

Evaluation of the Inclusive Learning Initiative – staff experiences

Research Report 2012-2013

Report prepared for the Inclusive Learning Initiative Steering
Group, Maynooth University

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DISCLAIMER:

The views and opinions contained in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Maynooth University. Responsibility for the research (including any errors or omissions) remains with the authors.

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PREFACE

Context of the Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI) at Maynooth University 2011-2018

In 2009 the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) and four other organisations - KARE, St. John of Gods Community Services, Stewarts Care and Camphill Communities – established a collaboration in order to identify ways of making higher education more inclusive for students with intellectual disabilities. This became the Service Learning Partnership Group and the Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI) emerged as a result of these collaborative efforts.

An exploratory approach to supporting students with ID to attend higher education in Maynooth University (formerly NUIM) was developed for a period of three years in keeping with the time frame of regular university courses. This was the pilot phase of the initiative and five students participated in this phase commencing their studies in September 2011.

The following report records the outcomes of research carried out in tandem with this pilot. It does not provide a complete picture of the initiative which continued until 2018 with the graduation of a further four students. In total nine graduates participated in the ILI. The ILI was both an access route and support system for students during their time in college.

This introduction intends to give an overview of the context and processes of the Inclusive Education Initiative to frame the following research reports.

Recruitment

The recruitment of students was as close as possible in all respects to the experience of the majority of our undergraduate students, whether school leaver or mature entrant. This was designed to ensure a shared student experience in keeping with the watchword “same as everyone else” and to ensure that the additional funding needs were kept to a minimum by operating within the existing frameworks and services. As part of its outreach work, the university admissions office visited some disability services in the Kildare district to provide information on programmes and subjects offered by the university.

An application process was devised and as similar to the mature student entry process applicants were invited to attend for interview. Those involved in recruitment sought students who would have interest in the courses on offer, be comfortable learning with other people, be

aware of personal safety, and would like to engage with the higher education. All of the students who registered were aged over 23. Although the registration process used the Occasional Student route, recruitment followed the ordinary established patterns of recruitment for Mature Students in so far as possible. The Occasional Student route was chosen for registration purposes as it enabled students to study a range of modules at their chosen pace.

From the outset, in keeping with the fully inclusive approach of the initiative, it was intended that no separate course be established and that, with the support of a facilitator, each student would select subjects of interest from the mainstream offering of Maynooth University. This was an essential element of the initiative. In all cases, the direction of the initiative was to keep to existing policies and protocols and modify only where necessary for the particular individual.

Benefits

The implementation of inclusive education at Maynooth University offered benefits that go well beyond that which is experienced by individual students with disabilities, though these in themselves are significant. The contribution of the students to campus life and the university environment must not be underestimated as they brought an added dimension to our appreciation of diversity. This is evidenced in the following report but also in the actions of heads of departments who welcomed back students each year showing that persons with an intellectual disability can fit into a department and make their own unique contribution.

As the programme developed, it provided numerous opportunities for volunteer activity by Maynooth students, supporting the university's mission in relation to civic engagement. Moreover, it offered a solution in part to one of the difficulties for volunteering in Maynooth, namely the limited numbers of easily accessible placements for volunteers. By providing volunteering opportunities on campus, students were able to give time to the actual volunteering activity, and less to transport getting there and back.

Academic staff faced the challenge of adapting their teaching and assessment to suit the learning styles and abilities of the students. They embraced this challenge and demonstrated their professionalism in adapting their classes and devising new and creative assessments. Their work and the challenges they encountered are evidenced in the relevant report. However, their

contribution provides further evidence of the student centredness that characterizes teaching staff at Maynooth University. Moreover, instead of viewing this work as a burden, many colleagues expressed the view that the experience benefitted them and energized their teaching and assessment in other contexts.

Aside from the enhancement of learning and personal development, graduates accounts of what was valuable about studying in higher education relates to the importance of human connection. This is nourished in reciprocal relationships with natural supports, staff, learning partners (mentors) and friends.

Finance

The financial context in which the Inclusive Learning Initiative operated was difficult because of the longstanding issues with the disability funding model structure in Ireland. The ILI approach was to keep the cost at a sustainable level, rather than basing it on large but temporary grant funding. Funding was achieved through contributions from KARE, St. John of Gods Kildare Services and from Maynooth University, together with grants from Genio Foundation and the Callan Institute (St John of Gods). Part of the goal of the ILI was to develop a model of funding that would allow students to participate in higher education on the same basis as their peers.

In addition to funds, partners made contributions in kind in order to facilitate the initiative. Staff time was provided by the University directly in the form of the participation of staff in establishing and managing the development of the initiative through its pilot phase.

Academic colleagues in departments hosted and supported students while service and administrative departments supported recruitment, library access, registration and other services. By using existing protocols and mechanisms, these were kept fairly much in line with the costs of any other student. Colleagues from KARE and St John of God Services assisted with training and supported the initiative with their specific professional expertise.

Governance model

Operational Management Team was tasked with the day-to-day management of the Initiative and of supporting the Learning Facilitator in her role. It comprised the Learning Facilitator, the

Director of the MU Higher Education Policy Unit, and the Head of Adult and Community Education.

The support of students and co-ordination of their learning plans was the responsibility of the Learning Facilitator. S/he liaised directly with the students, their lecturers, library staff and mentors and was supported by the Management Team.

An Implementation Team was set up to monitor the progress of the ILI and to advocate for policy change in particular concerning national educational funding models for persons with intellectual disabilities. This team was comprised of representatives from all partner organisations, the Registrar of Maynooth University or his representative and all members of the implementation team.

The future of the ILI

Historically individuals with intellectual disabilities have been excluded from participation in wider society and were often left in a parallel educational and societal context. The ILI highlights how students with an ID can learn, contribute, grow and develop in a higher education environment. It also acknowledges the rights of people to self-determination notwithstanding their disabilities and recognizes the benefits to society that accrue from independence, autonomy and self-determination in all people, including those with an intellectual disability. These benefits go beyond the measurable economic benefits they encompass the personal benefits that students, their families and supporters feel as they see the growing self-esteem and empowerment that the students experience by having the opportunity of an education like their siblings and peers.

Unfortunately, the ILI was suspended in 2018 because the funding model was deemed by the University to be unsustainable. A national funding model was identified as necessary to ensure the continuance of initiatives such as the ILI. This has not yet been achieved although we continue to advocate and seek funding and resource opportunities for the initiative.

ILI team December 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI) is a pioneering project in Maynooth University which aims to facilitate the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in higher education. In September 2011, five students with intellectual disabilities commenced their studies in Maynooth University in six academic Departments¹. The students attend lectures and tutorials, complete assignments and take part in social activities on campus.

Background to the ILI

The ILI is a collaboration between Maynooth University and four agencies which provide services to people with intellectual disabilities – the Camphill Community, the Kare Organisation, Stewart’s Hospital and St. John of God’s Hospitaller Service. The ILI is underpinned by the ‘fully inclusive’ or Individualised Support model of inclusion. The focus in this model is that the university experience for students with intellectual disabilities mirrors, as closely as possible, the experiences of the rest of the student body.

Methodology

The aim of the evaluation was to document the perceived benefits, specific challenges and key concerns identified by Tutors, Lecturers, First Year Co-ordinators, Department Heads and Administrative/Support/Development Personnel who were involved in the initiative. The first evaluation in 2012 was qualitative in nature and consisted of a desk review of relevant documentation, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with staff members. The second evaluation in 2013 comprised of an online survey completed by staff members involved in the initiative.

Key Findings

The findings were integrated and organised into three broad categories: 1) Perceived Benefits of the Initiative; 2) Strategies and Supports and 3) Key Concerns.

Perceived Benefits:

Overwhelmingly positive attitudes were displayed towards the initiative and the ILI was seen as a ‘good thing’ and an appropriate and worthwhile endeavour for Maynooth University. Participants spoke strongly about the positive benefits experienced by students

¹ Department of Adult and Community Education; Department of Applied Social Studies; Department of Anthropology; Department of Design and Innovation; Department of Media Studies; Department of Music.

across three strands: Academic Learning, Social Learning and Personal Development. The ILI students were highly regarded by the participants and viewed as positive additions to the student body. Although social relationships with fellow students were not always successful, some participants felt that peer groups responded positively to the initiative and made concerted efforts to make the student feel included. This was more evident in smaller classes and in classes with a higher number of mature students. Staff also spoke of the benefits for them emotionally and professionally as well as the benefits for the university community. The learning from and between students was noted as a key benefit of the initiative. Overall, there was a general consensus that making the campus more accessible and increasing diversity amongst the student body was a progressive and positive step forward.

Strategies and Supports

There was evidence that participants adopted highly creative strategies to make material more accessible and that these approaches were beneficial to the whole student body and to the teaching staff themselves. It was noted that the support needs of the ILI students were often higher than staff had expected. A number of external supports were drawn upon to facilitate departmental involvement although the ILI students' ineligibility for existing Access supports created additional challenges. The most significant resource identified by the participants was the ILI Facilitator who adopted multiple roles to address the direct and indirect needs of the ILI students and the participating departments. Students and staff were also identified as key supports.

Key Concerns

In general, staff expressed a lack of clarity around some aspects of the ILI, both in terms of individual aims of the student and the overall objectives of the initiative. Confusion was also caused by the absence of a clear assessment framework for each student and there was some frustration expressed at the lack of information around the specific needs and abilities of the ILI students. Concerns were also raised about the low visibility and resourcing of the initiative across campus and that the ILI was operating somewhat 'on the margins'. Views were also expressed that ILI students' expectations and emotional learning need to be managed more carefully and that there were significant challenges inherent in striking a balance between 'equal' treatment and protection from risk and harm.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the Higher Education Policy Unit and the Department of Adult and Community Education began a pilot education programme for five students who participated in learning in Maynooth University. The Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI) is a collaborative project between Maynooth University and four local disability support agencies to provide higher education for people with intellectual disabilities.² The ILI enables students to experience university life and the challenge of learning in the university community, based on an individualised model of support.

