity (cont'd)

3.2 Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

Participation in third-level has widened in recent years (from 44% of the 17-19 year old age-group in 1998 to 54% in 2003).¹⁹

Whilst participation rates by socio-economic groups remain unequal, third-level institutions have seen an increase in the numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds:

Father's Occupation	1998	2003
Higher professionals	97%	87%
Semi-skilled and unskilled	23%	47%

Source: Adapted from data presented in 'A Review of Higher Education Participation in 2003, HEA (2005).'

In 2003, 22% of university students received means-tested financial maintenance support (down from 29% in 1998), mainly through the Higher Education grants or the European Social Fund (ESF) Student Assistance Fund.²⁰ University-funded schemes are not included in these figures.

Main issues facing students from disadvantaged backgrounds

Appropriate and adequate funding is a major issue for many of these students. Also, in addition to the normal transition issues, some students report difficulties with social integration. In several institutions, peer support activities have proved helpful in this area.

It is clear that retention activities, with specific supports for first year students, need to be seen as a continuation of the various programmes that exist to increase access to third-level. It should also be noted that not all students from a disadvantaged background enter third-level through Access programmes and that such supports need to be readily available to these students also.

3.3 Mature Students

The proportion of new entrants classified as mature students (over 23 at entry) in Irish Higher Educational Institutes had more than doubled in the 20 years up to 2003²¹ and the figure is continuing to rise:

Age	1980	2003
17 or less	44.1 %	10.2%
18	38.5 %	40.9 %
19	9.6 %	29.2 %
20-22	6.5 %	11.0 %
23+	3.6 %	8.7 %

Source: Adapted from data presented in 'A Review of Higher Education Participation in 2003, HEA (2005).'

¹⁹ HEA (2005) A Review of Higher Education participation in 2003. Available at www.heai.ie.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*

3.0 Diversity (cont'd)

Main issues facing mature students

The three main issues for mature students are:

- Financial supports,
- Child-care, and
- Appropriate preparation for a return to education / academic work.

Child-care is a major difficulty, both in terms of cost and availability. It also very often constitutes a major drain on limited financial assistance resources.

Foundation courses and Return to Education programmes play an important role in ensuring that mature students are adequately prepared for a return to academic work. Specific ICT, mathematics and study skills modules are also often offered.

The introduction of modularisation may facilitate mature students as it allows them to organise their studies in a flexible manner to suit their particular circumstances but it should be noted that there is a risk of losing some of the cohort effect that, in a more formalised course structure, facilitates crucial informal peer-to-peer support networks.

3.4 Students with Disabilities

8.3% of the total general population have a disability.²² The last national survey for Higher Education in 1998 states that 0.9% of new entrants had a disability and a target of 1.8% was set for 2006.²³ In its Action Plan 2005-2007, the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education states that a new, higher target will be set for 2007.²⁴ In 2004/2005, over 1,600 students in third-level institutions received funding from the ESF Students with Disabilities Fund.²⁵

Main issues facing students with disabilities

Good quality, accessible information both on course requirements and on supports available must be made available pre-entry, thus allowing students with disabilities to make well-informed choices.

Mainstreaming of Disability supports, where appropriate, is seen as the way forward. The principles of inclusive teaching policies and practices also need to be disseminated across schools and faculties. Once appropriate supports are put in place, the main point raised by students with disabilities is the very varied levels of disability awareness of university staff. They say that lecturers, tutors and technicians with good levels of awareness can be of the greatest benefit to them.

²² Central Statistics Office (2002) *Census 2002*.

²³ Action Group on Access to Third Level Education (2001): *Report of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education*.

²⁴ HEA (2004) *Achieving equity of access to higher education in Ireland: Action Plan 2005-2007*. Available at www.heai.ie.

²⁵ As reported on the HEA website (www.heai.ie) with regard to funding for students with disabilities under Access, National Office Funding programme.

3.0 Diversity (cont'd)

For staff working in this area, one of the areas of concern is the late disclosure of disability by students. Whilst the CAO application process encourages students to disclose their disabilities, large numbers are still reluctant to do so as they fear that they will be discriminated against. This is particularly prevalent in students with mental health difficulties. As a result, supports are not available when the student starts in the university and the student may face unnecessary difficulties.

The full participation of students with disabilities in all aspects of university life (academic, social and sports) needs to be promoted and supported.

Physical accessibility to academic, social and support facilities remains a problem, in particular in institutions with an older building stock.

3.5 International Students

According to the 2003 HEA report on the *'Provision of Undergraduate and Taught Post-Graduate Education to Overseas Students in Ireland'*, in 2001-2002, 9% of the students in Irish universities came from abroad (41% from the EU, 59% from non-EU countries, 72% undergraduates). The report suggests 12-15% as an appropriate medium-term target, but also recognises that this will require an increase in the number of university places in order to avoid putting Irish residents at a greater disadvantage.

Main issues facing international students

In order for international students for whom English is not their first language to be successful, they need to be able to cope with the linguistic demands of their programme. In many instances, they can benefit greatly from appropriate language training and support, including aural, oral and writing skills.

Many university activities, whether academic or social, are predominantly Euro-centric, demonstrating that there is a need for inter-cultural training for all staff and students. Racism, both within the universities and outside, may be a difficulty which, if it is not addressed, may deter international students from coming to Ireland, or may make their lives miserable and impede their studies if they do.

In some cases, the gender balance of staff in Support Services may be an issue, in particular in Health and Counselling.

International students must be made aware of the range of support services available but also of differences as compared to their home countries; in some instances, it may be unrealistic for them to expect the same level of support as they are used to in their home institutions.

3.0 Diversity (cont'd)

The accommodation needs of international students are particularly acute and, ideally, should be addressed before their arrival in Ireland, through on-line booking services, for example. Accommodation services need to recognise difficulties that may arise from cultural isolation, should avoid the formation of potential ghettos and be aware of the need to encourage integration where desired.

Welcoming and peer-support activities organised at course/department/school levels play an important part in facilitating the integration of international students. Pro-active policies in this area have proved very beneficial.

