

# **Plan for Access & Participation**

**2024-2028**

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## 1. Introduction

Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) enables equity of access to, and participation in education to all, regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race (including colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins), membership of the Traveller community, and socio-economic background. The University is committed to ensuring that the student body entering, participating, and completing its programmes at all levels, reflects the diversity and social mix of the Dublin region, and Ireland's, population. The admissions policy takes full account of the University's Strategic Intent of being the most accessible university in Ireland, with the largest number of diverse learners.

<sup>1</sup>

The University is especially aware of the challenges to participation in higher education faced by persons from backgrounds of economic or social disadvantage, persons who have diverse abilities, and persons coming from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body. To this end, the University's admissions policy takes full account of the Higher Education Authority National Access Plan 2022-2028. It supports the participation of students with the above profiles through pre-entry activities; alternative entry arrangements and post-entry supports. It also aims to provide an enhanced experience and positive educational outcomes for all students through the utilisation of approaches such as Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning in the provision of education and related services, supports and facilities.

### 1.1 Strategic Plan Objectives 2024-28

TU Dublin's stated ambition is to be "the most 'accessible' university in Ireland, with the largest number of diverse learners". Our access strategy takes full account of UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which is to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Our strategy aligns with the *National Access Plan 2022-28* and with the *HEA Systems Performance Framework 2023-28*, in which Access & Participation is a strategic pillar.

### 1.2 Alignment with the National Access Plan

The National Access Plan 2022-28 identifies targets for priority groups who are under-represented in higher education, students who are:

1. New entrants (aged 18–20) from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas
2. New entrants who are mature and from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas

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<sup>1</sup> [FDI Equality Statement 2023-28](#)

3. New entrants with a disability including Intellectual Disability
4. New entrants from the Traveller community

The overarching ambition of the NAP is that the higher education student body, at all levels and across all programmes, reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.

### **1.3 HEA Performance Agreement: Access & Participation Pillar**

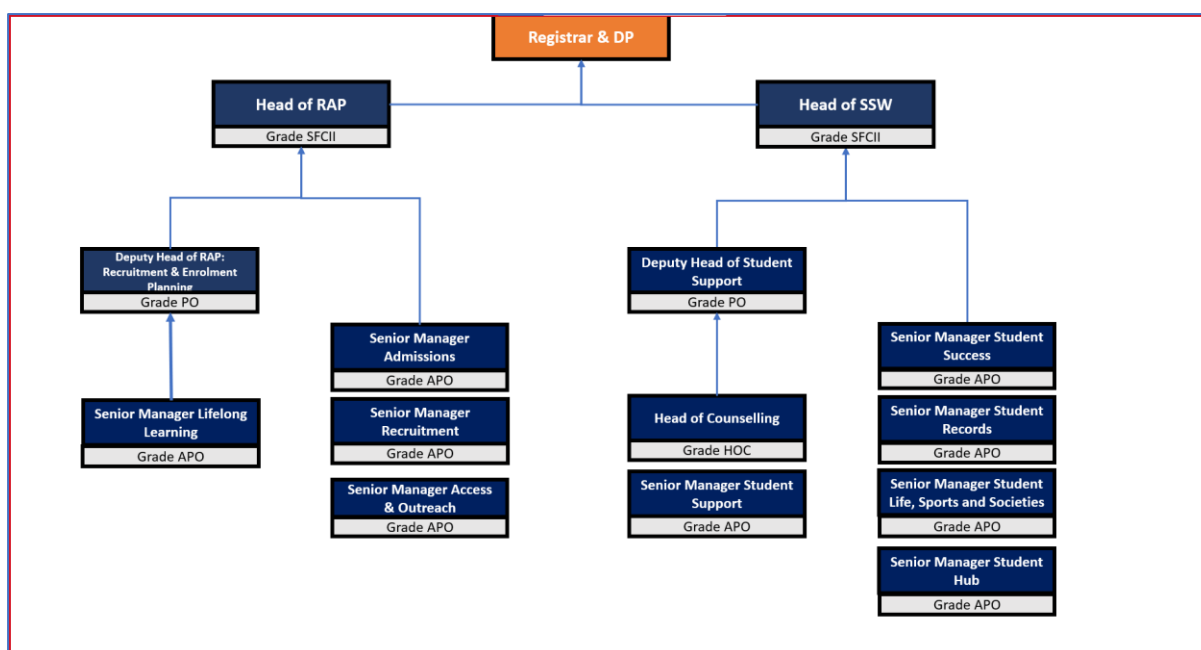
Aligned to the ambitions in NAP, and as part of our Draft Performance Agreement with the HEA for 2024-2028, we have established a pillar objective, which is:

*To maintain our leadership in supporting equitable access, participation and success in higher education.*

To measure outcomes, we have established targeted objectives, with established KPIs and benchmarks, that align with the goals of the National Access Strategy. These are identified in section 3. To support governance and oversight, we have established a widening participation working group. reporting to the Senior Academic Leadership team, Chaired by the Registrar. This group will play an important role in overseeing, monitoring, and reviewing our strategy for access and participation, and the actions that underpin it. It will support engagement and cross-collaboration across the university with key stakeholders - in recruitment, student services, faculties and schools, and with the Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Directorate.

## **2. Organisational Design for Access**

The organisational design to support our strategy is identified in Figure 1 below. It brings together the Recruitment, Admissions & Participation function (RAP), which focuses on pre-entry activities, with the Student Services & Well-being (SSW), which focuses on post-entry.



## 2.1 Recruitment, Admissions & Participation

The development of the *Recruitment Admissions and Participation* function in the newly established organisational design has facilitated the collation of admissions data for the University. In 2022/3, 6% of new entrants were from Further Education. Over 14% of new entrants came through the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), the Disability Access Route (DARE), and other TU Dublin access routes. The National Access Plan also emphasises the role of part-time and continuing education in widening participation, including for second chance learners. In 2022/23, TU Dublin was also the largest provider of part-time education in Ireland, with over 7,960 student enrolments. Of these, 1,400 students were registered on craft apprenticeship programmes.

The University is committed to expanding its apprenticeship programmes and providing lifelong educational opportunities with flexibility in the structure, mode, and place of delivery, to suit an evolving landscape and address the needs of our communities, industry and wider society.

## 2.2 Access and Outreach

Within *Recruitment, Admissions & Participation*, the *Access and Outreach* function provides a range of activities to support equity of access to higher education. Close cooperation with targeted schools at primary and post primary levels, and with community groups, is a hallmark of this activity, and provides the context specific knowledge to be able to assist students from under-represented backgrounds access TU Dublin and thrive when they are undertaking their studies here. The team develops relationships with prospective students, their schools, and parents, empowering their participation in higher education. There is additional focus on ensuring

diversity in specific areas of study and activity. These activities are supplemented through external funding from corporate partnerships and philanthropy along with the various *Programme for Access to Higher Education* (PATH) funding streams.

### 2.3 Student Services & Well-being

Within TU Dublin, Student Services & Wellbeing (SSW) provides a holistic support service for students, post-entry. Within this function, the following services are provided: Disability Support Service, Financial Aid and Projects, Accommodation and Operations, Access Support Service, Student Counselling, and Student Health. These services are supplemented through externally contracted services of the Pastoral care support and the National Learning Network. These units reside within the Student Support Function, within *Student Services and Wellbeing*, as part of a multidisciplinary team. In the development of the new organisational design for TU Dublin, great emphasis was placed on the development of these services, including through the provision of a dedicated [Access Support Unit](#) and the extension of the [Disability Support Services](#) team. The TU Dublin *Strategic Planning Implementation Framework* emphasises the need for cross-collaboration and integration in the achievement of goals.

## 3. Access Plan 2024-28: Key Targets

Aligned to the ambitions in NAP, we have established four key targets, outlined below.

- **Socio-economically Disadvantaged Students**

In 2020/21, TU Dublin had the highest number of total disadvantaged students in the sector (2,062).<sup>2</sup> The percentage of new entrants (aged 18–20) from socio-economically disadvantaged areas (SED) was 12.8%; the equivalent for all HEIs was 11%. Our target to 2028, is to increase the percentage to 14%. A disproportionate number of disadvantaged communities are evident in parts of Dublin city centre, and in the north and west suburbs of Dublin. These communities experience significantly higher levels of unemployment and low educational attainment. By improving links with FE colleges, DEIS schools and local communities, we aim to attract higher numbers of students from these communities. We will support this objective through our recruitment and outreach activities and by strengthening links with FE, as well as through innovation in our programme offering. HEA PATH 3 funding initiatives have facilitated collaborative community project work with organisations such as: [Empowering People in Care](#) (EPIC), [Empower](#) and [Dublin's North Inner City Learning](#)

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<sup>2</sup> Based on RGAM 2023 Allocation (HEA)

[Neighbourhood](#) . EPIC undertakes research on care- experienced students accessing higher education; *Empower* works to develop anti-racist practice in community and higher education.