Five students with intellectual disabilities commenced their studies in Maynooth University in September 2011. The five students attend lectures, tutorials, complete assignments and take part in social activities and are expected to attend for a three year period, receiving support as a individual where needed. In the first year of the initiative, six academic departments participated, allowing students to select individual modules in their preferred area of study. The six departments were:

- Department of Adult and Community Education
- Department of Anthropology
- Department of Applied Social Studies
- Department of Design Innovation
- Department of Media Studies
- Department of Music

The students registered as occasional students, with the freedom to identify their preferred area of study and select as many modules as they feel able to manage. Students were selected after an application and interview process. Although some of the current ILI students have completed second level education and/or accredited courses on the National Framework of Qualifications, the entry criteria was based on a desire to engage in challenging learning opportunities presented at third level rather than previous academic achievements. The initiative aims to develop a flexible accreditation process to acknowledge each student's individual achievement throughout their course of study.

This research presents the results of two evaluations completed with Maynooth University staff during the first two years of the ILI in 2012 and 2013.

The first evaluation was conducted by Meliosa Bracken in 2012 and was qualitative in nature, comprised of i) a desk review of relevant documentation along with two in-depth, semi-structured interviews with members of the ILI Steering Group to give a detailed overview of the ILI in the first two years and ii) ten semi-structured interviews with a range of academic staff involved in the ILI in Maynooth University to give a picture of their experiences and perspectives.

The second evaluation was completed by Sinead Hyland in 2013, comprising of an online survey to gather experiences and insights from Maynooth University staff engaged on the Inclusive Learning Initiative in Years 2 and 3.

These two evaluations were analysed and written up separately by the researchers in 2012 and 2013 respectively and were used for strategic planning by the ILI team and Maynooth University at this time. They are now combined into one integrated report about staff experiences during the ILI in the first three years of the pilot in this document. All material and data included in this document originates from these two evaluations, aside from some contextual literature on educators' perspectives from inclusive education at higher education in the next section added by Bernie Grummell. The other change from the original evaluations has been re-editing with a single referencing and style guide for this report for consistency by Bernie Grummell, with the consent of the two original authors.

²The local disability support agencies involved are: KARE, Camphill Communities of Ireland, St John of God Community Services and Stewarts Care

Policies of recognition and inclusion of the rights of people have become increasingly important, in promoting and supporting inclusive education. The UNESCO (2005) 'Guidelines for Inclusion: Access for All' is informed by a human rights approach that emphasises providing opportunities for equal participation of persons with disabilities (physical, social and/or emotional) whenever possible into general education but leaves open the possibility of personal choice and options for special assistance and facilities for those who need it (UNESCO, 2005: 15). This places an emphasis on "transform[ing] education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners...and to see it as a challenge and enrichment of the learning environment" (UNESCO, 2005: 15). Principles of inclusive education were first adopted in the 'Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education' at the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Equality (UNESCO, 1994) and restated at the World Education Forum, Dakar 2000. 'The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' (UNCRPD) includes the right to education as a major article. In the Irish context, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) views inclusive education as a concept that "means that all persons, including those with special educational needs, have equal rights to participate in, benefit from and achieve outcomes from educational opportunity as the norm" (NCSE, 2006: 6).

Inclusive postsecondary education opportunities fall into three broad categories which largely depend on the rationale, motivation, and expected outcomes of the persons involved (Hart, Zafft, and Zimbrich, 2003; Stodden and Whelley, 2004).

The ***Substantially Separate Model*** is delivered on campus but participating students engage in a separate course of study and do not attend standard college courses with the general student body. The learning focus is often on 'life skills' or 'transition' classes and students have limited opportunities to engage in whole-campus social activities.

The ***Individualised Support Model*** provides high levels of individualised support to

ensure participating students can set and achieve their own learning goals. The focus in this model is that the university experience for students with intellectual disabilities mirrors, as closely as possible, the experiences of the rest of the student body.

The **Mixed Model** facilitates participating students to engage in a combination of campus wide activities (social and academic) as well as a separate 'life skills' programme delivered on campus.

The concept of inclusion in an educational context generally advocates a removal of all segregated and specialised instruction for learners with an intellectual disability in favour of full participation in mainstream settings with the support of appropriate adaptations and accommodations (Zigmond, Kloo and Volonino, 2009). Winter and O'Raw note that inclusion "has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference and learning how to learn from difference" (2010: 132).

In an international context, models of fully inclusive education systems are rare with most provision being a mix of specialised and mainstream provision. While mainstreaming and integrated approaches are more prevalent in primary and second level schools, in higher education models of full inclusion tend to be limited to specific initiatives. Such initiatives include those in Alberta University in Canada, Flinders University in South Australia, Kampus programme in Kuhankoski School, Finland and Trinity College in Vermont, USA. Noteworthy amongst these international models of inclusive education is the emphasis on the whole-institution approach, the development of individual learning plans, and supported pathways. A whole-institution approach involves all aspects of university life including teaching, learning, student support, built environment and technological infrastructure (Kelly and Padden, 2018). For example, Flinders University in South Australia developed an inclusive education programme which sought to provide "opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to increase their range of experiences, exercise their rights for continuing education, enhance their vocational opportunities and develop their

social networks” (O’Brien, 2008:10). The Alberta University ‘On Campus’ programme, established in 1997, aims to facilitate the full inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of university life. The principles underpinning the ‘On Campus’ programme in Alberta include:

- The need to challenge the assumptions about the very nature of developmental disabilities
- A desire to test the perceived limits of inclusion
- An intention to advance inclusion and reduce marginalization
- The necessity to extend existing knowledge and practice in supporting people with disabilities (Hughson, Moodie and Uditsky, 2005, p.98).

The ILI used an Individualised Support Model, similar to the ‘fully inclusive’ approach adopted by the University of Alberta, Canada, which is outlined in the following section.

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE INCLUSIVE LEARNING INITIATIVE

Maynooth University has a long history of encouraging underrepresented groups to enter third level education (for example, early school-leavers, mature students, students with physical disabilities, students with specific learning difficulties, members of the Travelling Community and refugees). The decision to include students with intellectual disabilities seemed a natural progression for a university that prides itself on providing a 'truly student-friendly' environment.

Professor Tom Collins, interim President of Maynooth University (2008-2010) and Professor of Education, brought together representatives from Maynooth University, KARE, Camphill Communities of Ireland, St John of God Community Services and Stewarts Care to address a perceived lack of opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities wishing to progress into third level education. Parents in the region had also been in contact with Maynooth University and the local disability services seeking higher educational options for their family member. This, combined with engagement between disability providers and Maynooth University, led to the establishment of the service learning partnership group. This group sought to identify a suitable model for the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities within the university.

After evaluating existing models in Ireland and internationally, the service learning partnership group agreed that an Individualised Support Model, similar to the 'fully inclusive' approach adopted by the University of Alberta, Canada would fulfil their objectives (Noonan, 2012). As outlined in the previous chapter, the Alberta programme aims to facilitate the full inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of university life (Hughson *et al.*, 2005). As the ILI service learning partnership group shared the same pedagogical approach to inclusiveness as Alberta College, there was an eagerness to initiate a similar model here and they consulted with scholars from Alberta College including a visit by Alberta College staff to Maynooth University in 2010. As one member of the original service learning partnership group observed:

We do have a philosophy that says that all students are different. Every student has different learning styles and needs and they do things uniquely. We want to work towards a time where all students are treated as different and that nobody is treated

as an exceptional case [...] and I think the push came from the agencies and the passion that was in the group to try the Alberta model and see if it would work in Ireland, even though the context and the culture is different. [Steering Group Member]

This is echoed in Maynooth University's philosophy at the time which is committed to consistently promoting greater access to education and to providing an environment within which the student can learn, develop and mature.³

Although concerns were raised by some service learning partnership group members around the burden that this initiative might place on existing supports for students with additional needs, a decision was made to proceed – on a very small scale – with the ILI pilot project.

³ Source: University Profile [www.nuim.ie/about/profile.shtml]

KEY ASPECTS OF THE INCLUSIVE LEARNING INITIATIVE

In 2011, recruitment began for students with intellectual disabilities for the 2011/2012 academic year. Drawing on the Alberta 'On Campus' initiative, the following key components were considered crucial to Maynooth University's model:

- Students would choose their own preferred course of study.
- Students would identify their own learning goals and set their own learning objectives.
- Students would enrol in standard college courses or programmes, attend lectures, tutorials and complete assignments and group work alongside the rest of the student body.
- Modifications and adaptations would be made by teaching staff to ensure students were included to the fullest extent possible.
- Flexible assessment procedures would be developed to reflect and reward each individual student's progress.
- Support would be provided from a range of sources, including the ILI Support Facilitator, natural supports from student body, with a volunteer programme drawn from the student body developed as a formal way of meeting students support needs a volunteer programme was developed, on-campus academic and social support structures, student families, key workers and disability support agencies.

The following happened as a result of facilitating and developing the ILI

- Students would be assessed and graded at the level of the work they present to the departments they are enrolled in.
- Students' progression across three strands that they had developed would be supported – Academic Learning, Social Learning and Personal Development.

This chapter has presented the context for the Inclusive Learning Initiative in Maynooth University, as well as placing this within the context of existing policies and practices on inclusive education and outlining key aspects of the ILI.

CHAPTER 2 - METHODOLOGY

These evaluations were designed to capture the experiences and perceptions of Maynooth University staff involved in the Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI). ILI Students' experiences and perspectives are explored in detail in Finnegan's 2013 evaluation. The focus of this current report is at departmental level in the university and the data collected reflects the thoughts and opinions of academic and administrative staff involved in the initiative.