3.6 Students from Minority and Ethnic Groups

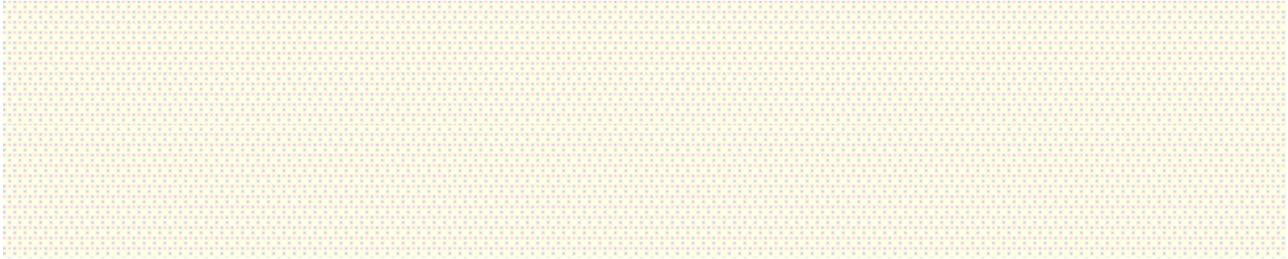
Traveller students: the numbers of traveller students currently attending university are very small. According to the 2002 census, 1.4% of travellers have a higher education qualification compared with 21% of the general population.²⁶

At present, there appears to be no data available on students from other minority groups, although anecdotal evidence indicates that the number of students with refugee status is increasing in most universities. Third-level institutions need to undertake research so as to better understand their needs, and in order to respond appropriately.

Main issues facing students from minority groups

There is little information available but these students are likely to face many similar issues to those faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds or international students.

²⁶ See footnote 22.



3.0 Diversity (cont'd)

3.7 Overview: Current Issues and challenges

- Current funding mechanisms for Student Services generally are not closely related to student numbers and do not take into account changes in the composition of the student body. In addition, many Student Services are relying on external and uncertain sources of annual funding in order to provide services for particular groups of students, as internal resources are often inadequate.
- Increased use of ICT needs to be carefully thought out, as it may lead to other types of exclusions; students from disadvantaged backgrounds or mature students may not have ready access to computers at home.
- One-to-one supports embedded in the academic structures at faculty/school/department level in the form of tutors, mentors or advisors have proved beneficial to all students.
- Finally, it is important to remember that good practice for students in general is good practice for non-traditional students and vice-versa.

3.0 Diversity (cont'd)

Guidelines - Diversity

- It is clear that diversity is valued as a source of enrichment for all and reference is made to this in the University Mission Statement. Cognisance is taken of the advantages of increasing diversity in the range of services the university provides.
- Universities, in consultation with the CAO, encourage students to disclose disability (and other matters related to the needs of non-traditional students) prior to entry without fear of discrimination, to ensure appropriate supports are put in place before their arrival.
- High-quality general introduction and orientation programmes are supplemented by targeted and on-going orientation activities for students with particular needs.
- The development of Peer Support and Peer Mentoring systems is encouraged and facilitated, as they bring multi-faceted benefits to all students and can be particularly effective in the case of international students.
- Integration is recognised as being social as well as academic. The role that clubs and societies play in facilitating student integration is recognised and encouraged.
- Services are available to all students, including evening/part-time/off-campus students. The opening hours of relevant offices are reviewed regularly with this in mind.
- Efforts are made to provide activities at times that also suit commuting, part-time and working students.
- Diversity training is included in the portfolio of training courses offered to all staff (academic, administrative, technical and support staff).
- All staff are encouraged to think in terms of inclusiveness at all levels (publicity material, course design, social activities, etc.)
- Access, support and retention are seen as a continuum by the universities and by the funding bodies. Secure, on-going funding is put in place to support these activities.



4.0 Ensuring quality

4.1 Introduction

Quality of service is fundamentally important to the ability of Student Services to contribute substantially to the mission of a university, and standards and levels of satisfaction must be maintained and improved against a background of increasing diversity, widening participation and the provision of 'student experiences' in an increasingly competitive market. In order to ensure this, the services provided must be assessed regularly and objectively. Such information needs to be gathered systematically with appropriate feedback mechanisms used, to ensure that services are adjusted and promoted effectively, that the expectations of students are known, and that the services and supports offered are appropriate to student needs in a rapidly changing environment. During the consultative discussions, the necessity for substantive data/research on the needs of non-traditional student groups was highlighted "so that money/resources are not just thrown at the (perceived) problem".

Student Service units in Irish universities are subject to the normal quality review process that has developed to meet the requirements of the Universities Act, 1997. The actual review procedures presently in use for Student Services are those used for all administrative/academic departments; however, it has been suggested that there may be a more appropriate template. In the UK, Student Services utilise the national quality standard for organisations delivering information, advice and/or guidance on learning and work, called 'Matrix'²⁷. In a recent development supported by IUQB, the Association of Graduate Careers Services in Ireland has developed a more suitable process by adapting the 'Matrix' standard to the quality review procedures exemplified in the IUA (formally C.H.I.U.) 2003 publication '*A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities*'.

In addition to periodic review (usually on a five-to-six-year cycle), quality processes need to be embedded actively and consistently into on-going activities, with mini-reviews conducted regularly to ensure the maintenance of the quality of each service unit. Furthermore, views on the appropriateness and effectiveness of Student Services should be sought during all quality reviews of academic departments/schools and other appropriate units, as recommended by the EUA review of quality assurance in Irish universities (2005).²⁸

²⁷ For more information on the 'Matrix' see www.matrixstandard.com

²⁸ See footnote 5.

4.0 Ensuring quality (cont'd)

At an individual service level, specific codes of practice, quality standards and professional guidelines are available, for example, in the areas of health, counselling and careers guidance. These professional standards provide performance indicators that are widely recognised as appropriate.

In addition to quality standards, most services are obliged to report at least annually to senior management or to a University Committee in respect of their activities in the university. In this context, Student Services staff can provide university management with an early warning system on issues affecting students and their social and learning environments. However, in order to do this, data must be available to allow for inter-university comparisons and benchmarking. When collating the information for the Interim Report²⁹ on this project, it became clear that the quantity and quality of data available from each university relating to each of the constituent units of Student Services is variable. The overall situation in this respect is exacerbated by differing definitions of what constitutes Student Services between universities. Therefore, even a general benchmarking exercise across the universities in respect of the quality and range of Student Services provided proved to be very difficult. However, there is general agreement among service staff that each service needs to think about what kind of performance indicators are relevant to it. Within the wider institution, the co-ordination and usage of data and their analysis, and the generation of key performance indicators also need to be examined to maximise their usage in the most effective and efficient manner for Student Services (This will be explored further in a separate IUQB sectoral project on “Institutional Research in Irish Universities”). On a national level, collaboration with other third-level institutions in sectoral research, data analysis and establishing key performance indicators could provide valuable insights and assist in the decision-making and planning processes for individual Student Services. Furthermore, comparative and integrated data analysis could inform national debates such as, for example, on the effectiveness of equality legislation.