- **Mature Students**

The NAP aims to increase the percentage of mature new entrants from SED backgrounds to 20% in 2027/8 (NAP, p.73). In 2020/21, the percentage of these students in TU Dublin was 18%. We aim to increase this to 20% by 2028.

- **Students with a Disability**

In 2022/23, the percentage of all new entrants with a disability (SWD) in TU Dublin was 16.2%<sup>3</sup>; this compared to 13.8% for all HEIs.<sup>4</sup> The NAP has set a specific target, to increase the percentage of SWD to 16% by 2028 (NAP, p.73). TU Dublin has already exceeded the national target for participation by SWD and is committed to increasing the percentage to 17% over the period of this Performance Agreement. This will exceed the national target for all HEIs of 16%. TU Dublin was successful in its submission through PATH 4 phase 2 funding to introduce the Certificate in Independent Living 'Pathways Together' programme. This programme is aimed specifically at students with intellectual disabilities, who are now identified in the National Access Plan.

- **Participation by Traveller & Roma Communities**

In 2022/23, an estimated 0.1% of new entrants in HE identified as members of the Irish Traveller and Roma Communities. The NAP target is to increase this to 0.35%. Based on HEA RGAM data for 2021, there were 119 Travellers in all Irish HEIs, 33 of these were new entrants. TU Dublin will continue to support progress toward increasing participation by Traveller and Roma students under PATH 5 and has recruited an Access and Outreach Project Officer who is a member of the Traveller Community, to support this work. We will not set a specific target as it can be difficult (i) to obtain accurate data (as it must be self-disclosed), and (ii) there can be a degree of overlap between the different categories, for example, a member of the Traveller community might also be socio-economically disadvantaged, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> HEA System Performance Dashboard (2022/23)

<sup>4</sup> Derived from HEA System Performance Dashboard (2022/23)

We have also set targets for enhanced progression in the different cohorts:

- **Target Progression Rates for SED**

The goal of the NAP is to increase progression and completion among selected priority groups. In 2021/22, the non-progression rate among HEIs in Ireland was 15%.<sup>5</sup> Rates of non-progression for disadvantaged students were much higher at 23% (HEA 2024, p.21).<sup>6</sup> Based on the most recent geo-coding data available, the non-progression rate for SED students in TU Dublin between 2019/20 and 2020/21 was 17.5%. With further access to HEA geo-coding data, we can start to monitor progression rates for SED students more effectively and develop appropriate targets for this cohort.

- **Target Progression Rates for (SWD)**

TU Dublin is committed to increasing the percentage of all new entrants with a disability to 17% over the period of this Performance Agreement and to ensure that these students complete their programme successfully. In 2022/23, 85% of FSD students who entered TU Dublin in 2021/22 progressed to year 2, giving a non-progression rate of 15% which is higher than the rate of non-progression for all new entrants of 24%. We plan to maintain the high level of progression among this cohort of students, and if possible, increase the rate of progression to 86%.

- **Target for Progression from Further Education (FE) to TU Dublin**

In 2022/23, 6% of new entrants to TU Dublin were from FE - the rate for all HEIs is 4.5%. TU Dublin aims to increase the number of students transitioning from FE over the period of our performance agreement. Our target is to increase the number from 312 (2022/23) to 400 in 2027/8, with FE students accounting for 7% of new entrants.

### **3.1 Key Performance Indicators, Targets & Benchmarks**

Related to our performance objectives, Table 1 identifies our key performance indicators, baselines and per annum targets for the period 2024-2028.

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<sup>5</sup> *Analysis of Non-Progression among Higher Education New Entrants in Ireland, 2016/17 to 2021/22* (HEA, 2024, p.4 and p.9)

<sup>6</sup> *Analysis of Non-Progression among Higher Education New Entrants in Ireland, 2016/17 to 2021/22* (HEA, 2024, p.21).