RESEARCH AIMS

A number of key research questions guided the study:

- What were the perceived benefits of the initiative?
- What specific challenges were encountered?
- What strategies or adaptations (if any) were implemented to facilitate the inclusion of the ILI students?
- What supports were availed of during the initiative?
- What supports would be necessary – at departmental level – to ensure a successful continuation of the initiative?

RESEARCH DESIGN

The first evaluation was qualitative in nature and the following stages of data collection were carried out in 2012:

Stage 1: A desk review of relevant documentation along with two in-depth, semi-structured interviews with members of the ILI Steering Group.

Stage 2: Ten semi-structured interviews with a range of academic staff involved in the ILI in Maynooth University.

The second evaluation was quantitative in nature, by means of an online survey in 2013 to gather insights from a range of Maynooth University staff involved in the ILI (see Appendix 4). This included teaching staff, staff in administrative and student learning and development roles, Heads of Department and others engaged on the ILI primarily in Years 2 and 3, but also some people participating from Year 1. It was also sent to staff from partner

disability support organisations in the region.

Twenty seven responses were received having sent the survey to 60 people involved in the ILI which is equal to a 45% response rate.

Data analysis:

The interviews in the first evaluation were recorded and transcribed and then subjected to a thematic analysis. The open-ended questions from the online survey in the second evaluation were coded using thematic analysis.

The data collected from stakeholders representing different departments and institutions was analysed separately and then cross-referenced to identify recurring motifs, core themes and sub- themes. Some themes were anticipated in advance but new themes also emerged from the analysis.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Ethical approval for the study was sought from and granted by Maynooth University's Ethics Committee. An information sheet and consent form for prospective participants was created (see Appendix 2) and distributed to various academic staff across the six participating departments, with a similar information and consent process included with the online survey.

Recruitment of participants for the interviews in the first evaluation involved 'targeted' or 'critical case' sampling to ensure that the views of academic staff with varying teaching responsibilities would be included. However, this evaluation makes no claim of being representative of the university, support agencies or of the departments in general.

Interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis, apart from one instance where two participants were interviewed together. A semi-structured interview schedule guided the interview process (see Appendix 3) but was flexible enough for participants to develop and express their understandings, perceptions and experiences of the ILI. All interviews

were digitally recorded, following verbal and written consent, and transcribed at a later date. In addition, field notes were taken to enhance the recorded data.#

The online survey in the second evaluation in 2013 was designed in a range of open-ended questions to capture the experiences of respondents working with students participating in the ILI and perceptions about the value of including these and other students with similar challenges in higher education programmes.

Sample Profile

Ten academic staff, consisting of Heads of Departments, First Year Coordinators, Programme Managers, Lecturers, Tutors and Academic Support personnel from the Teaching and Learning Centre and the Writing Centre participated in the interview process of the first study. 27 people completed the online survey at the centre of the second evaluation.

In the next chapter, representations of participants' experiences and perspectives are shown, supported by excerpts from interview transcripts and surveys. All quoted excerpts are presented as closely as possible to participants' own words. In some cases, minor editing was required to make narratives clearer to the reader or to anonymise features which may identify people.

At the end of each interview excerpt, the speaker is identified by a pseudonym and their academic role. Students participating in the ILI are similarly identified by a pseudonym and their pronouns generalised; both intended to maintain the confidentiality of all participants. In order to maintain the anonymity of the staff who responded to the online survey in the second evaluation, it was decided, with agreement from the ILI team, not to include these job titles in the final report; instead participants' general role is referred to throughout the report. Similarly the gender and name of students were generalised and anonymised to maintain confidentiality.

CHAPTER 3 - FINDINGS

The following chapter integrates and organises the experiences, understandings and perceptions of the participants from both evaluation reports into the following categories:

- Staff knowledge and perceptions of ILI
- Perceived benefits of the initiative.
- Strategies and supports.
- Key concerns.

STAFF KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS OF ILI

Respondents to the online survey in Hyland (2013) were asked about their levels of knowledge of intellectual disability and the ILI initiative before they started to find out if knowledge of either was increased by their participation in the initiative.

Staff were asked about their knowledge about issues to do with intellectual disability before they started working in the ILI, with eight respondents reported that they felt they were not knowledgeable and 14 stated that they were fairly knowledgeable. Two respondents stated that they were very knowledgeable about issues to do with intellectual disability.

In terms of knowledge of the ILI, 21 respondents reported that they were not knowledgeable and three fairly knowledgeable. Six respondents responded to a question about where they obtained information about the initiative, with most reporting that they received information through discussions with ILI staff before they agreed to take part in the initiative.

*The department was briefed by ILI staff and a preliminary plan was developed.
(Head of Department).*

In another case the information was received because the respondent was interested and because s/he had heard about the initiative from sources, including ILI information sheets, location and similar programmes.

This is perhaps by virtue of location... ILI is situated [name of building] where I am also based. I was also aware of similar programmes eg Trinity and UCC and am generally interested in initiatives like this. (Administrative/ support/ development role).

Staff were also asked their understanding of the aims of the ILI when they first got involved in the ILI (online survey question 7) and whether these aims should be changed in the future (online survey question 8).

Ten respondents to question 7 mentioned that the aim of the ILI was to provide an opportunity or chance for people with intellectual disabilities to attend higher education.

To help students with intellectual disabilities to participate in mainstream HE. (Administrative/ Support/ Development Staff).

Staff also expressed an extended understanding of the aims of the ILI to the personal development of the students taking part in the ILI and what they described as the 'education in the fullest sense' below.

I understood that the initiative was established in order to provide adult students with intellectual disabilities a chance to progress their learning in areas that they were most interested in as facilitated by [Maynooth University] faculties and departments. I was also aware that it was aiming to support its participants in other areas of their lives, e.g. being self-sufficient, managing time, communicating their thoughts and feelings to others, etc. (Lecturer)

In my view, the initiative aims to impart a sense of self-worth and confidence as much as academic knowledge. It is not based on an instrumental orientation towards the acquisition of a degree. It seems to be about education in the fullest sense, rather than merely training and accreditation. (Lecturer)

Other respondents picked up on the experimental nature of the initiative for all involved.

To experiment with the possibilities for providing opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to participate in third level and/or University education. This meant being an experiment for the Universities - staff and students - as well as the participants, their families and their support organisations. (Lecturer)

The extension of the inclusive ethos of Maynooth University and the desire to increase the range of access was mentioned by seven respondents as an aim of the ILI.

It was my clear understanding that the programme was to fully include the ILI students in the learning experience at Maynooth; this I took to encompass participation in the academic learning and to meet, with appropriate adjustments, the same expectations as their classmates. I also understood that there was an additional opportunity for full social engagement to extend to other activities, such as student societies and sports. That could also be part of the learning experience. (Lecturer)

Other answers focused on the students participating in the ILI and their educational development or pathways.

To establish and operate a bespoke education pathway for ILI students that took seriously the whole of their educational development. (Head of Department)

I understood that it was to be a pilot scheme to offer third level education to students with disability. I understood that it was to be monitored and feedback would be made regularly to the people spearheading it. (Tutor and Course Coordinator)

For other staff in part-time roles, little knowledge of the aims of the initiative was mentioned.

I knew very little - I was told only that they hoped I'd be comfortable accommodating a student from the ILI and that her/his assistant would be with him. I was told s/he had [ID] but was interested in the subject I was teaching and capable of participating fully in tutorials. (Teaching Assistant)

Again 22 answers were received to question 8 'Having worked with students participating in the ILI what do you think the aims of the initiative should be now?' Two respondents stated that they couldn't answer as they did not work directly with participants in the ILI.

Half of the respondents to question 8, stated that they felt the aims of the ILI should remain the same or similar and should be extended, based on their experiences. They felt that the ILI should be

available on a full time basis. I think it was a fantastic initiative and should be

available to everyone that wishes to avail of it. (Programme Supervisor)

PERCEIVED BENEFITS

Overwhelmingly positive attitudes were displayed towards the initiative and the ILI was seen as 'a good thing' and an appropriate and worthwhile endeavour for Maynooth University. Participants spoke strongly about the positive benefits experienced by a range of stakeholders, including: ILI students, the student body, teaching staff, participating Departments and Maynooth University in general.

Perceived Benefits for ILI Students:

There was a clear perception, based on personal experience and observation, that ILI students benefitted enormously from the educational opportunities available to them throughout the academic year. Progress was seen across the three strands identified by the ILI – Academic Learning, Social Learning and Personal Development:

Sam went from being at sea to going to college like a college student. On a personal level, that's an amazing transformation and at an academic level, it was phenomenal. I think s/he made huge, huge progress and s/he's the kind of [person] who will continue to make progress. (R.S., First Year Coordinator).

S/he seemed to get a lot more confidence and a lot more willing to participate and even when s/he was sitting in with another group, the confidence was still there. It wasn't just that s/he knew this group, s/he knows the expectations, knew what s/he was meant to be doing and s/he could talk comfortably. (C.E., Tutor).

The advancements that Nic made were unbelievable and very exciting. I found the work very exciting. (B.F., Lecturer)

And I mean, the independence, the confidence, the social skills, the handwriting, just being able to put the material together, to follow, do all the things, taking notes, brainstorming, I mean s/he went and embraced those skills and did her/his very best. (K.W., Lecturer)

Jo certainly changed personally, her/his confidence grew, her/his personality started to come out, s/he definitely started to challenge her/himself. (D.L., First Year Coordinator)

This was also echoed by respondents to the online survey.

The student progressed dramatically and the most noticeable change was a substantial increase in confidence and communicative ability. (Lecturer)

Looking back, it was a successful experience that benefited the student, the entire class and myself. These genuine concerns were addressed by the remarkable support offered to the student and myself by the ILI Facilitator, and also to some extent by fellow students. (Lecturer).

Perceived Benefits for Staff and Departments:

ILI students were highly regarded by the participants and viewed as positive additions to the staff and student body.

I liked Sam a lot, I thought s/he was really cool and when I see her/him, s/he brightens my day. S/he really does. (A.G., Lecturer).

