

Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (2007- 2013)

Progress Report

FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD: January to December 2013

PRIORITY: No. 2 INCREASING PARTICIPATION AND REDUCING INEQUALITY IN THE LABOUR FORCE

ACTIVITY NAME: Third Level Access

ESF 2.4

1. Activity description

The Third Level Access programmes support the participation in third level education of people who are traditionally under-represented at this level. Under Third Level Access funding is administered by further and higher education institutions (through the Student Assistance Fund and Fund for Students with Disabilities) to support the retention of certain target groups, namely students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, mature students, students with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities. It is managed on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills by the Higher Education Authority's National Access Office and is a major contributor to the achievement of the high level goals for Education and Training.

2. Significant Changes in the Operating Environment

As in 2012 in respect of the two programmes funded through Third Level Access, namely the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities, demand for both funds continues to increase. For example, approvals under the Fund for Students with Disabilities have increased dramatically in recent years, growing by 344% between 2005 and 2013.

It is anticipated that the demand on this fund will continue to grow for the foreseeable future. Learners with disabilities are now increasingly integrated and successful in the primary and second-level system, thus providing such students with the necessary academic attainment and resources to aspire to and compete for opportunities in further and higher education. The Fund for Students with Disabilities remains the key source of support for these students.

In an effort to achieve increased administrative efficiency, a faster assessment process for students and a strategic, institution-wide approach to the provision of supports and accommodations, a review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities by the National Access Office was initiated in the spring of 2010. The overall goal was to develop a revised model of allocation for higher education institutions for implementation at the beginning of academic year 2010-11. The outcome was the implementation of a devolved assessment procedure and allocation model for higher education institutions. It involves the decentralisation of the assessment of students to disability officers at institutional level. Implementation of the new model of assessment and allocation began in September 2010 and consultation with the sector has confirmed that the new model has considerably reduced administrative duplication and has significantly improved the provision of supports to students with disabilities. The model has continued in 2011-12 and 2012-13 and was extended to the Further Education sector in 2013.

Demand for support is also increasing in respect of the Student Assistance Fund. HEA data indicates that new full time entrants to higher education of mature age increased from 13% in

2006 to 15% in 2011. In addition, HEA equal access data also indicates that 39 % of new entrants to higher education in 2011 are from the target groups identified in the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013* (i.e. those from semi- & unskilled manual and non-manual backgrounds, mature students, students with a disability and Travellers). Socio-economically disadvantaged groups in particular face financial barriers to higher education and often require intervention from the Student Assistance Fund. An additional factor in increased demand on the resources from the sub-priority relates to current economic circumstances. High levels of unemployment and a desire to up-skill has led to an increase in enrolments in higher education in general. Coupled with a lack of available part-time work the demands on the financial supports available from the Student Assistance Fund have grown significantly.

3. Commentary on Activity-related progress

Fund for Students with Disabilities performance: The total allocation for this funding programme in 2013-14 was €10.3m. (Provisional figures). This funding supported 9,020 students with disabilities in the further and higher education sector. The number of approvals in 2013-14 represents an increase of +15% over the previous year when 7,897 students were approved for support. Support under this fund can be categorised under three broad headings; assistive technology and equipment, academic/personal support and transport. Supporting the participation of students with disabilities in higher education is a priority for the Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

Student Assistance Fund performance: The total allocation for the SAF was €8.35m in academic year 2013/14. A total of €11m was allocated in academic year 2012-13. This included a core allocation of €8m plus a once-off allocation of €3m from the Minister for Education and Skills. The €11m provided 16,721 low income students with financial support (provisional total). The SAF provides assistance under a range of headings including financial support for the cost of childcare, rent and general living expenses. The fund positively impacts on the participation and retention of low income students in higher education. It should be noted that this fund is not exclusively targeted at under-represented socio-economic groups in HE. Students facing temporary financial difficulties can also be supported by the Fund. Each HEI has its own application process and the fund is open to all students who meet the institution's selection criteria.

Equal Access Data Initiative: 2013 is the 7th year of the HEA's equal access data initiative. Information is gathered as part of registration on students' social, economic and cultural background. This data is informing work on the development of a new funding model for higher education. The equal access data collected for 2011-12 was published in March 2013 in the HEA's *Higher Education Key Facts and Figures 11/1*. The full report can be accessed here <http://www.heai.ie/files/Keyfactsfigures1112.pdf>

A review of the Fund for Students with a Disability is expected to be completed in 2014 and will link with the implementation of next National Access Plan 2014-2020.