**Table 1: Indicators and Targets**

PO 3.		Data source	Data Type	Baseline	Benchmark	Per annum targets (number # and proportion %)				Cumulative 4 Year target
#	Indicator	Body, process, repository	Select from dropdown	With reference to calendar or academic year	With reference to comparator, timeframe, and source	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	2024-2028
1	% new entrants (aged 18-20) who are disadvantaged	SRS Data, HEA Dashboard	Quantitative	12.8% 2020/21	11% (All HEIs) 2020/21 HEA Dashboard	13%	13.5%	13.7%	14%	+1.2%
2	% mature students NEs (≥23 years) from disadvantaged areas	SRS Data, HEA Systems Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	18% 2020/21	17% (All HEI) 2020/21 HEA Dashboard	18%	18.5%	19%	20%	+2%
3	% new entrants with a disability	SRS Data, HEA Dashboard	Quantitative	16.2% 2022/23	13.9% (ALL HEIs) 2022/23 HEA Dashboard	16.4%	16.6%	16.7%	17%	+1%
4	Non-Progression rates among SED	2019/20 NAP & HEA Dashboard	Quantitative	For latest data available 2019/2020, non-progression for TU Dublin was 17.5%	In 2020/21 (NAP, p.73) Non-Progression for all HEIs =12%; TUs = 19%  Benchmark for TU Dublin in 2022/23 from geo-coding data to be confirmed.	17.5%	17%	16.5%	16%	-1.5%
5	Progression rates for Students with Disabilities (FSD)	SRS Data	Quantitative	85% Progression 2021/22 (285 students), 2022/23 (243 students)	No benchmarking data available	85%	85%	86%	86%	+1%
6	% new entrants from FE	SRS Data	Quantitative	312 (6.2%) 2022/23	4.5% (All HEIs) 2022/23 HEA Dashboard	335 (6.3%)	350 (6.4%)	380 (6.5%)	400 (7%)	+1%

## 4. Governance

The Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) was established by the Department of Education and Skills in 2016 to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access. We have established the following structures within the Access & Outreach and the Student Support Services groups, to support the following PATH initiatives:

- PATH 3 Steering Group
- PATH 3 Community Outreach Working Group
- PATH 4 UD/UDL/Pathways Together Programme Working Group
- PATH 5 Traveller & Roma Working Group

At a university level, two task groups have been established that will support the implementation of the objectives identified in our Access Plan:

1. **TU Dublin Working Group – Enrolment Planning 2024-2028** is the first of its kind in TU Dublin and is a constituent plan of the TU Dublin strategic plan. The enrolment plan supports both the implementation of the Financial Recovery Plan and also the implementation of an enrolment planning and research approach, underpinned by the concept of Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM).  
As part of this group, we will pursue an integrated approach to increasing access and participation by the student groups identified as under-represented in higher education and ensure our programme offering is aligned to the needs of learners and society.
2. **TU Dublin Group – Student Retention Working Group** – This task group was established to improve student retention and progression across the university. There are two KPIs in our Access Plan related to progression by two major cohorts: students with disabilities (SWD) and students that are socio-economic disadvantaged (DIS). We will ensure that targeted measures are taken to support student retention/success among these cohorts.

## 5. Access & Outreach Activities

TU Dublin offers a comprehensive range of pre-entry and outreach activities to primary and secondary schools and in the wider community. We believe that it is vital to build links with schools as early as possible to break down barriers to education and raise aspirations. Some of these programmes are captured in Table 2 and Table 3 below.

**Table 2: Outreach Programmes with Local Primary (DEIS) Schools**

Programme/Activity	Delivered in collaboration with:
Switch on Apprenticeship	School of Mechanical Engineering
STEM: Try Five +	Science Foundation Ireland, Workday
CLiC News	School of Media, School of Biological, Health & Sport Science, School of Electrical & Electronic Engineering,
Culinary Arts	School of Culinary Arts & Food Technology
Slice of Science/Let's Talk Science/Seeds of Science	School of Biological, Health & Sport Sciences, School of Chemical & Biopharmaceutical Sciences
Maths Outreach Activities	School of Mathematics & Statistics