I liked working with Nic, I liked the dynamic in the class with her/him, I liked the challenges it posed for me and I liked designing work for her/him to do. (B.F., Lecturer)

Certainly from our point of view, it was a joy having her/him really. (K.W., Lecturer).

Staff described the personal benefits and values they gained from their involvement with ILI students, especially as they saw their progression.

I found the entire ILI's experience highly emotional. At the end of the project, the student had completely changed, much more confident and outspoken; to hear the student talk in public about the progress, and to see and hear the changes with my eyes and ears was just incredible (Lecturer)

As I came to know and understand the student I was working with and learned about the initiative and the wide-range and wealth of its support, the more I

became personally and emotionally involved in the project - I feel that I have developed as a person and gained insight into my practice as a result of this most worthwhile experience. (Lecturer)

I took great satisfaction in the part the department played in the flourishing of the student intellectually and socially. (Head of Department)

Staff described how they felt that the ILI programme espoused the open access ethos of Maynooth University.

I value the open access ethos at Maynooth University and was pleased when an ILI student opted for a BA 2nd Year module that I was teaching. Having had a very positive experience of her/his presence in the classroom in this first course, I was delighted when s/he went on to choose another module with me in the second semester of that year. (Lecturer).

*I was very happy and proud of the work that the students, tutors and support staff did to facilitate the student's learning and it was a highlight of my teaching career to see her/him at graduation with her/his peers.
(Administrative/support/development role)*

It was seen as a means of encouraging their department to engage with cultural diversity in taught material, fitting the ethos of their department and inclusion in the university.

A core value of the department ... is equality and participation. The ILI seemed to be experimenting with how third level can be more inclusive and since the department has always gone out of its way to find creative ways to include non-traditional students it seemed an obvious choice to get involved. (Lecturer)

I now realise the beneficial influences of the ILI on teaching and on the general campus culture. (Lecturer)

Many teaching staff in the online survey reported a renewed focus on the value of teaching, an increased awareness of learner diversity in terms of levels of ability and learning styles and use of materials including making materials accessible to students with different needs and abilities. Listening, evaluation of learning and engagement were also mentioned in the responses received.

In essence, the greatest effect manifested itself in the recognition that broadening inclusiveness is not a significant challenge but rather an opportunity for pedagogy,

enhancing teaching methods, encouraging in-class dynamics and appreciating the connections between diversity in the classroom and diversity at societal level. (Head of Department)

Staff in administrative and student learning and development roles reported similar advances with their work practices because of their participation in the ILI. This cohort of respondents reported that their participation in the ILI made them more conscious of the diverse needs of students and in the design of the delivery of services including reception services and assessment.

I spent one hour with each student once a week and really enjoyed the experience. It was an extremely interesting experience for me learning how others learn, and how their confidence, and as a result, independent use of the library, grew. (Administrative/ Support/ Development staff)

Many were satisfied with the supports and training that they received from the ILI team, some staff recounted that they felt they would have benefited for additional support and training, but acknowledged that they were not always sure of what this was at the time and that this changes over time.

I had little or no experience of working with students with intellectual disabilities and I found I was conscious of not saying the wrong thing (being unintentionally patronising maybe). I would have liked some help there. I found that I got better as I got to know the individual students over the year. (Administrative/ Support/ Development staff)

On reflection I would have liked some training but I wouldn't have known exactly what at the time (university staff)

Perceived Benefits for the Student Body

Although some participants noted that social relationships with fellow students were not always successful (see under Specific Challenges for more details), other participants felt that fellow students responded very positively to the initiative and made concerted efforts to make the student feel included:

I received only positive feedback from [the other students]. Most of them said 'ah,

s/he's great, love them to bits, s/he's brilliant' and s/he just really seemed to have slotted in seamlessly. (R.S., First Year Coordinator).

*I can see where [the other students] struggled with it, but I can also see, once they copped it, once they realised **this** is difference, they were quite happy to go along with that and give her/him an extra bit of support. If Jo didn't get it, or if s/he talked too much, or too little, or said something that didn't make sense, they just let it go. (D.L., First Year Coordinator).*

A number of interviewees noted that smaller classes with heterogeneous peer groups were particularly accepting and welcoming:

The mature students were completely comfortable talking to her/him and finding ways to include her/him. (C.E., Tutor).

S/he was fine in class and the other students really rose to having her/him there. The class is quite small, we have a class of fewer than forty students which is small for us and students welcomed her/him into groups, and you know, they seemed to welcome working with her/him. In some cases, it kind of brought the best out of them because in trying to include her/him they would have to explain things very clearly to themselves and it just worked with the group dynamic. (E.R., Head of Department).

Responses to the online survey reported the positive impacts and relationships built between students and the impact on the learning environment as a whole.

There were some very strong and I believe lasting relationships formed with a relatively high number of the other students. Towards the end of the programme the candidate was always considered as part of the class and there were concerns about the inclusion of the candidate in the 'class graduation' ceremony. This was important to all of them. Initially, some students took it upon themselves to take care of the candidate. However, the more in contact they were the more 'naturalised' the relationships became until by the end of third year it seemed the candidate was accepted as an equal and different member of the group. (Lecturer)

In both cases, it was a privilege and a joy to have her/him in class. Both of these were optional courses, and his presence in the class seemed to bring the group closer together, thereby enriching the quality of class discussion. Her/his evident intellectual disability actually helped both the other students and myself to become more aware of and attuned to the diversity of pace and form of learning within the room, and thus created a more inclusive learning environment

overall. (Lecturer)

Others noted the evolving relationships which emerged in the group dynamics and the diversity between different group contexts.

At first (in a class made up of school leavers only) there wasn't a great intermingling, but as time went on things were easier and some students would say hello or invite her/him into their groups for discussion, though it was never what I would call totally relaxed and comfortable. S/he spent one day making up a tutorial though in another class and immediately the students there, who ranged in age and had different backgrounds, were joking with her/him and much more conversational. (Teaching Assistant)

Respondents mentioned that the potential of the participant in the ILI would not have been realised without participation in the ILI and that the expectations for learning for the participant was 'lamentably low' but were far exceeded.

Yes I see the importance of inclusion for students in the sense that it's a very normative social and familial experience to go to college. I see that if students are challenged to learn then their capacity to learn improves. I see that the university should not exclude members of society on any grounds otherwise it contributes to an unequal society. (Administrative/ support/ development role)

Responses in the online survey also described the benefits for the student structures of the university, especially those who worked in student services with ILI participants.

It had a great effect on the Students Union especially the other students that worked with us, the benefit they received from working with (name of student) - I can only say was invaluable to them. (University staff)

Perceived Benefits for Maynooth University

Interviewees generally agreed that making the campus more accessible and increasing diversity amongst the student body was a progressive and positive step forward.

I think students with learning disabilities, particularly Down Syndrome, who are interested in these subjects and want to be part of university, I think it's a great programme for them and I think it's great to have them participating in a way that they're able to have access. (C.E., Tutor)

The really positive impact for me is that this is about diversity. It's about diversity in the classroom; it's about the idea of a university that's open and encouraging to the citizens in its state. (R.S., First Year Coordinator)

There was also an acknowledgement that the adoption of a fully inclusive, individualised support model, although challenging, was highly commendable and held potential for greater inclusion across the institution.

I'm really proud of Maynooth, seeing how they struggle with these things, and they genuinely do. (D.L., First Year Coordinator)

I think it makes a very positive impact and it looks very positive as a project. I think it's very good to get people into the mainstream population. I mean, if you ran some kind of shadow programme, it wouldn't be successful at all. (R.S., First Year Coordinator)

I feel this model has worked extremely well and its aims have been met. The only additional aim I would suggest would be to expand the core element of integration even further within the University setting, so as to provide the opportunity for ILI participants and graduates to affect change within the University setting - to give them space and a voice of their own within the University environment. (Lecturer)

Other answers indicated that the ILI provided an opportunity for critical analysis of the education system or own work practices and the implementation of the ILI itself;

I am further reminded now that the key challenge is not with those directly involved but, rather, with recognition of the value of such programmes at the level of funders. (Head of Department)

STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

It was abundantly clear from the data that participating departments and staff spent large amounts of time and effort implementing the initiative to the best of their ability. A number of strategies were utilised to ensure ILI students were supported and included within the learning environment.

Teaching Adaptations

There was evidence of highly creative adaptations to teaching practice to make the curriculum content more accessible to ILI students, although this was more evident in lectures with small class numbers or in tutorials and seminars. Adaptations mentioned by interviewees in the first evaluation included:

- Making materials and content available pre-lecture or tutorial.
- Breaking complex information down into a more accessible format.
- Assigning simplified texts to ILI students on key academic concepts.
- Using a wider variety of accessible texts to illustrate key concepts (.e.g. one tutor used a Fr. Ted clip to explain a concept).
- Reduced reliance on academic texts to explain content.
- Regular check-ins with ILI students to monitor progress.
- Regularly providing positive feedback and encouragement.
- Creating alternative learning experiences for ILI students when their peers were engaged in tasks or activities that were deemed too difficult (e.g. one lecturer devised an alternative assessment when the ILI student's peers were taking a written exam).
- Supplying topics or questions for ILI students to 'practice' discussing with their mentor or the ILI Support Facilitator.
- Building understanding from the ground up.

- Reducing assumptions of prior knowledge of concepts.
- Modifying materials to suit the preferred learning style of the ILI student

These were also reiterated in the responses to the online survey in the second evaluation, with the following mentioned as means of facilitating learning for students on the ILI

- breaking down the teaching material into smaller 'chunks'.
- using images, video and other visual aids.
- giving copies of powerpoint presentations.
- seeking feedback from ILI students
- more one-one support.
- use of different assessment tools to suit the ILI participants learning styles (e.g. presentations rather than essays).
- In terms of practical (library) skills, the same lessons were repeated weekly with participants.