The point was made at the Experts’ Conference that whilst performance indicators are useful in measuring some aspects of the quality of the service provided to students, there needs to be caution that usage statistics are not confused with definitions of success of a service or the quality of that service. It was also remarked at the Conference that performance indicators could provide a useful service for gathering statistical information when seeking additional resources.

²⁹ See footnote 7.



4.0 Ensuring quality (cont'd)

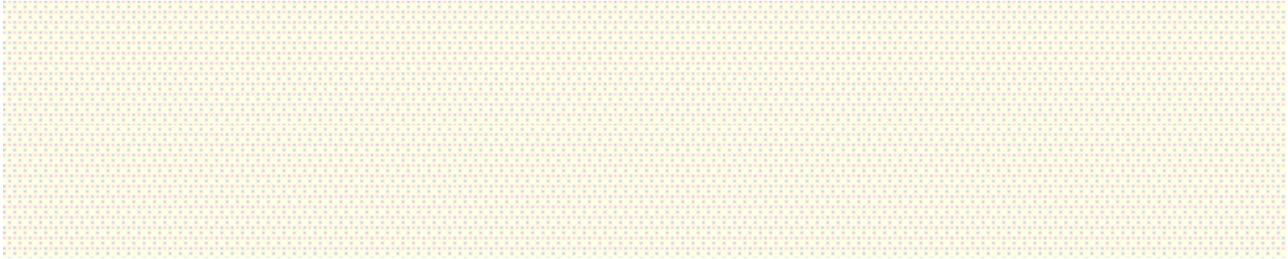
A very real concern is that inappropriate quantitative measures could conceivably skew the work of the services to produce a positive set of numerical results, which negatively impacts on the student experience. There was also concern that too much of the emphasis of a service could switch from providing the service to utilising scarce resources to monitor the service. Undoubtedly, comprehensive monitoring mechanisms can have considerable resource and training implications.

There is general consensus that Student Services suffer from a lack of research into student satisfaction with the services provided and that there is little time to conduct such research. It was also noted that while some service units do have databases of usage data and statistics that facilitate audit, these resulted in no routine demonstrations of outcomes to the university regarding completion, retention and skills acquisition, from the particular services provided. In other words, the available data is not being used as a research resource. This highlights the importance of service providers and the university undertaking research within the area of Student Services. Rationales need to be defined and occasions created for the review and exploration of research opportunities with the collaboration of appropriate academic staff and other experts.

One key concern that arose was the matter of student retention. It was suggested at the Experts' Conference that research should be carried out to show whether issues which are addressed within the Student Services domain influence whether students stayed in the system. It was further agreed at the Conference that there needs to be research into the level of risk of leaving the university that some students are at and whether Student Service interventions are effective in retaining such students.

Finally, student feedback is crucial to the continual improvement of quality in Student Services. A small selection of current practices in the universities where student input is effective proves the point that more systematic collection and use of feedback across the whole sector could have profound effects:

- Data and feedback from international students in one university is utilised routinely in the provision of advisory reports to university management, faculty and university committees.



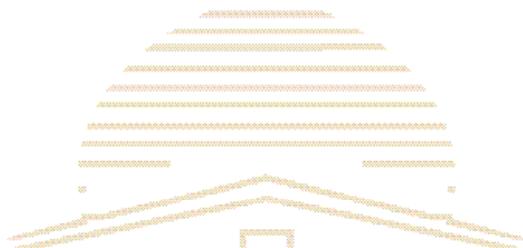
4.0 Ensuring quality (cont'd)

- In another university, feedback from students with disabilities was used as an integral part of the decision-making process in the development of the service. It was very clear that students with disabilities are willing to advise and offer feedback on what the service is doing right/wrong.
- For mature students in another institution, data collection and analysis provides the services with the ability to change to suit the needs of the mature students and to develop integrated models of good practice.

4.0 Ensuring quality (cont'd)

Guidelines - Ensuring quality

- An appropriate quality assessment template for undertaking quality reviews is used for Student Services.
- Quality review processes are embedded actively and consistently into on-going activities, with regular mini-reviews to ensure the maintenance of the quality of individual service units.
- Views on the appropriateness and effectiveness of Student Services are requested as a standard part of the reviews of academic departments and other relevant units.
- Benchmarking across universities is enabled by establishing agreed classifications of issues raised by the students in order that meaningful comparative research can be conducted between services and that trends can be monitored both locally and nationally.
- Systematic tracking of the numbers and key characteristics of users of the various Student Services, in order to identify resource requirements and to monitor trends, is in place.
- Systematic tracking of waiting lists and mechanisms to monitor the source of student referrals and, where possible, the extent to which students avail of external agencies or services, are in place.
- Resources necessary to measure and assess Student Services are provided in addition to what is needed to operate them.
- Student Services review and explore research opportunities with the collaboration of research experts (internal and external), appropriate academic staff and other third-level institutions. In particular, research is required to:
 - Determine student satisfaction with the Services, on a regular basis;
 - Establish qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators to assist in decision-making and planning processes for each of the Services,
 - ▶ where appropriate and available, performance indicators in relevant professional guidelines are used;
 - Investigate student retention and the role of Student Services in relation to completion, retention and skills acquisition,
 - ▶ including the establishment of mechanisms to track student retention/drop out rates and student employment rates upon graduation;
 - Assess the implications of growing diversity in the student population on Student Services.
- There is a balanced use of qualitative and quantitative research mechanisms.





5.0 Training & professional development

5.1 Introduction

Staff within Student Support Services are committed to the highest professional standards. Individual Services strive to achieve common objectives that include: quality assurance, evaluation of work, research, benchmarking with best practice in Ireland and abroad, appropriate confidentiality, appropriate use of technology, teamwork, cost effectiveness and on-going professional and, not least, personal development and training in pursuance of all of these.

The current university environment of dependency on outside funding, constant change, and the evolving profile of the student body in terms of numbers, diversity and more varied demands have direct impacts on requirements for staff training and professional development. For some Services, the conventional student/staff ratios are much too high, as benchmarks and staffing norms were drawn up in a past when expectations and demands were quite different. However, recent creations of new senior positions in Student Services reflects the importance that the universities are now placing on the provision of support services, and on the need for high academic performance in a positive environment.