4. Progress in relation to physical performance indicators and targets

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:							
Annual and Cumulative Indicators							
A. OUTPUT							
	Region	Current period/Year: (e.g.) Jan. – Dec. 2013 as applicable			Cumulative totals 2007-2013		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. The number of students supported by the Student Assistance Fund	BMW	1,504	2,124	3,628	5,321	9,202	14,523
	SAE	5,413	7,680	13,093	20,267	29,035	49,302
	NAT	6,917	9,804	16,721	25,588	38,237	63,825
	Region	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2. The number of students supported by the Fund for Students with Disabilities	BMW	856	807	1,663	4,792	4,298	9,090
	SAE	3,660	3,525	7,185	16,613	14,787	31,400
	Unknown	58	114	172	566	719	1,285
	NAT	4,574	4,446	9,020	21,971	19,804	41,775
B. RESULT							
	Region	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. The number of students supported by the SAF successfully completing the academic year	BMW	1,203	1,699	2,902	4,257	7,361	11,618
	SAE	4,330	6,144	10,474	16,213	23,228	39,441
	NAT	5,533	7,843	13,376	20,470	30,589	51,059
	Region	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2. The number of students supported by the FSD successfully completing the academic year	BMW	684	645	1,329	3,833	3,438	7,271
	SAE	2,928	2,820	5,748	13,290	11,830	25,120
	Unknown	46	91	137	452	575	1,027
	NAT	3,658	3,556	7,214	17,575	15,843	33,418
C. IMPACT							
	Region	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. Rate of completion of higher education <u>qualification</u> among SAF /FSD beneficiaries	BMW						
	SAE						
	NAT						

NUTS III Activity Indicator Report for reporting period (Jan – Dec. 2013)

Activity: <i>Student Assistance Fund 2012-13 (provisional)</i>			
Indicator Used:			
Region	Total	Gender break-down	
		Male	Female
<i>Border Region</i>	1,146	500	646
<i>Midland Region</i>	474	195	279
<i>West Region</i>	2,008	809	1,199
BMW Total	3,628	1504	2,124
<i>South East Region</i>	1,944	764	1,180
<i>Mid East Region</i>	766	285	481
<i>Dublin Region</i>	6,389	2,601	3,788
<i>South West Region</i>	2,051	825	1226
<i>Mid West Region</i>	1,943	938	1005
SAE Total	13,093	5,413	7,680
National (BMW + SAE)	16,721	6,917	9,804

Activity: <i>Fund for Students with Disabilities 2013-14 (provisional)</i>			
Indicator Used:			
Region	Total	Gender break-down	
		Male	Female
<i>Border Region</i>	599	300	299
<i>Midland Region</i>	212	94	118
<i>West Region</i>	852	462	390
BMW Total	1,663	856	807
<i>South East Region</i>	3,652	1,853	1,799
<i>Mid East Region</i>	691	337	354
<i>Dublin Region</i>	683	358	325
<i>South West Region</i>	685	358	327
<i>Mid West Region</i>	1,474	754	720
SAE Total	7,185	3,660	3,525
Unknown	172	58	114
National (BMW + SAE+ Unknown)	9,020	4,574	4,446

5. Progress with regard to expenditure

Table 1 – Expenditure for the Reporting Period January to December 2013 (€m)

HCI OP €m	<i>Total Programme Forecast*</i>	<i>Total Programme spend</i>	<i>Expenditure as % of forecast</i>	<i>Total co- financed spend</i>	<i>EU Social Funds</i>	<i>National Public Co- financed</i>	<i>Private Co-financed</i>
<i>Source of information within financial tables</i>		<i>Column</i>		<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>
Region							
<i>Dublin</i>		4.860	N.A	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>South East</i>		0.292	N.A	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Mid East</i>		0.707	N.A	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Mid West</i>		1.277	N.A	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>South West</i>		1.855	N.A	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
SAE Total	0.00	8.991	N.A	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Border</i>		1.506	N.A	0.811	0.406	0.406	0.00
<i>Midland</i>		0.694	N.A	0.374	0.187	0.187	0.00
<i>West</i>		1.615	N.A	0.870	0.435	0.435	0.00
BMW Total	1.00	3.815	381.5%	2.055	1.027	1.027	0.00
National (BMW + SAE)	1.00	12.806	1280.6%	2.055	1.027	1.027	0.00

In relation to the figures included in Table 1 above, note:

- **Total co-financed spend** amounts are estimated by calculating the percentage of Total Programme spend that is eligible for co-financing. The percentage applied is based on the 2011 claim amounts as a percentage of the 2011 Total programme spend. The percentage is then applied to the 2013 Total Programme Spend to calculate the co-funded estimate.