A respondent described how some of these means of facilitation worked in practical terms:

Each week I sent my lesson plan to the student and her/his assistant to review and offered suggestions for where I wanted her/him to join in. If, for example, the students were reading an article about culture and symbolism I'd ask her/him to watch a video and search the internet for examples of what symbols are in different cultures - then brainstorm some examples of symbols in his own culture, then during the discussion I'd ask someone to summarise the reading and apply the ideas to our own context, and s/he'd be ready with his examples. (Teaching Assistant)

Overall, these adaptations were considered beneficial for the ILI student, fellow students, and for the educators themselves. One tutor spoke about the positive impact her adaptation had on her teaching practice and how it ultimately benefitted the whole class:

It definitely got me thinking about the material in a different way because each week I was thinking how can I make this more relevant to Sam?...I ended up really looking at the material I was teaching and really able to break it down into 'this is how you

explain it; this is ultimately what we're supposed to be learning from it'. And I think it was beneficial to my students as well who were in the tutorials because we sort of worked from the bottom up. (C.E., Tutor).

Other interviewees spoke about how their pedagogical practice improved through working with students with intellectual disabilities:

It's very unusual to be thinking about third level ideas but expressing those ideas in a very clear and simple sentence structure...I was also learning when I was working with Jo. Just between the two of us, working together to come up with a useful system. It was a learning curve for me as well. (S.B., Tutor)

I thought it was very exciting from a teaching and learning point of view, anyway that we would be attempting to do this and the institution would be attempting to do this and that is quite an innovation. I think that's been a very good thing and from my own point of view, to push me outside what I'm used to dealing with and a very linear way of working with students. (M.T., Tutor)

Staff in the online survey reported that their views of the benefits of inclusion and equality were reinforced by their participation in the ILI. They felt that that they were better informed and more open-minded, less prejudiced as to what a participant in the ILI could achieve/more aware of the potential to be tapped and more aware of the importance of access to higher education for all.

External Supports

At departmental level, a number of external resources were drawn upon to facilitate the initiative. The most significant resource identified by the participants was the ILI Facilitator who was deemed 'essential' to the success of the pilot project.

[The ILI facilitator] was very present and in that regard, the student certainly had all the support s/he could ever want and s/he was really well looked after...It was the complete opposite to the situation where somebody is thrown in and told 'there you go, sink or swim'. My impression is that the student was quite happy with the whole process and certainly felt supported and happy. (E.R., Head of Department)

[The ILI facilitator] was fantastic from the very, very start. There was lots of communication back and forth, which was great. [The ILI facilitator] was fantastic, definitely, and if there was any kind of early problems, I think that communication

was key. We'd both put our heads together every two classes to see how things were going and there were constant emails. (W.L., Lecturer)

I thought that [the ILI facilitator] was just amazing, a star. It was astonishing the kind of workload they took on and put in. (D.L., First Year Coordinator)

The ILI Facilitator's role was originally envisaged as a liaison between the student and campus supports, mediating with departments and existing campus supports around appropriate ways to fulfil student-led objectives and goals. However, it transpired that ILI students were not eligible for existing Access supports because they were not registered as full time students⁵. Thus, a new orientation process and an alternative support system had to be devised for the ILI students in a very short time frame. In addition, the support needs of the ILI students turned out to be quite extensive.

I think we were ambitious with five [students], we thought we would be well able to manage. However, the academic support wasn't the only challenge; the social learning and the integration have also been a bit of a struggle. (ILI Steering Group member)

The support needs of the students were a lot higher anticipated. What we did find that by not having the Disability Support Services [available], it was quite challenging, it really took us to a different level and we had to adjust and our support system had to change quite quickly. (ILI Facilitator)

Consequently, a number of planned supports were unable to be implemented, including the recruitment and training of peer mentors as social and educational supports for the ILI student. This had a 'knock on' effect and the ILI Facilitator was forced to adopt multiple roles and take on an enormous workload in order to provide the required level of support to meet the diverse needs of the five ILI students.

I stepped in as requested by the students into the class environment to support the students with their transition, to understand the social nuances of the structure, but also to work with the students on pieces before each class or tutorial. In each student's case, it was very, very different. (ILI Facilitator)

Although the in-class support was specifically requested by the ILI students, this particular support strategy generated mixed responses from staff. One participant felt they would not have managed without it:

⁵ Although officially not responsible for supporting ILI students, the Access Office did provide support, upon

request, at various times throughout the academic year (see Finnegan, 2013 for further discussion of this).

I have to say that the fact that [the ILI facilitator] was there from the start was a great help to us, I don't think I could have coped as well without [the ILI facilitator] . They were absolutely essential to it, they really, really were. And as time progressed it meant we were capable of doing more with Nic, because we had [the ILI facilitator] . (B.F., Lecturer)

On the other hand, whilst recognising the necessity of in-class support, concerns were raised by one tutor about the impact of the facilitator's presence on the group.

I had mixed feelings because I think it was necessary, like Sam needed [the ILI facilitator] to take notes and if s/he wasn't clear on a concept, s/he couldn't just grab me all the time. So, I think it was helpful, but one big misunderstanding was that [the other students] thought that Sam wouldn't need to talk to them or wouldn't be involved with them because s/he had [the ILI facilitator] . I think there was confusion about that. (C.E., Tutor)

Another possible support strategy – making information about the ILI student's learning ability and preferred learning style – also generated mixed feelings amongst the interviewees. Some academic staff felt that the lack of information was problematic and that the 'direct' approach taken by the Access Office was more helpful.

I felt like the Access Office was very direct about 'this is the student, this is who you should talk to, and also you're very much encouraged to talk directly to the Access students about their needs so I could take my Access students aside and say 'is this working for you and can we try this?', and it was an open dialogue. Whereas with the Inclusive Learning, it was not really communicated what to expect or what adjustments would be made because it was presented in this very optimistic 'no adjustments need to be made, it's all going to be fine' way. (C.E., Tutor)

I suppose a little more detail on where they are actually are, or levels, because I suppose it was a 'suck it and see' treatment and we had to do that just to find out [the student's ability]. Maybe just a one-page, bullet-pointed sheet on the person, the skills they have, it's just something that would be very helpful. (P.W. Lecturer)

Similar points were also raised by respondents to the online survey, with 14 out of the 20 responses to this question feeling that the information they received was satisfactory. Some respondents called for a background profile of students, similar to what is available through the MAP higher education system, as well as their learning styles.

A short background of their education so far student's foundation learning, previous engagement at Third Level, what level of work could be expected. (Lecturer)

Students' learning styles/particular learning abilities (Administrative/ Support/ Development Staff & Lecturer)

Staff explained how they received this information about the ILI students.

I had a meeting with the ILI coordinator and with the student, during which the coordinator explained to me what the student's aims were, where s/he was in terms of actual abilities. I also had a chance to talk to the student to explain what the chosen modules involved (Lecturer)

However, this did not always occur in all cases, with one staff describing how

I was told very little about my student and was lead to believe s/he was much more of a 'typical' student than s/he was. I think a bit more practical information would have been great. (Teaching Assistant)

This issue of the type of information is key for the ILI and closely linked to students' rights about disclosure versus the levels and type of information needed for different teaching and support contexts.

Other participants felt that the flexibility afforded by the pilot nature of the initiative and the lack of prior knowledge about the students created a space for them to develop their own understanding of the student and his or her abilities.

I actually prefer not to know too much about [the students] because I think it pre-conditions you and makes you a little bit biased. (K.W., Lecturer)

I like the freedom to get an instinct and say 'Do you know what? This might work!' I quite like the idea that we able to make our own materials as we went along. It wasenough for somebody to say 'we're just exploring, go with what you think will work'. That was wonderful, that just opens the doors of possibility. (B.F., Lecturer).

It was similar for students with one staff member in the online survey describing the evolving dynamics in the learning environment between students.

Initially the relationships were not very open, as I don't think students had any awareness of why a new student with learning difficulties had joined their group. But I think it's good that it is up to the participating ILI student to disclose as s/he sees fit. That worked to create opportunities for communication amongst the students. If individual students were approached to help in any way they were happy to do so. (Administrative/support/ development role)

It was also noted that background information was not available about the main student body, and therefore, should not be a requirement for ILI students.

I feel that in a way, we have no background information on any student, every student comes in equal and everyone is treated totally equal. Now, when we start getting bits of work, we realise that some people are much stronger than others and that's where we take it on board. (B.F., Lecturer)

When I meet any student for the first time, I don't have any [information]. I just really pick up with them from how they come to me. That's how we tend to operate. (S.B., Tutor).

However, an incident with one ILI student raised concerns for a number of interviewees and identified the possible need for a very specific type of support for teaching staff. In this particular case, the student was outspoken and somewhat 'politically incorrect' when participating in their first tutorial.

The first week I had her/him in my class, it was a disaster. I don't think s/he knew what her/his role was. He was eager to participate and s/he participated in inappropriate ways the first week, like s/he shouted out during class. S/he made jokes that were not appropriate. I needed an analysis of her/his abilities in a group before s/he went into a group. It turned out ok, but it could have turned out very badly. It could have been bad for her/him, for everyone else in the room, and for me. (C.E., Tutor)

It was suggested that some kind of prior assessment or simulation exercise was needed to identify possible strengths and weaknesses before the student's participation in a classroom environment.