Those working in Student Services aim to perform their functions effectively but sometimes need higher levels of appropriate knowledge and skills. Such knowledge and skills are generally of two types:

- Generic skills appropriate to all Services personnel irrespective of their particular professional field; and
- Skills that are required in order to work in a specific service (e.g. counsellor, career advisor, nurse, chaplain, sports officer, psychiatrist).

Generally, requirements for specific advanced and professional skills are met by targeted recruitment. With regard to the more general competencies, in many countries there are formal preparatory programmes (frequently at 'master' level) for those entering higher education support services. Currently, within the Irish system, the various generic competencies in Student Services are acquired by means of post-entry professional development courses.

5.0 Training & professional development (cont'd)

The following are the key generic skills for support staff:

Interpersonal skills: As students are the central focus for Student Support Services, those working in this field must possess high levels of interpersonal skills appropriate to the composition of the student body. These include emotional intelligence and empathy, and skills related to listening, interviewing, giving presentations, and working in a team. In summary, staff must have the ability to interact easily with a wide variety of people and personalities (both students and colleagues). Indeed, although most Services staff are not counsellors, it is highly desirable that all those working in Student Services would have some training in basic counselling skills for non-counsellors. Finally, given the increasing diversity of our student population, the specific area of cross-cultural communication deserves particular mention.

Knowledge of students and student cultures: Those working in Student Services need to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the student population with which they work: its composition, characteristics and diversity, student expectations, and their psychosocial development, behaviour, motivation and needs. While on-the-job experience can lead to staff developing high levels of expertise in these areas, it is important that such insights be complemented by more formal in-service training on the characteristics of school-leavers, mature students, students with disabilities, international students from different cultures, etc. It is also important that staff have relevant training in interpreting and initiating surveys (attitude surveys, needs assessment, focus groups, etc). In a very real sense, many of those working in Student Services must be educationalists, working to support, influence and enhance the educational mission of the institution.

Leadership and management skills: Both the SSAO and those managers responsible for specific services and functions need a range of leadership and management skills. These include competencies in the following areas: staff management and motivation, project management, strategic planning, budget development and management, research and evaluation, marketing, and introduction of appropriate technology.

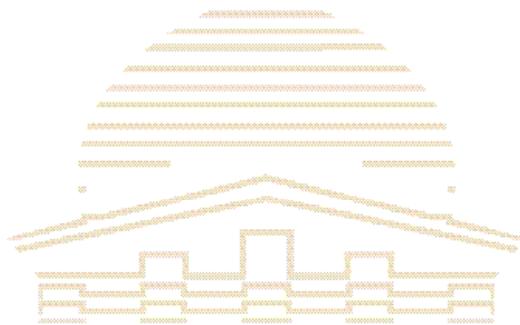
ICT skills: All those working in student affairs should have training in appropriate technology so that they can integrate and use it in the delivery and evaluation of services and programmes.

Stress management skills: Working in Student Services can be very stressful for a number of reasons. Those working closely with students in crisis or under stress can themselves become stressed, and indeed burnout is an occupational hazard. Furthermore, current high student/staff ratios within Irish University Student Services lead to huge pressures on staff to take on unsustainable workloads. The role of the SSAO is also potentially stressful as s/he must be a strong advocate for student-centred approaches, when other constituencies may have different priorities. Therefore, staff development of personnel within Student Services should always include training in stress management and work/life balance.

5.0 Training & professional development (cont'd)

Guidelines - Training and professional development

- To ensure quality and to maximise the contributions of Student Services to student development and to the mission of the university, a strong emphasis is placed on the provision of adequate resources for professional development activities for relevant staff.
- Among the general competencies which are important to develop are:
 - ▶ interview and listening skills
 - ▶ presentation skills
 - ▶ working in teams
 - ▶ 'counselling for non-counsellors'
 - ▶ an understanding of student development and student needs
 - ▶ disability awareness
 - ▶ cross-cultural communication
 - ▶ survey methodology
 - ▶ project management
 - ▶ appropriate ICT skills
 - ▶ stress management
- Student Services staff are facilitated by the university, where appropriate or necessary, in obtaining further qualifications in their field, in attending professional conferences, and external training events in carrying out research, and in visiting counterparts in order to identify best practice.
- Training and development for staff is provided on an on-going basis and takes into account changing and evolving trends and the changing profiles and needs of the student body
- Staff 'self-care' guidelines and student and staff expectations of services are defined and readily accessible.
- Comprehensive induction and orientation activities suited to their responsibilities are provided for all professional and administrative staff taking up employment in Student Services.



6.0 Resources

6.1 Finance

Currently, funding for Student Services comes from a variety of sources including:

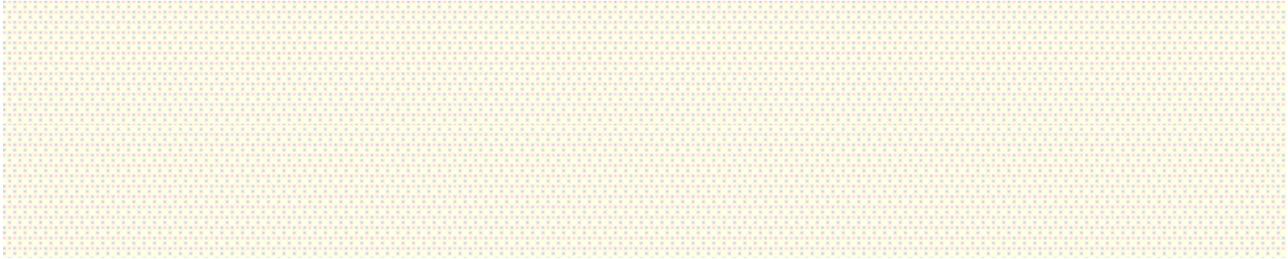
- The university core budget
- The student registration charge, introduced in 1995 by the Government as a contribution towards non-tuition costs e.g. academic administration, Student Services, Students' Union, as well as to support clubs and societies
- Student levies
- The annual NDP/HEA Strategic Initiatives Scheme which provides support for Disability and Access services; and a number of other schemes that provide individual support for students and are administered by Student Services staff
- The ESF Fund for Students with Disability, and
- The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) which provides assistance to individual students in financial need.

The ring-fencing of a number of these initiatives has ensured that in financially constrained times, students in need still had funding available to them. However, there is concern about the high dependency on the uncertain, external ESF Fund to assist students in financial hardship, along with a strong awareness that the consequent administration and auditing places a significant burden on Student Services staff. Furthermore, the financing of services on an annual basis makes planning difficult.