Table 2 – Cumulative Expenditure since January 2007 (€m)

HCI OP €m	<i>Total Programme Forecast*</i>	<i>Total Programme spend</i>	<i>Expenditure as % of forecast</i>	<i>Total co- financed spend</i>	<i>EU Structural Funds</i>	<i>National Public Co- financed</i>	<i>Private Co-financed</i>
<i>Source of information within financial tables</i>		<i>Column</i>		<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>
Region							
<i>Dublin</i>		36.288	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.00
<i>South East</i>		4.508	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.00
<i>Mid East</i>		4.786	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.00
<i>Mid West</i>		9.649	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.00
<i>South West</i>		12.549	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.00
SAE Total	8.570	67.780	791%	44.641	22.320	22.320	0.00
<i>Border</i>		8.491	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.00
<i>Midland</i>		3.335	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.00
<i>West</i>		11.255	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.00
BMW Total	11.800	23.081	196%	15.833	7.917	7.917	0.00
National (BMW + SAE)	20.370	90.861	446%	60.474	30.237	30.237	0.00

* See Financial Tables.

In relation to the figures included in Table 2 above, note:

- **Total Co-financing spend for the period 01/01/2007-31/12/2009** are the actual claim amounts submitted.
- **Total co-financed spend amounts for the period 01/01/2010-31/12/2011** are based on actual claims received by SFU from beneficiaries for submission to the ESF Managing Authority.
- **Total co-financed spend amounts for the period 01/01/2012-31/12/2013** are estimated by calculating the percentage of Total Programme spend that is eligible for co-financing. The percentage applied is based on the 2011 claim amounts as a percentage of the 2011 Total programme spend. The percentage is then applied to the 2013 Total Programme Spend to calculate the co-funded estimate.
- It is anticipated that the actual claim amounts for the period 01/01/2012-31/12/2013 will be available for the Autumn 2014 Monitoring Committee meeting.

6. Data On Participants In Programme Activity Implementation Plan

(Commission Implementing Regulation 1828/2006 - Annex XXIII)

6.1 NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS PER YEAR FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

(People entering, those leaving, carry-over from one year to the next)

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Entrants: (a)	1,473	1,372	2,845
Leaving: (b)	1,244	1,273	2,517
Carry-over to next year [(a) less (b)]	1,857	1,801	3,658
Total:	4,574	4,446	9,020

6.1 NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS PER YEAR STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

(People entering, those leaving, carry-over from one year to the next)

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Entrants: (a)	5,199	7,096	12,295
Leaving: (b)	624	1,125	1,749
Carry-over to next year [(a) less (b)]	1,094	1,583	2,677
Total:	6,917	9,804	16,721

6.2 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Participants:	4,574	4,446	9,020

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER UNDER THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Participants:	6,917	9,804	16,721

6.3 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO STATUS IN THE LABOUR MARKET FUND FOR STUDENT WITH DISABILITIES

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Employed (Total number of employed, including self-employed)	148	162	310
Self-employed	9	12	21
Unemployed (Total number of unemployed including long-term unemployed)	166	140	306
Long-term unemployed	102	85	187
Inactive persons (Total number of inactive persons, including those in education, training or retirement, those having given up business, the permanently disabled, those fulfilling domestic tasks or other)	4,260	4,144	8,404
Inactive persons in education or training	4,071	3,911	7,982
Note: Employed + Unemployed + Inactive = Total number of Participants (by Gender)	4,574	4,446	9,020

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO STATUS IN THE LABOUR MARKET UNDER THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Employed (Total number of employed, including self-employed)	553	724	1,277
Self-employed	87	55	142
Unemployed (Total number of unemployed including long-term unemployed)	1,521	1,375	2,896
Long-term unemployed	822	796	1,618
Inactive persons (Total number of inactive persons, including those in education, training or retirement, those having given up business, the permanently disabled, those fulfilling domestic tasks or other)	4,843	7,705	12,548