**Table 3: Outreach and Pre-Entry Activities with Secondary Schools (DEIS)**

Programme/Activity	Delivered in collaboration with:
Programme to Enhance Digital Literacy – Parents of incoming 1 <sup>st</sup> year students	UCD, TCD, Workday
Junior Cycle Workshop Programme – 1 <sup>st</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> year students	School of Chemical & Biopharmaceutical Sciences, ESHI, An Garda Síochána
“Sport for Life” Wellbeing Programme – 1 <sup>st</sup> year students.	Dublin City Sport & Wellbeing Partnership, TU Dublin Sports, The Sanctuary, Student Enrichment Services
Junior Unilabs – 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year students	[pilot 2024-25]
TY Challenge Programme TY Young Creators Programme	Student Enrichment Services, Concern, School of Social Sciences, Law & Education, School of Media, School of Physics, Clinical & Optometric Sciences, School of Art & Design, School of Culinary Arts & Food Technology, School of Media, Conservatoire, School of Tourism & Hospitality Management, School of Surveying & Construction Innovation,
Senior Cycle Insight - TY, 5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Year students	School of Chemical & Biopharmaceutical Sciences, School of Food Science & Environmental Health, School of Culinary Arts & Food Technology, School of Media, School of Electrical & Electronic Engineering, TU Dublin Health Centre, School of Management People and Organisation, School of Accounting Economics and Finance
6 <sup>th</sup> Year College Preparation & Application Workshops	Student Support & Wellbeing
Maths Outreach & Pre-entry – 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Year	School of Mathematics & Statistics
STEM Passport – TY Students	School of Physics, Clinical and Optometric Sciences in the Faculty of Sciences

## 5.1 Pathways for Adult Learners from Under-represented Groups

PATH 3 focuses on expanding pathways available for adults from under-represented groups to access Higher Education. TU Dublin has supported the following activities, with support from PATH 3 funding:

- Development of cross-sector community events, such as the *Education Fair for Traveller and Roma Communities*, to showcase learning opportunities among different providers and provide a stepped approach to learning opportunities.
- College Preparation Workshops for mature students at TU Dublin, focusing on developing confidence in key skills (maths, academic writing, IT) along with information on student supports needed for successful transition to Higher Education.
- A structured Community Outreach Taster Programme, “Taste of TU Dublin”, developed with community partners, to integrate and add benefit to existing community-based learning opportunities and support learners to gain an understanding of Higher Education and the pathways and supports available
- Under PATH 3, we will also deliver a series of research seminars related to research and participation by Traveller & Roma and those in Care.

## 5.2 Supporting Inclusive, Universally Designed Higher Education Learning Environments

The PATH 4 *Universal Design Fund* (Phase 1, 2023 - 2024) was established to support the development of inclusive universally designed higher education environments. The National Access Plan highlights the fact that everyone in the university has a responsibility for UDL. Our key actions related to Universal Design are outlined below.

Table 4: Universal Design Activities

Programme/Activity	Delivered in collaboration with:
<b>Universal Design in Policy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Investigation and mapping of relevant existing TU Dublin policies for review of Universal Design.</li><li>• Make recommendations for amendments to embed UD.</li><li>• Contribute to National Charter for UD in Tertiary Education.</li></ul>	Academic Affairs Faculty and Schools
<b>Universal Design in Technology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Investigation of accessibility audit on the TU Dublin website, with the intention to support the improvement of audit outcome figures.</li><li>• Make recommendations for Virtual Learning Environment.</li></ul>	TU Dublin Web team Learning Teaching and Assessment Unit
<b>Building Staff and Student Universal Design Capacity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Embedding Universal Design into the fabric of TU Dublin</li></ul>	Faculty and Schools National Disability Authority (NDA)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capturing the Universal Design PATH 4 Journey</li> <li>• Student and Staff UD Video contributions</li> <li>• Review and dissemination of CEUD Universal Design Resources provided by National Disability Authority (NDA).</li> </ul>	Centre of Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD)
<p><b>Capturing and illustrating the Universal Design Journey</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visualisation of TU Dublin success to date in UD (and UDL), for the purpose of building awareness, continuation of the UD conversations.</li> <li>• Dissemination of key UD artefacts and resources.</li> </ul>	Marketing and Communications EDI Directorate Campus Planning Campus & Estates
<p><b>Campus Universal Design Environment</b> Collaborate and Inform the Campus Planning, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UD input to Task Group the Design and Construct Centre for the Broombridge Campus.</li> <li>• Further development of TU Dublin Way Finding App.</li> <li>• Introduction of Sensory equipment</li> </ul>	Campus Planning Campus & Estates