With the growing demands placed on Student Services and with high expectations of Student Services support, there is a clear need to ensure that the resources required to meet these needs are appropriately identified, perhaps by designating a proportion of the fee income from students. Such a per capita resourcing of Student Services would ensure that, as a minimum, growth in student numbers is catered for. The new funding model currently being proposed by the HEA is a positive step in this direction.

General financial considerations and the low level of baseline funding were core issues that were raised by every service provider at the Experts' Conference and in the workgroups. The general perception is that a lack of appropriate funding prevents sustainable growth and development within Student Services. It was felt that Student Services still face a struggle to ensure that they have adequate resources to be able to continue to deliver quality services. Other factors identified that currently impact on resources are: the economic and social climate, modularisation and semesterisation, effects of changes in the universities, changes in teaching methods and the possible re-introduction of fees.

However, resources for Student Services in terms of finance, space and staffing have improved in recent years in recognition of the need and value of the Student Services functions. However, it has become apparent that, in more financially constrained times, Student Services have to compete heavily with academic programmes and research for additional resources. Government policies resulting in an increase in the diversity of students entering third-level education have impacted disproportionately on Student Services. As stated previously in Section 3.0 (Diversity), international, disabled, mature and socially disadvantaged students all require significantly more resources to support them than more traditional students. The impact of this has been keenly felt by all Services but especially those in areas such as health and counselling. However, on a positive note, this has also resulted in the creation of newer services for international, socially disadvantaged,



6.0 Resources (cont'd)

disabled and mature students which are now funded from core grants but which were supported initially under the Strategic Initiatives Scheme.

The case for increased support for Student Support Services may be encapsulated in the comment made at the Experts' Conference that there are compelling financial and pragmatic arguments for Student Services (e.g. improving student retention) as well as to the more philosophical justification, which is also valid, of the need to facilitate the development of the well-rounded individual.



6.0 Resources (cont'd)

Guidelines - Finance

- Universities ensure that Services are adequately funded and planned on a multi-annual basis.
- To ensure adequate provision of services to all students, and to take account of the fact that groups such as international, mature, disabled and socially disadvantaged students place significant, and in many cases disproportionate, demands on Student Services, these students are weighted when calculating student numbers to estimate resource requirements.
- The IUA and the individual universities make representations to outside funding partners to ensure that their systems of delivery, timing and amounts of funding minimise the burden on staff and students, and allow for long-term planning of services and the continuity of service delivery.

6.0 Resources (cont'd)

6.2 Space and Facilities

Students in distress coming to Student Services should find a welcoming and comfortable environment within which to resolve their difficulties. A major problem at virtually all sites, identified in the initial data gathering exercise and also highlighted in some of the quality reviews of Services in individual universities, was the lack of appropriate, accessible and sufficient spaces for many of the individual Student Services. Many are operating in fragmented locations that are inadequately signposted and often inadequately soundproofed. Space constraints were also deemed to be a significant issue. In many cases, the historical nature of the buildings used makes them inaccessible to disabled students without significant modifications. It was also remarked that inadequate and inappropriate space means curtailed access. It is critical that the spaces provided for Student Services are in locations that are central to the campus and which provide for discreet access by students. Facilities must meet minimum basic standards and allow, where appropriate, for the close physical proximity of related or complementary services. Services should also be clearly signposted.

Another issue that arose throughout this project is the increasing importance of having adequate and affordable crèche facilities for students with young children. This was highlighted at the individual university workshops, at the Experts' Conference and at the student focus group meetings. Many existing university childcare facilities are currently inadequate for the demands being placed on them.

One further point raised was that funding agencies for such groups as Access and Disability students do not have clear and cohesive policies.



6.0 Resources (cont'd)

Guidelines - Space & Facilities

- Student Services are located in appropriately designed spaces.
- Student Services facilities are universally accessible.
- Ideally, services are housed in a single building or at one location on campus whilst maintaining clearly defined and separate units as appropriate.
- Multi-site campuses ensure that all students have ready access to Student Services.
- Space provided is soundproof and allows for discreet access by students.
- Student Services are clearly signposted throughout the campus and their locations prominently displayed on university maps, so that students may find the Services without having to ask third parties for directions.
- As far as possible and within their means, universities provide crèche facilities on campus for students at an affordable rate and provide sufficient places to meet student needs.

6.0 Resources (cont'd)

6.3 Staff

The number and quality of staff available to provide support services for students largely dictates the level of services available. There must, however, be a realisation that resources are finite and limited. There must also be an awareness of the limits of what can be provided and this must be communicated to stakeholders. During the data gathering exercise, many Services identified inadequate staffing as a major issue. Many of these Services are guided by professional standards which lay down staffing norms; however it was clear that these norms are frequently and routinely disregarded. In 1998, the HEA made recommendations as to the appropriate level of provision for Irish Educational Institutions.³⁰ This included recommendations for a staff:student ratio of 1:2000 for Counsellors and a ratio of 1:3000 for Doctors and Nurses. In 1997, a (UK) Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CARC)/ Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)³¹ report proposed a benchmark for careers services of one careers advisor for every 400 final-year students plus one member of support staff for each careers advisor. Universities should make every effort to adhere to recommended norms.

While it is acknowledged that professional personnel with appropriate and specific qualifications are staffing services, the provision of continuous professional development is a matter that must be addressed and which requires recognition when considering the resourcing of such a function. In counterbalance, the Services themselves recognise the need for clarity from the university and the students of their roles and the limits of what they can provide. Due to the nature of Government funding, many universities have employed significant numbers of staff on a contract basis, even when the need is long-term and the continuity of services could be adversely affected. In some cases, the advertisement of contract positions has failed to find appropriately qualified and experienced staff. The employment of contract staff may also result in continuity of care issues, particularly in the area of mental health. Another related concern is the grading structures for staff which, in some instances, are viewed as being inadequate in respect of the levels of work undertaken. These factors, coupled with heightened demands and growing student numbers, led to a wide range of comments from various Services across the sector:

- "increasing waiting lists"
- "long queues, causing frustration"
- "standing room only at peak times" and
- "an office that lacks space in which to meet privately with distressed students".

The effects on staff are also a concern for some Services:

- "excess workload will lead to staff stress and loss of staff"
- "inadequate one-to-one student support"
- "inadequate student/staff ratio"
- "not using internal expertise to its optimum" and
- "staff turnover - loss of expertise - contracts"

It was agreed that there were recruitment issues in some institutions, and a need for more staff training, along with a need for more appointments at a senior level for some of the Services.