It shouldn't take more than ten or twenty minutes to do [to see] how they behave and write a short report on it. Get a group of people together, kind of have a mock tutorial discussion on some topic and then provide a short report on where their strengths and weaknesses are before they go into a class. What a tutor needs to

know are danger points, basically. (R.S., First Year Coordinator)

The ILI Steering Group was aware of this desire for more concrete information on individual students. Balancing those requests, whilst adhering to the fundamental philosophy of the adopted model and maintaining the rights of the ILI learners to privacy and dignity, created a considerable challenge for the Initiative:

*Departments that weren't familiar with intellectual disability had a kind of fear of how to integrate the student into class, how to make provisions for this student, how to communicate with this student. They wanted information to help them, but the aim of the ILI was not to spoon feed information or slap down a hand-out on an academic staff member's desk. It was really a focus on the individual and their ability. It was really about finding a balance between what information [ILI] students wanted the department to know and their peers to know and what information **do** the departments **really need** to know. (ILI Facilitator) [Emphasis interviewee's own]*

KEY CONCERNS

A number of concerns were raised by academic staff in both evaluation reports, some of which overlapped with concerns expressed by the ILI Steering Group and by the ILI Facilitator. The fact that every concern raised was fundamentally rooted in a desire to make the initiative more meaningful, more relevant and more effective indicates clearly how deeply participants cared about the success of the initiative and the welfare of the ILI students. A clear pattern emerged from the data which revealed that that concerns were broadly connected to three key areas:

- Understanding and Awareness of the Initiative,
- Appropriate Assessment Procedures
- Students' Vulnerability.

Understanding and Awareness of the Initiative:

Although the Steering Group felt that the rationale and aims of the initiative were clearly communicated to participating departments and staff and to the university in general, there appeared to be a relatively high level of confusion amongst interviewees around the purpose of the initiative, students' goals and their role as educators. Some participants did not appear troubled by the lack of clarity or the absence of definitive expectations,

perceiving this to be synonymous with the experiential and exploratory nature of the initiative.

We were told at the beginning that it was an initiative, that there were no set rules, that it was an exploration. A pilot, and just to do what we felt was the right thing. (B.F., Lecturer)

The feeling I got was that everybody was regarding this as a pilot project and nobody really knew the answers to some of those administrative questions and they would have to be worked out as time went on. (R.S., First Year Coordinator)

Other interviewees felt the lack of clarification needed to be addressed.

If we could have had clarity from the outset as to what the objective of the student was, and the programme too. I was never clear on that. (E.R., Head of Department)

I wondered how does it actually shake out in terms of what this person is learning. I mean, I don't know. I guess I would need to know a little bit more about the goal for her/him is, what s/he's meant to be getting out of it. (A.G., Lecturer)

I was never quite clear on what the goal of the programme was. I thought there was a lack of clarity on it. It kinda seemed like the goal was more 's/he socialises with other students' and 's/he's comfortable in an academic setting' which is fine but I just thought 'why throw her/him in here if the goal is just to socialise with other people her/his age?' I always thought it was a bit muddled. (C.E., Tutor)

I am still unsure of the aims - apart from helping someone with special needs engage socially and intellectually in university life. I think with each subject there should perhaps be some more specific goals that are made clear to the teaching staff - I would have liked to know what [ILI student] wanted out of the experience. I think maybe each student should explain why they chose their particular course and the staff that works with them should be given some ideas about how they can make sure the student gets to join in - if not for my own interest it's likely in another group s/he might have just been made to sit on the sidelines of all discussions and activities. (Teaching Assistant)

Two participants make interested comments, which speak potentially to educators' views on the nature and purpose of higher education as well as normative assumptions about the nature of disability and learning. It is also indicative of the impact of the lack of clarity around rationale and objectives as it relates to a much deeper, ideological dilemma about the nature of learning and inclusion.

The overarching thing, which I'm thinking of all the time, is why are we doing this? Why would you put someone through this? Is it some sort of social snobbery that unless you've gone to university, you're nothing? Why do you have to come to university when you don't have the academic capacity? Why an initiative to have people with an intellectual disability come into an academic situation where the only thing that gets measured is your intellectual disability? What is that about? (D.L., First Year Coordinator)

Many times during my involvement in the initiative I thought about the Para-Olympics and the challenge and delight it is for people with physical disability to participate and compete against others who also have physical disabilities. In my experience formal education is a competitive environment and the way people's effort is measured and assessed is experienced as being compared to one's peers and is consequently highly competitive. I wondered how hard it was for the candidate to be working in this environment and often imagined the candidate was pretending to not have a disability. This doesn't seem correct. (Lecturer)

In some cases, the lack of clarity around objectives, goals and assessment procedures created an unanticipated burden on staff resources and time.

I think if you have the goals, the objectives set up from the start, if issues of assessment are clearly thought out at the beginning, if you know all that at the outset, it's fine. It doesn't take a lot to do. If you have to sit down with the facilitator every fortnight or every week and have a long discussion about what the student is doing, it becomes a disproportionate drain on resources, and the most pressing resource we have here is time. (E.R., Head of Department)

In other instances, staff expressed a complex sense of concern about their own capacities to support learners due to the newness, lack of familiarity and scale of work involved with the initiative.

There seemed to be an enormous amount of work needed to be done to support the candidate 'behind the scenes' and I was not clear about how much was my responsibility (Lecturer)

There was a lot more support and understanding from the ILI and [the ILI facilitator] in particular, about how little we knew how to do, than I had anticipated. Secondly, it really was a learning experiment for all concerned so it was ok not to know. Thirdly, the students were fantastic learners and willing to challenge themselves. They were much more resilient than I had feared at first. (Lecturer)

Another respondent felt that more time with the students would have helped her/him get over the concerns that s/he had in relation to her/his own abilities.

Yes, I would have needed more time with the students to build my own confidence. (Administrative/support/development role)

The low visibility and modest profile of the ILI was another cause of concern. One interviewee felt that the initiative had bypassed the usual channels for such initiatives, such as the Teaching and Learning Council and/or the Academic Council, thus missing out on an opportunity to build support and awareness across campus.

One of the difficulties I had with the lead in was that it seemed to come out of nowhere and the first I heard about it was when I was asked to take a student in. The fact that it didn't go through any [of the usual steps], when I heard about it in August, I wasn't quite sure – Is this real? Is this a Maynooth thing? What level of obligation do I have? (E.R., Head of Department)

Other respondents felt that a more visible profile for the ILI across campus would help keep departments engaged.

It might be no harm to have a bit more publicity. I mean, when I said it to colleagues and students, nobody knew about this. Unless I'm wrong, I've never seen it in a newsletter and I don't know if there's a website. If you have something like a post-Christmas letter or note on people's progress, it makes people in the department more supportive. They feel that this is not just something flying under the radar, that this is important. (R.S., First Year Coordinator).

I would like to see the initiative more widely recognised throughout the university. Even here I'm not sure all staff know the initiative even exists though I understand we are organising an information session for staff soon. (Administrative/ support/ development role)

This need for increased recognition of the ILI was not only in terms of its visibility, but also its funding and supports.

In my opinion, this initiative is being stifled... by the lack of resources and funding imperative to its development and survival. Increased monetary support would allow for the initiative to grow and for more students to partake in it in a variety of ways. (Lecturer)

I think a broader awareness of it and its objectives on campus and amongst staff would help. (Administrative/support/development role)

the University must acknowledge more fully its commitment to inclusive learning as an institution (such as providing direct funding) and in the learning support systems such as those currently provided to students with learning or physical disabilities (Access Office)...It is essential that this is supported with some funding (i.e. some direct provision for the students themselves) but, even more importantly, with accreditation as a specific teaching and learning skill set. (Lecturer)

Appropriate Assessment Procedures

Strong concerns were expressed by the majority of participants about the absence of a clear assessment framework for ILI students.

My only concern was the manner in which I was going to assess the student and the grading rubric I was going to employ so as to ensure that they were afforded the opportunity to illustrate their learning to their full capabilities. (Lecturer)

The perceived vacuum created considerable amounts of anxiety and stress for participating staff who were more accustomed to dealing with specific assessment procedures.

It was difficult to know what exactly [the ILI student] was doing because we didn't know how s/he was to be assessed or if s/he was to be assessed. And there was no real clarity on that and we still have no real clarity on it. I would have wanted that clarity before s/he stepped into a seminar room. (E.R., Head of Department)

Finding an appropriate 'scale' to map ILI students' progress was also perceived as extremely difficult and outside interviewee's area of expertise.

The problem was finding a scale to grade them on. That to me is massively difficult and something we still have to work out. (R.S., First Year Coordinator)

How could [the student's] learning be measured against a Level 8, which the degree standard is? And if s/he wasn't being measured against the Level 8, what was s/he being measured by? Nobody seemed to be able to answer that question and that concerned me a lot. (D.L., First Year Coordinator).

I can't assess what her/his abilities are, that's not my area. I wouldn't presume to do that. (E.R., Head of Department)

My only concern was the manner in which I was going to assess the student and

the grading rubric I was going to employ so as to ensure that they were afforded the opportunity to illustrate their learning to their full capabilities. (Lecturer)

There were also concerns about the increased workload that a separate assessment process would create for teaching staff.

After [the ILI Facilitator] said 'we're trying to figure out a way of grading the work I started to get really panicky because I couldn't go back to staff and say 'I need you to do a special piece around this'. (D.L., First Year Coordinator)

Interviewees also spoke about the difficulties caused when it became obvious that ILI students were not able to meet the required standard.

I thought the assessment procedure got a little bit too much for her/him. With that module, there are three continuous assessments and I think s/he got a bit overwhelmed by that. (W.L., Lecturer)

The message that students with intellectual disabilities will **only** be assessed at their individual ability seems to have gotten lost in the exploratory process of creating an appropriate assessment framework. Genuine concerns were expressed that departments were being asked to 'pass' or 'fail' a student who clearly did not reach Level 8 standard.

With our main process of assessment, we apply quite rigorous and finely tuned standards. To then sweep them aside for one student is not something we can really do. You can't just waive [standards]. If it's a case that they can't achieve this standard, we can't really pretend otherwise. (E.R., Head of Department)

I know in this department we would be really, really reluctant to say to any student that they have failed at anything and if it's a student with an intellectual disability who is really pushing themselves, then we're twice as reluctant, and yet, it's twice as likely to happen. (D.L., First Year Coordinator)

Staff acknowledged that additional work was needed on curricular aspects to design modules using an universal design for learning approach.

