Monitoring the outcome of student exams for all Access students (Technological University Dublin)

Key Features

1. Was the initiative established specifically to promote progression and retention and/or to address non-progression rates?

   Yes

2. Please state the institutional commitments or national priorities with which this initiative is aligned — for example, an institutional policy or strategic plan, an indicator in the institution's Performance Agreement under the System Performance Framework, and/or the National Access Plan?

   In TU Dublin's Strategic Plan and the TU Dublin Performance Agreement 2024–2028 with the HEA, student success focuses on progression and retention. Performance Objective 4 (PO 4) in the Performance Agreement focuses on the established progression targets for students from a background of socio-economic disadvantage.

3. Title of lead or section responsible for the initiative/measure

Access Support Manager

4. Focus

- Early intervention initiative
- Targeted initiative (specific student cohort/faculty)
- Institution-wide initiative

5. Theme

- Assessment & examination
- Data analytics & dashboards

Overview of Initiative

6. Briefly describe the initiative, with reference to

- Why, and when introduced
- Overview of activities/intervention
- Success to date & next steps.

The purpose of the initiative is to ensure the academic success and progression of Access students. Access students are students under the age of 23 who enter TU Dublin through one of four Access entry routes (HEAR, Access TU Dublin, QQI Access TU Dublin, & Access Foundation Programme).

By reviewing student performance after Semester 1 and Semester 2 exams, the Access Support Service can identify students who may be facing challenges and proactively offer targeted support. Using a data-driven approach, an analysis of exam results enables the Access Support team to identify trends (high failure courses/modules), inform targeted interventions, and ensure support is tailored to the specific needs of Access students. Exam result support calls are unique to Access students and represent a proactive approach in the provision of supports to students.

The initiative was introduced in 2021 in its current form. Its implementation was informed by data on best adoption of practice – keeping the student at the centre of the work, connecting as early as possible with students to reassure students of their successes, applying the 'CARE model' of support.

The initiative will be further enhanced with the migration of systems to Banner, which will identify students at greater risk of failing exams at an earlier stage.

Aims and Objectives

7. Aim of the initiative

To streamline the support offered to Access students following exam results analysis in January and June and to provide appropriate and consistent academic and wellbeing support to students across all campuses.

8. Objective 1

To analyse exam results to identify student needs and inform the provision of supports where required to support student progression and retention.

Actions

- Collect and review data
- Conduct detailed data analysis
- Identify Access students at risk
- Engage with students at risk of non-progression
- Implement targeted supports
- Monitor Student progression

Expected Outcome

- Early intervention
- Increased student progression
- Students feel a sense of belonging, impacting positively on retention

9. Objective 2

To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of support initiatives.

Actions

- Collect data
- Analyse trends and impact
- Review and adjust supports where appropriate

Expected Outcome

- Identify courses and demographics with high failure rate / low progression
- Data driven understanding of low progression risk factors
- Targeted and effective student support initiatives
- Increased progression and retention

Resourcing

10. How is the initiative resourced?

The Access Support team, when fully staffed, is comprised of a manager, three student support officers and two administrators.

Monitoring & Oversight

11. How is the initiative monitored — is there a reporting structure in place or a committee where there is a monitoring of and reporting on progress and the achievement of objectives (e.g. academic council, university executive team)?

Each year, a review of the Access Student Support Model takes place. This includes a thorough review of the exam results analysis outcomes. A review of the progression / non-progression rates for all Access students examined is undertaken by faculty, level, course, campus, CAO points and demographic information. The review highlights areas where additional support interventions may be needed or amended.

This information is gathered for operational purposes to enhance the targeted proactive support

for Access Students. The information is not aligned with a reporting structure, however, the information is available when requested.

Data & Evidence of Impact

12. How do you know that the initiative is working as planned, i.e.

- Are data gathered (ongoing monitoring and evaluation of achievement of objectives)?
- Have the objectives been achieved? What data and evidence are there to support this?

TU Dublin has been monitoring progression rates for many years. The student support model is continually evolving and aligning with the needs of the students based on the outcomes identified through the exam results analysis.

Example: Analysing progression data at the end of 1st year identified a trend regarding Access Students who receive financial support. With multiyear analysis, early financial support has emerged as a high-impact progression lever for Access students. Providing financial support within the first 6 weeks of Semester 1 significantly increases Access students' likelihood of progressing to Year 2. The combination of **early intervention** and **timely funding** appears to be the critical success factor.

Example: Analysis of exam results at the end of Semesters 1 and 2 provides the Access Support team with a valuable opportunity to proactively engage with students who have failed one or more modules.

Using the 'CARE Model' (Connect, Assess, Recommend, Empower) when communicating with students who have failed is key for the students. Beginning with **Connect**, the focus is on acknowledging their achievements and efforts, building rapport. Starting with positive reinforcement helps reduce anxiety and encourages open dialogue. Next, during **Assess**, the team works with the student to identify the underlying challenges contributing to module failure—such as academic difficulties, personal circumstances, or time-management issues. Based on this assessment, the team provides tailored **Recommendations**, which may include attending academic tuition, participating in skills workshops, engaging with counselling services, or accessing other relevant supports. Finally, the **Empower** stage focuses on reinforcing the student's strengths, encouraging self-belief, and outlining clear next steps. Follow-up plans ensure continuity of support and help students regain confidence in their ability to succeed.

The CARE model strengthens students' sense of belonging and reinforces that they are valued members of the TU Dublin community. Depending on the needs identified through these conversations, targeted academic sessions can be delivered to address common areas of difficulty. In courses with high failure rates, the Access team also collaborates closely with academic colleagues to develop coordinated interventions that better support student success.

13. Has impact been established, and how? If not at present, how do you plan to gather data and evidence to establish impact?

The progression of Access students has increased significantly since undertaking the exam results analysis in conjunction with the review of the student support model. In the five-year period 2008/09 to 2012/13, the progression rate was 69%; in the period 2020/21 to 2024/25, the progression rate was 73% — an overall increase despite the negative impact of the Covid pandemic years.

Future Plans

14. How do you intend to further develop or expand the initiative?

With the SET[1] project, the initiative will become more efficient, and we will be able to monitor throughout rather than at the end of the semester as we will be able to track student engagement more proactively, intervening where alerts highlight issues and pre-emptively identifying students who are more at risk of failing.

Additional Information

15. Additional information including relevant URLs

https://www.tudublin.ie/connect/technology-services/all-services/banner-student-and-curriculum-administration/

[1] SET = The Student Experience Transformation Project (SET) is harmonising the University's three Student Administration systems into one system using Banner 9. Further details are available at https://www.tudublin.ie/connect/technology-services/all-services/banner-student-and-curriculum-administration/.

Access Support | TU Dublin
Access Support | Information for Current Students | TU Dublin
Access Support | Information for Final Year Students | TU Dublin
Access Support | Study Skills | TU Dublin
Access Support | Academic & Financial Support | TU Dublin
Access Support | Access Support at a Glance | TU Dublin
Access Support TU Dublin (@tudublinaccesssupport) • Instagram photos and videos

Financial Support | Cost of Living Guide | TU Dublin
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Student Survival Guide | TU Dublin Students' Union

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