With more flexible academic delivery modes and times, students can now be on campus 7 days a week and often outside the traditional 9 to 5 day. Student Services need to be in a position to respond to student needs outside the traditional working day and week, and to provide for more flexible working and opening hours to meet the changing needs of students.

³⁰ HEA (1998) Guidelines for the Development of Student Support Services. Available at www.heai.ie.

³¹ Watts, A.G. (1997) Strategic Directions for Careers Service in higher education. CRAC/ Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, London, Burlington Press.



6.0 Resources (cont'd)

Guidelines - Staff

- As well as defining what they can do, Student Services also define the limitations of the services they provide and ensure that this is made known to the organisation, staff and students.
- Appropriate staffing norms for each of the service functions are researched and agreed with university management, which also agrees to working towards implementing these norms.
- An over-dependence on contract positions is avoided as this poses risks to continuity of care and such contracts may fail to attract appropriately qualified and experienced staff.
- The budgetary mainstreaming of posts is seen as a priority.
- Provisions for appropriate services outside the 9 to 5 working day and 5-day week, and also during traditional holiday periods, are made in order to meet the needs of all students.

6.0 Resources (cont'd)

6.4 Information communication technology (ICT)

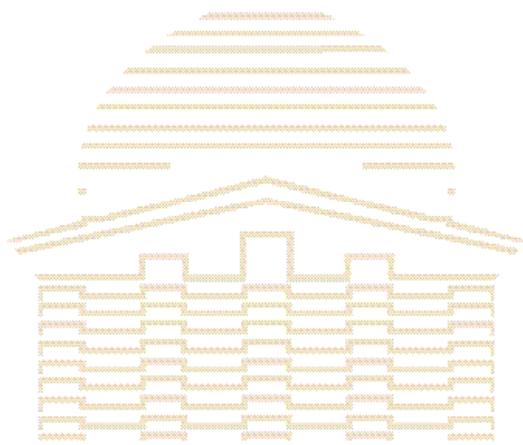
Access to and increased use of technology for better communications between Services and students is essential e.g. the use of on-line information and forms. It emerged in the course of this project that in some Services there is limited internal ICT expertise and that there is a general need across the sector for more effective use of ICT to reach wider groups of students. Greater access to and use of e-mail was suggested, along with the use of generic rather than personal e-mail addresses for Services. One service even admitted that its ICT capability was non-existent and that it urgently needed to provide on-line services to students as well as ICT facilities for residential communities. For international students, it was suggested that on-line and telephone support to students before their arrival in Ireland could and should be provided. In general, it was felt that the internal ICT and data systems availed of by some Services are not always readily accessible or user-friendly. Further refinement of these systems will require inputs from suitably skilled Student Services staff. Finally, it should be borne in mind constantly that not all students are ICT literate or have access to personal ICT facilities.



6.0 Resources (cont'd)

Guidelines - Information communication technology (ICT)

- There is adequate access by all of Student Services to the full range of necessary ICT systems.
- All internal ICT systems for the use of students and non-specialist staff meet high standards of 'user-friendliness'.
- Student Services are efficient and effective in their usage of ICT systems in reaching target audiences.
- All Services have generic e-mail addresses to ensure that, as individual personnel change, contact information can remain constant.





7.0 Policy development

7.1 Introduction

As well as exercising its primary functions, a properly-constituted and vigorous Student Services division can make valuable contributions to the university by informing university policy development from a professional student-centred perspective. Likewise, Student Services managers and professionals are in excellent positions to influence national policies when working across institutions, or through national organisations or networks. However, to be most effective in these roles, and to be in a position to benefit fully from shifts in institutional and national policies that favour more emphasis on holistic student development and welfare, Student Services must also have active procedures for the development and regular reviews of a full range of policies covering all aspects of its own roles.

Therefore, policy development is an essential function of Student Services and it should be understood clearly in the university that the role of Student Services is not limited to service delivery (although this is of vital importance), but embraces a pro-active involvement in student-related policy development and review at many levels, in facility development, and in facilitating the development of novel approaches to learning and teaching. This is one reason why the term 'Student Affairs' is to be preferred over 'Student Services'. More importantly, the universities are recognising this by increasingly appointing SSAOs at senior levels, up to 'Vice-President for (or Dean of) Student Services' or simply 'Vice-President for Students'. By the same token, Student Services must work constantly to ensure that their planning and policy development is done explicitly in strategic contexts and that they are seen as an integral part of the educational enterprise of the university.

In a very real sense, therefore, the remit of Student Services is university-wide, in that everything that the university does impacts to some extent on students. Obviously, Student Services do not have a monopoly on concern for student welfare and development, nor do they have a monopoly on wisdom regarding how to promote these, but they do have a valid and important role in university policy development.

7.0 Policy development (cont'd)

7.2 Policy development at institutional level

There are many areas where Student Services can have, and indeed have had, either a primary role or a central role in the formulation of university policies. These include amongst others:

- Alcohol and drug policy
- Protocol for student death
- Equality policy (including disability policy, policy on under-represented groups such as those from a low socio-economic background, mature students, ethnic groups)
- Dignity and respect policy (including policy on bullying, harassment, racism)
- Policy on health promotion
- Mental health protocols (including policy on psychotic episodes)
- Policy on contact with parents and other third parties
- Code of discipline (including rules for student residences)
- Examination regulations
- Student financial support mechanisms and criteria (including childcare support)
- Student retention
- Recruitment and welfare of international students
- Personal tutor (academic advising) system
- Teaching and learning policy

In most, if not all of the above cases, the formulation of policy has involved, or should involve, collaboration with experienced academic staff, relevant administrators, other support colleagues and a sufficient number and variety of students. To be most effective from the holistic student and Student Services perspectives, such collaborations must benefit from considerable tact and political skill, particularly from Student Services when it has a leadership role. Effective policy development requires inputs from senior management and an acceptance of the validity and the importance to the university of the Student Affairs' perspective.