I would say that it could also be improved by working collaboratively with department staff to design basic subject-specific modules that could be offered to all ILI students in conjunction with their chosen areas, using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a guide. (Lecturer)

Student Vulnerability

Staff expressed concerns in the online survey about student vulnerability on several fronts, including, academic, social, and emotional aspects.

Main worry was that the student would feel an outsider and not have the confidence to mix with the others. This would be a lonely situation. There was also a worry that they wouldn't be able to cope with the course work. (Tutor and Course Coordinator)

Another person described their initial concern about the student's ability to communicate.

My initial concern was principally about the student's verbal, not intellectual, abilities. (Lecturer)

[concern] about them emotionally and about the pressure to pretend all was ok. (Lecturer)

Staff also expressed concerns about their own engagement with the ILI students.

I sometimes felt that in my efforts to be "sensitive" I may have underestimated the students' abilities. I suppose a lot of this would come with experience. Also as it was new I didn't perhaps fully understand what the academic objective of the initiative was. (Administrative, support & development role)

The general consensus that the ILI was a 'good thing' and a desire to treat ILI students 'like everybody else' generated some situations where the actual vulnerability of the student may have been overlooked. Views were expressed that students' expectations and emotional learning needed to be managed more carefully in the future.

There was a little bit of getting caught in the thing where we didn't mind her/him, I think. We didn't take care of the boundary and s/he was left to manage that and I don't think that was fair. I don't know, but it feels like we didn't – I didn't – hold a safe enough boundary for her/him. To say well, whatever about the risks you're prepared to take, I think it's my responsibility to keep you as safe as possible for this initial experience. (D.L., First Year Coordinator)

We have tried to take care of their social learning, their academic learning. I'm not so sure we've been as good on the emotional side of it. We haven't really paid attention to the emotional learning that students go through and we need to pay attention to that in the future. (ILI Steering Group member)

A number of participants spoke about the issue of ILI students identifying openly as individuals with an intellectual disability. Although students in the initial Alberta programme fully disclosed the nature of their disability, all five students in the ILI were very

clear that they did not want this information made available to their peers. The ILI Steering Group felt that it was important to respect the wishes of the students in this matter and consequently, fellow students received only vague information about the initiative and the ILI students' circumstances. Interviewees indicated that this had a two-fold effect – first, it raised ILI students' expectations to an unrealistic level.

Jo was being built into the whole group class and they were really enjoying having her/him there and s/he was becoming more involved. This is my 'pop psychology', but I think it became more and more difficult for her/him to identify as being intellectually different. It was really hard for the [other] students to say 'well, s/he's not up to the same intellectual standard as us' because it was all about inclusion and equality. So, we got into a sort of circle where everybody was saying 'isn't s/he great?' It got really tough – s/he was great and s/he is great but where we then going to draw the distinction? (D.L., First Year Coordinator)

Secondly, it created an 'elephant in the room' situation for fellow students, who sometimes inferred from the lack of information that this was on 'off limits' topic. The situation was

further exacerbated by the students' own social anxieties and their general lack of experience in dealing with difference.

I think it would have been really good for [fellow students] just to have less of a sense of here's somebody in our class and we're not going to talk about why it's different. I think actually, it would have been helpful to say, yeah, we're going to do things a little differently, it's ok. They really didn't know how to include [the ILI student].
(C.E., Tutor)

From the ILI Steering Group's perspective, it was important to respect the due rights of the ILI students to make their own decisions, whatever the implications. However, there was an acknowledgment that this particular decision did have a negative impact.

The [other] students haven't naturally supported the students with an intellectual disability. That was a disappointment to us and one of the reasons that I think that happened was because the students didn't want to reveal that they had intellectual disabilities. (L.H., Steering Group member)

Mixed views were expressed on the rationale for revealing this information. One participant felt strongly that the desire to keep this information hidden was rooted in the stigmatization of intellectual disability.

I think [not disclosing the disability] is internalized oppression. It's a piece of internalized oppression. Because of the stigma attached and the low status attached to people, if it's left to them, the person with the low status, they will say 'no, please don't tell them'. It's too hard. I think that needs to be coached and supported, either the tutor gets permission to explain it to the rest of the class or the student explains it themselves. I think it really needs to be out there at the front. (D.L., First Year Coordinator)

Acknowledging these kinds of power differentials, the ILI Steering group are aware of the difficulty in striking a balance between treating the ILI student 'equally' while at the same time protecting them from risk or harm. In one instance the ILI Steering Group decided to intervene when an ILI student was invited to share her/his experiences of support structures on campus at a conference. Echoing the findings of Hughson *et al*, the ILI Steering Group felt there was a 'necessity to safeguard students from being identified by the faculty as 'objects of the gaze' i.e. research subjects' (2005, p.104).

*An undergraduate student might not want to go to a conference and talk about 'the deficits', they'd rather go and talk about what they were studying. I felt there was a huge ethical problem in that. The department just hadn't thought about it. Why am I asking **this** person instead of somebody else? It's those kinds of things that we*

have to be mindful of, that come at you in ways that you don't realise, and they are about power. They are about power differentials. It's part of the duty of care that we are mindful of ourselves, and I talk about myself in this, that I have to be mindful of my own power position. (Steering Group member)

The foregoing comments highlight the challenges of transferring a pilot programme of this nature into the Gordian knot of the university experience. Schön (1987, p.3) refers to the 'messy, confusing problems that defy technical solution' in the 'swampy lowlands' of professional practice and the findings from this evaluation indicate the inherent difficulties of transferring an initiative such as this from theory to practice. However, the concerns and challenges discussed here should not diminish the overwhelming support for the initiative expressed by the interviewees. Concerns raised were, without exception, intended to improve the initiative rather than disparage it.

CHAPTER 4 – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY:

This section offers a snapshot of key issues raised in the two evaluations across two broad categories - Perceived Benefits and Concerns.

Perceived Benefits

- Predominantly positive attitudes towards the initiative – ILI seen as ‘a good thing’ and an appropriate and worthwhile endeavour for Maynooth University.
- ILI students were highly regarded by the participants and were viewed as positive additions to the student body.
- Departments and teaching staff had varying levels of engagement with the student and the initiative, but on the whole levels of engagement were high.
- Large amounts of time and effort were spent on implementing the initiative to the best of each department’s ability.
- Evidence of highly creative approaches to teaching practice to make the material more accessible (generally in tutorials/seminar groups rather than lectures)
- Evidence that making the material more accessible was beneficial to the whole student body and to the teaching staff.
- A strong belief that the ILI student benefitted from the experience and that their ability to engage with the material and with their peers increased throughout the year.
- Clear acknowledgement of the key role played by the ILI Support Facilitator in supporting the students and academic staff.
- In some cases, the students’ peer group were very accepting and welcoming and made a considerable effort to make sure the ILI student was included. This appeared to happen more easily when the peer group was heterogeneous, e.g. mixed age groups, diverse backgrounds, etc.

Concerns

- There was a perceived lack of clarity around the individual aims of the student and the overall objectives of the initiative.

- Considerable confusion and anxiety was caused by the absence of a clear assessment framework for each student prior to their engagement in lectures and tutorials.
- There was a lot of confusion around the ILI Facilitator's exact role.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of concrete plans for progression.
- A minority of participants had reservations around the actual purpose and appropriateness of the ILI.
- There was some frustration at the lack of information around the specific needs and abilities of each student
- Some participants felt that their involvement with the initiative created a significant demand on time and resources and that the allocation of such resources to 'one student' was somewhat unfair.
- Inclusion within the students' peer groups was sometimes problematic.
- One tutor felt excluded from the process as decisions on assessment, etc., were made between the ILI facilitator and the First Year Coordinator and/or Head of department even though the tutor had the most direct experience of working with the student.
- There was a sense that the initiative was operating on the margins and that the usual channels had been somewhat bypassed. (e.g. TALC)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the evidence gathered during this evaluation suggests that the Inclusive Learning Initiative was successful in a number of concrete and tangible ways. It is also clear that a range of anticipated and unanticipated challenges emerged as the year progressed. A significant strength of the programme is the level of reflexivity and reflection amongst participants. Academic staff – at a personal and departmental level – took the Initiative extremely seriously and grappled with complex and often unforeseen issues arising from their involvement. A number of interviewees expressed a desire to engage with other educators in order to tease out the pedagogical implications of working with adults with an intellectual disability. The importance of this kind of reflexive practice cannot be understated and should be promoted and preserved through the creation of forums, reflective spaces and networking conferences.

The extent of direct and indirect support needed by the five ILI students and by participating departments and academic staff members became increasingly evident as the pilot phase of this initiative progressed. Enormous credit must be given to the ILI Facilitator whose initial responsibilities mushroomed beyond expectation. It is clear that more than one person is needed to meet the support needs of the initiative. This could be addressed in a number of different ways: i) the recruitment of additional support personnel; ii) eligibility for existing supports in the Access Department; iii) a reduction in the number of participating ILI students; iv) increased recruitment of volunteer mentors from the student body.

Finally, the pioneering and radical nature of this particular initiative should not be overlooked. The ILI Steering Group and the ILI students have made a significant impact on the very concept of inclusiveness across the campus. The approach taken in this initiative is a seismic shift away from the more familiar deficit-based model of dealing with individuals with intellectual disability, which tends to treat such individuals as children in need of high levels of protection and supervision. However, in some instances, there appears to be a gap between the ILI Steering Group's vision of inclusiveness and general perceptions and understandings of that vision. This 'gap' may need to be addressed through awareness raising or consciousness raising to ensure that the deficit model is dismantled as fully as possible.

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APPENDIX 1

The service learning partnership group for the ILI

APPENDIX 2

Evaluation of Inclusive Learning Initiative at Departmental Level

Information Sheet and Consent Form for Interviews with Staff

Background Information

The Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI) offers higher education to students with intellectual disabilities. The initiative is a collaborative project between Maynooth University and various agencies which provide a service to people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Five students with intellectual disabilities commenced their studies in Maynooth University in September 2011. The ILI enables students to experience university life and the challenge of learning in the university community. The five students attend lectures, tutorials, complete assignments and take part in social activities.