In order to properly fulfil their policy roles, Student Services managers and professionals must be expert and sophisticated in making a case, and this will entail undertaking relevant research. For example, properly conducted surveys of student views and student needs, familiarity with best practice elsewhere, and firm evidence of individual and institutional benefits (or disimprovements) arising from equivalent policy developments will enhance proposals for changes in services or policies. As emphasised in Section 4.0 (Ensuring Quality), research activities should be an integral part of Student Services. Accordingly, if logged and measured, the day-to-day work of student affairs practitioners (e.g. counsellors, careers advisors, health professionals, chaplains) can yield, over time, very reliable and valuable insights about how the university can do its job better. Otherwise, such insights risk being dismissed as merely 'anecdotal'.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the above list of 'policy' areas is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive. There are many other areas in which those working in Student Services either should be involved or can make a useful contribution to policy development and review. These include, for example, the design of buildings; landscaping, art policy; the quality, range and cost of food; parking regulations and charges; administrative charges in general; the number and timing of examinations and projects; anonymous marking of examinations; opening hours of administrative offices and campus services; freedom of speech and the regulation of the activities of student clubs and societies; and negotiations with student leadership in cases of conflict with the University.



7.0 Policy development (cont'd)

Guidelines - Policy development at institutional level

- The role of Student Services in the development and review of all relevant university policies is acknowledged by senior management and there is Student Services representation on the Academic Council and on all committees related to student welfare, student policy and student life.
- A clear mechanism exists in each university whereby the views of Student Services are represented regularly at senior management level, ideally by the SSAO.
- Those working in Student Services see their role as being both service delivery and policy formulation.

7.0 Policy development (cont'd)

7.3 Policy development at national level

Just as Student Services have an important policy role at institutional level, they have an important contribution to make to the development of policy at national level for the university sector. Those working in Student Services should always be to the forefront in commenting on important policy issues such as the funding of universities, the possible return of tuition fees, student financial support, loan schemes, the need to maintain a balance between teaching and research, student retention, equity of access to third-level education, student health and lifestyle issues, student mental health issues, the alcohol debate, the points system, newer approaches in teaching and learning, the importance of transferable skills, a critique of the business (as opposed to the holistic) model of education, and the need (and argument) for a range of student supports to enable students to realise their full potential.

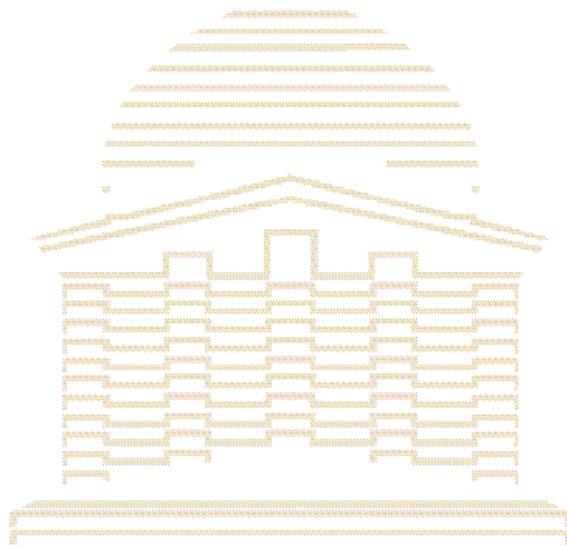
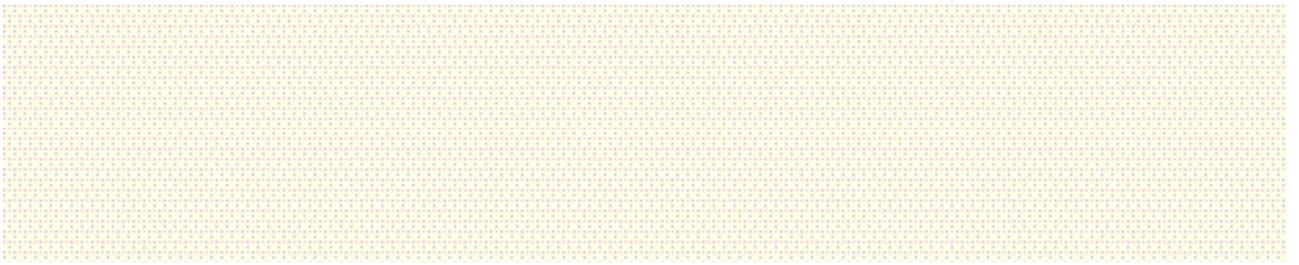
The recently formed Irish Universities Student Services Network (IUSSN) has great potential for influencing national policy. The role of the IUSSN can extend far beyond making the case for adequate resources for Student Services divisions, and it should consider and act appropriately on all issues that have a bearing on student welfare, student life and student development. There is also a policy role for the Confederation of Student Services in Ireland (CSSI), which represents those working in both the university sector and the Institutes of Technology. Likewise, the service groupings within Student Affairs (counsellors, careers staff, etc.) can have, and have had, important inputs into national policy through their national associations.



7.0 Policy development (cont'd)

Guidelines - Policy development at national level

- The Irish Universities Student Services Network (IUSSN) develops a range of policy documents on such issues as Student Services staffing norms, fees/loans/grants, health care and health promotion (including mental health), and other educational and student welfare issues as identified by its members.



Appendix 1: Work-programme

Background

The 2002 applications of all seven universities to the *HEA Quality Assurance Programme Funded under the National Development Plan 2000 - 2006* included a request for support for an IUQB proposal to undertake a number of 'Sectoral Projects', concerned with the dissemination, publication and implementation of good practice, namely:

- 1 Student Support Services
- 2 Mathematics, Teaching and Learning
- 3 Organisation of PhD programmes

According to the application, the project in each of these three areas would involve:

- The analysis of relevant data and departmental review reports to date for all seven universities.
- A set of seminars/workshops (1 per university) to obtain input from university officers/staff
- A conference with international experts
- Preparation and publication of a code of good practice

The '*Organisation of Student Support Services*' project was initiated by the IUQB in Spring 2003.

Project outline

Initial actions

- 1 Establish current practice.
 - i Collect from each university a report summarising recommendations related to Student Support Services that have been made in peer review group reports arising from reviews of academic departments and other units.
 - ii Collect from each university information in relation to resources and resource models.
 - iii Collect information from each university with regard to the structures and practices in place for Student Support Services including reporting structures and compare across the sector.
 - iv Prepare a summary of current practice.
- 2 Obtain participation of Vice-Presidents/Heads of Student Support Services
- 3 Establish a project group (Student Support Services Committee) with representation from all the universities.
- 4 Promote the organisation of a number of workshops to discuss Student Support Services and to clarify and prioritise issues.

Activities

Co-ordination

From September 2004 to June 2005 a Student Support Services Committee met and co-ordinated the project. It was assisted in its work by the quality officers based in each of the seven universities.