Six academic departments have participated in the initiative allowing students to select individual modules in their preferred area of study. The six departments are:

Department of Design Innovation

Department of Anthropology

Department of Media Studies

Department of Applied Social Studies

Department of Music

Department of Adult and Community Education

What is this evaluation about?

This evaluation has a purely departmental focus and will feed into a larger evaluation of other stakeholders. The purpose of this evaluation is to explore the experiences, perceptions and reflections of staff and students who have participated in the initiative.

What will be your role as a participant?

If you agree to take part in this study, we would like to ask you to participate in an interview at a time and place that suits you. The interview will last for approximately thirty minutes and you will be asked a number of questions about your experiences and views of the Inclusive Learning Initiative.

Privacy and Confidentiality

With your permission, we will audiotape the interview to help us to record your views accurately. The transcript of the recording will only be available to the research team.

What happens if I decide I don't want to take part?

Taking part in the study is completely voluntary and you do not have to be part of the study if you do not want to. If you have any questions, you can contact a member of the research team at the number

or e mail addresses provided below. If you do want to take part, we will ask you to sign a consent form and keep a copy of this information so you can refer to it again.

What happens to the information I provide?

The information will be written up into a report that will be published. The information may also be presented at conferences or in other publications.

Contacting the Research Team

If you want to discuss any aspect of this study with the research team, you can contact any of the following:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

DECLARATION

I have read this information sheet and consent form and have had time to consider whether to take part in this study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time.

I agree to take part in this research.

I understand that, as part of this research project, audiotapes of my interview will be made. I agree that the audiotapes may be studied by the research team for use in the research project and for future academic publications.

Name of Participant (in block letters) _____

Signature _____ Date / /

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (01) 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

APPENDIX 3

Interview Schedule for Inclusive Learning Initiative Evaluation (Staff)

Initial Perceptions of ILI

1. Could you outline your involvement in the ILI?
 - *Tutor / lecturer for which module and which department?*
 - *Level and frequency of contact with ILI student?*

2. How did you feel about the ILI when you first learned about it?
 - *Did you volunteer or were you asked/informed?*
 - *Did you have any concerns or worries at this stage?*

3. What support or information did you get prior to classes starting?
 - *How would you characterize the level of support given at this stage?*
 - *Is there anything you would have liked to have known at this stage?*

Impact of ILI on department

4. How is this initiative perceived within your department?
5. Overall, do you think the ILI has had a positive effect on your department?
 - *Why do you think that?*
 - *What benefits do you think the departments have received from their involvement with the ILI? Any negative aspects?*
 - *Do you think this initiative is appropriate for your department/module?*

6. What kinds of demands has this initiative had on you and on your department?

Impact of ILI on Teaching Approach and Strategy

7. How did you cope with the different levels of ability in your class?
 - *What changes (if any) did you make to your delivery of course content?*
8. What teaching strategies did you find most successful?
 - *Did you identify any strategies that were not successful?*
9. How did the student's literacy skills impact on your teaching methods?
10. How would you characterize the level of support given to you in facilitating this initiative?
 - *From the co-ordinator? Other sources?*
 - *Guidelines? Suggestions? Feedback?*
11. Do you feel there have been any benefits from your participation in the ILI?
 - *How do you think the ILI has impacted on your professional practice?*
 - *On you personally?*

Impact of ILI on Students

12. Did you notice any changes in the ILI student's behaviour or participation as the module progressed?
13. How successful do you think the ILI student has been in achieving his/her goals?
14. How successful do you think the ILI student has been in their own personal or social development?
15. How well do you think the rest of the student body interacted with the ILI student?
 - *Did you witness a broadening of the student's social circle?*

- *In your opinion, how did the other students feel about this initiative? How supportive were they?*

Suggestions for Improvement

16. How would you rate the level of support you were given during this initiative?
17. Can you identify any interventions, practices or supports that were particularly helpful?
18. Can you identify any gaps in the current supports offered to you and your department?
 - *Are there any training or professional development interventions that you feel would be beneficial?*
 - *Did you have any opportunities to meet with other tutors/lecturers to discuss your participation in this initiative? How beneficial do you think this would be?*

Closing Questions

19. What is your overall opinion of this initiative?
 - *What is the best thing about this initiative?*
 - *What is the worst?*
20. What advice would you give to another tutor about to participate in this initiative?
21. Moving forward, what supports at departmental level do you think should be prioritized in the future?
22. Are there any additional comments that you would like to make?

Survey Questions for Evaluation of the Inclusive Learning Initiative Years 2 and 3

In 2011, the Higher Education Policy Unit and the Department of Adult and Community Education began a pilot education programme for a group of five students who have previously been determined to have an intellectual development disorder. The pilot phase is now complete. We wish to carry out a short evaluation to gather data on your experiences as Heads of Department, teaching, support staff and volunteers engaged on the Inclusive Learning Initiative in Years 2 and 3. The survey is being conducted by me, Sinéad Hyland, at the request of the ILI programme team in Maynooth University (Josephine Finn, Department of Adult and Community Education, Saranne Magennis, Higher Education Policy Unit and Laura Burke, Learning Facilitator). The evaluation is designed to capture your experiences of working with students participating in the ILI and your perceptions about the value of including these and other students with similar challenges in higher education programmes. This survey will form part of a report detailing the development and outcomes of the pilot phase of the Initiative. We would greatly appreciate your participation.

The survey contains 27 questions and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. All the answers you give are confidential to the survey and cannot be used for any other purpose. Your answers are also anonymous and will be combined with all of the others responses from students and agencies involved to produce a general picture of the Initiative.

I have been asked to conduct this survey and am using an online survey tool. If you prefer to answer the survey in another format I can send you a word copy of the survey and you can then email the completed survey to me or return it in a sealed envelope to [address redacted]

First of all can we ask you about your position in Maynooth University.

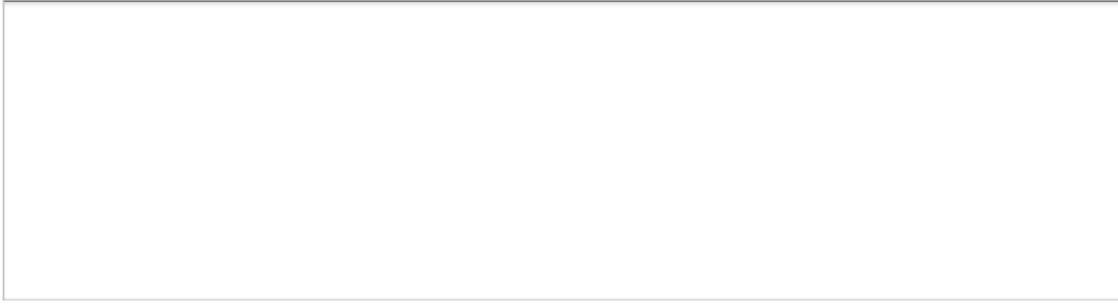
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Section A

This section asks some background questions on your work and the ILI.

1. What is your job title?

2. Why did you participate in the ILI?



3. What effect did your participation in the ILI have on your professional

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Section B

This section asks about your knowledge of the ILI and Intellectual Disability before and your participation in the ILI.

4. Before participating in the Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI) do you consider that you were knowledgeable about issues to do with intellectual disability?

- Not knowledgeable Fairly
- knowledgeable Very
- knowledgeable

5. Before participating in the ILI do you consider that you were knowledgeable about the ILI?

- Not knowledgeable Fairly
- knowledgeable Very
- knowledgeable

6. If you answered that you were knowledgeable about the ILI where did you obtain information about the initiative?

7. When you first got involved in the ILI what did you understand the aims of the initiative

8. Having worked with students participating in the ILI what do you think the aims of the initiative should be now?

9. Has your perspective on inclusion and equality changed since you participated in the ILI? If so how? Please comment below.

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Section C

The following section asks for information from your point of view about students participating in the ILI and your experiences of the ILI generally.

10. How many students participating in the ILI were you teaching/supporting?

	1	2	3	4	5
Year 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Year 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

11. How many modules did the student(s) undertake as part of the initiative?

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Year 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Year 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. How much time every week during term-time did you spend on the ILI?

	Under 1 hour	1-2 hours	2-4 hours	4-8 hours	over 8 hours
Year 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Year 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

13. When you were teaching/supporting the student involved in the ILI did you do anything differently to specifically facilitate this student's learning?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

14. If you answered yes, please expand on actions you took to facilitate this student's learning

15. Did you expect to get information about the participants specific needs before the ILI commenced?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

16. If you answered yes, can you describe what information you expected to get and how it would be

17. Was the amount of information given satisfactory in your view?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

18. Did you expect to receive formal training about supporting/teaching students participating in the ILI?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

19. If you answered yes, can you describe what training you expected to get and how it would be delivered.

20. Did you have concerns about your capacity to support a student participating in the ILI before the start of the initiative?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

21. If yes can you describe these concerns? This may be in terms of supports for you, assessment of the

22. Looking back on your experience of the ILI were concerns about your capacity to support of the student participating in the ILI founded? Please expand in the box below.

23. Did you have concerns for the student participating in the ILI?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

24. If yes can you describe these concerns in terms of students' welfare or emotional learning or other concerns?

25. Looking back on your experience of the ILI were concerns for the student founded? Please expand in the box below.

21. If yes can you describe these concerns? This may be in terms of supports for you, assessment of the

27. Looking back on your experience of the ILI can you describe how engaged you were in the initiative, either in emotional, professional or other terms? Please expand in the box below.

28. In your opinion how might the ILI be improved?

29. Please use the following space to give any comments on the ILI that you wish to make.

[Prev](#) [Done](#)