Alan Harrison (UCD) and Saranne Magennis (NUI Maynooth) assisted in the organisation of the project. Drew Logue acted as a consultant to Alan Harrison at the outset of the project. Alan Harrison was subsequently replaced by Mary Clayton and Bronwyn Molony (both UCD). The following "Co-ordinators" were identified in the seven universities:

UCD	<i>Mary Clayton</i>	NUI Galway	<i>Mary O'Riordan</i>
UCC	<i>Con O'Brien</i>	DCU	<i>Barry Kehoe</i>
	<i>Michael Farrell</i>	UL	<i>Jeremy Callaghan</i>
NUI Maynooth	<i>Brian Gormley</i>	TCD	<i>Claire Laudet</i>
	<i>Saranne Magennis</i>		<i>Bruce Misstear</i>

Workshops

In early 2004, the universities were invited to hold a workshop to facilitate inputs to this project from its staff and relevant officers. Concise reports from these workshops are included in the Interim Report ³² (see below).

'SWOT'-like analysis

A 'SWOT'-like analysis was prepared by each of the universities on current practices at the outset of the project. This was refined and updated in early 2005. The results from each report were compiled into a composite document and were included as part of the Interim Report ³³ (see below).

The Interim Report ³⁴

In order to summarise all of the information collected and as a central input to the Experts' Conference (see below), an Interim Report was prepared. The Interim Report included the following sections:

The Project

- Background to the Project on Student Support Services

- Objective

- Methodology

- Participants in the Project

The Current Situation

- The Case for Student Support Services

- Reporting Structure

- Summary of Services Provided

 - Common Issues

- Resource Provision for Student Services

 - Funding Sources

 - Inter-university Comparison

- Recommendations from Quality Review Reports on Student Support Services

 - University Organisation

 - Student Support Services Organisation

 - Assessment and Review

 - Communication

- Reports from University Workshops

- Appendix One: Reports from University Workshops

- Appendix Two: 'SWOT' Analysis

³² See footnote 7.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*



Experts' Conference

A conference entitled 'Good Practice in the Organisation of Student Support Services' was held in The Gresham Hotel, Dublin on 11th March 2005. The programme included presentations and question sessions on practices in two countries:

USA - Dr. Peggy Jablonski, Vice-Chancellor Student Affairs, University of North Carolina
UK - Mr. David Ball, Dean of Students, University of Hertfordshire

During the morning, there were breakout sessions chaired by university members of the organising committee and a plenary discussion followed in the afternoon.

The Conference was attended by about 120 staff, senior officers, administrators and students from the seven universities, and representatives from other relevant organisations including many of the other third-level educational providers in Ireland. The discussions were prolonged and lively and each breakout group reported at the plenary discussion session.

Further consultations and finalisation of these Guidelines

After the above Experts' Conference, work commenced on the Good Practice Guidelines. In keeping with the previous publication in the series, it was decided that each section should start with a broad outline of the main relevant issues in order to place in context the specific guideline items which follow. A pre-publication draft of the booklet was reviewed and revised in light of feedback obtained from focus groups held in February 2006 with students and students union representatives from the Irish universities and from feedback obtained from experienced members of the Student Support Services sector and other interested persons and professionals, who were invited to review the draft as part of an open consultation process.

Appendix 2: Description of Services

The following is a descriptive overview of the Student Support Services provided in Irish universities. Some of the format and descriptions used are adapted from the '*Report on the Quality Culture Project 2002 - 2003*'³⁵ of the EUA. Note that certain categories included in the EUA report such as academic support systems and transport are not included here as they do not always fall within the remit of Student Support Services in Irish universities. However, these Services are considered in section 2.0 (Institutional Organisation) in the context of the overall management and co-ordination of support provision to students.

Descriptors:

- **Counselling Service** enables students to achieve their academic and personal potential and to adjust successfully and resourcefully to the challenges of college life. It helps students cope more effectively with the personal or emotional difficulties that may arise during their studies, such as coping with exams, stress, etc.
- **Health Promotion** enhances 'positive health and reduces the risk of ill-health through the overlapping spheres of health education, prevention and health promotion'.³⁶
- **Student Health** offers a range of medical services.
- **Careers Service** enables students to develop the skills necessary to effectively manage their careers throughout their working lives. This is achieved through the provision of careers education, careers information, employer programmes and opportunities, and one-to-one guidance.
- **Mentoring and Tutoring** matches students with peer mentors or tutors, who are academically qualified and trained in tutoring skills.
- **Student Financial Assistance** while not a specific office, each university has a committee or committees responsible for disbursing the Student Assistance Fund (funded by European Social Funds) and other monies (donations, student fines, etc). Low-income students and students experiencing unexpected financial hardship are assisted with living costs and study costs.
- **Disability Support** promotes equality of opportunity and aims to adapt and organise supports on an individual basis, tailored to each student's needs. According to their declaration of their needs on the application form, every institution will plan and prepare for arrival and support, e.g. note-taking arrangements, learning disability supports, academic tutoring, etc.
- **Accommodation and Catering** deals with both university-owned and privately rented accommodation and food service and helps with any queries.

³⁵ EUA, (2005), Developing an internal quality culture in European universities: Report on the Quality Culture Project 2002-2003. Available at www.eua.be.

³⁶ Downie, R.S., Tannahill, C., & Tannahill, A., (1996) Health Promotion Models and Values, 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- **Mature Students Office** deals with mature students, helping them with study skills, personal difficulties and the transition to university life.
- **International Student Support** is responsible for the support and welfare of incoming and outgoing international students, to make their stay as comfortable as possible, running a comprehensive advice and information service.
- **Access Office** is the co-ordinating body for a variety of pre-entry programmes designed as out-reach to promote the participation of students with disadvantaged background or members of minority groups who need extra support.
- **First-Year Orientation** focuses on new students and prospective students, giving essential information about the institution and providing opportunities for interaction with faculty, staff, and other students. It serves as a clearing house for students considering the institution as an option, and offers a wide range of advice about faculty choice, graduate study skills and information on graduate programmes.
- **Student Crèche** provides a safe, stimulating and caring environment for children of students and staff.³⁷
- **Sport and Recreation** provides a wide range of sport facilities, courses and events.
- **The Chaplaincy** focuses on the spiritual, social, emotional, educational and political support of students and staff.
- **Student Centres** are a venue for a wide range of social and cultural activities and events put on by the Students' Union, societies and clubs.
- **Security** inside the Campus is designed to enhance the security of property and the personal safety of students, staff and visitors to the campus. It may include: 24-hour emergency line; 24-hour patrol; Bicycle security and safety; Car security; CCTV and control office.

³⁷ See footnote 4.

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