Inactive persons in education or training			
Note: Employed + Unemployed + Inactive = Total number of Participants (by Gender)	6,917	9,804	16,721

6.4 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY AGE UNDER THE FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Young people (15-24)	3,735	3,671	7,406
Older workers (55-64)	33	51	84

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY AGE UNDER THE FUND THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Young people (15-24)	5,567	7,839	13,406
Older workers (55-64)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

6.5 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY VULNERABLE GROUPS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATIONAL RULES UNDER THE FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Minorities:			
Migrants:			
Disabled:	4,574	4,446	9,020
Other disadvantaged people:			

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY VULNERABLE GROUPS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATIONAL RULES UNDER THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Minorities:			
Migrants:			
Disabled:			
Other disadvantaged people:	6,917	9,804	16,721

6.6 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT UNDER THE FUND FOR STUDENT WITH DISABILITIES

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2)	76	54	130
Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	3851	3546	7397
Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)	339	412	751
Tertiary education (ISCED 5 AND 6)	248	320	568

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT UNDER THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2)	334	290	624
Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	4,845	7,115	11,960
Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)	723	822	1,545
Tertiary education (ISCED 5 AND 6)	1,015	1,577	2,592

7. Horizontal issues

SEE SEPARATE TEMPLATES

8. Compliance with EU and National policy

It is the policy of the Department of Education and Skills to comply with all EU regulations in relation to procurement, state aids etc.

9. Added Value of ESF Interventions

As Ireland seeks to compete in the global knowledge economy the supply of graduates from groups traditionally associated with higher education will not be sufficient to meet demand. Ireland will therefore need to attract more students from traditionally underrepresented groups in order to enhance the national skills profile.

ESF-aided programmes, i.e. the Fund for Students with Disabilities and the Student Assistance Fund, play a key role in widening participation for those who are traditionally under-represented in higher education. The funds are a key driver of increased participation and retention of students who have additional educational needs arising from a disability; students who are socio-economically disadvantaged; and students who are returning to education as mature students (+23) having left the education system previously without qualifications.

The National Access Plan has set national targets for the participation of key target groups. The targets include:

- All socio-economic groups will have entry rates of at least 54 per cent by 2020

(‘Non-manual’ group at 27 per cent and ‘Semi-skilled and unskilled manual’ group at 33 per cent in 2004). Report on progress due in 2013.

- Mature students will comprise 27 per cent of all (full-time and part-time) entrants by 2013 (18 per cent in 2006, 21% in 2011).
- The number of students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities in higher education will be doubled by 2013. (466 in 2006, 979 in 2011).

Every year thousands of students from the key target groups are supported in their studies with assistance from the Fund for Students with Disabilities or the Student Assistance Fund. The Fund for Students with Disabilities provides institutions with specific funding to support to people with disabilities. The supports provided are key to the inclusion of these students in higher education. Typical supports include assistive technologies and personal or academic support (e.g. personal assistance, study skills). The Student Assistance Fund allows institutions to provide financial support to students who require it. The fund provides funding to contribute to the costs of rent, childcare and other living expenses which are essential for the participation of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Tables 1 and 2 below provide data on students supported and allocations provided for recent years.

Table 1 – Fund for Students with Disabilities

Academic Year	Students supported	Total allocation €
2006-7	2,444	9.9m
2007-8	3,099	13.5m
2008-9	3,483	11.7m
2009-10	4,964	12.1m
2010-11	6,097	13.7m
2011-12	6,849	10.8m
2012-13	7,897	10.3m
2013-14	9,020	10.2m

Table 2 – Student Assistance Fund

Academic Year	Students supported	Total allocation €
2006-7	9,200	6m
2007-8	9,858	6.2m
2008-9	7,917	5m
2009-10	7,681	5m
2010-11	8,301	5m
2011-12	13,347	9m
2012-13	16,721 (provisional)	11m
2013-14	Not available	8.3m

A specific target in the National Access Plan, outlined above, is that the number of students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities in higher education will be doubled by 2013. These categories of disability traditionally have the lowest participation rate in higher education amongst the various categories of disability. Achievement of the target is to be based upon approvals under the ESF-aided Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD). A review of the 2008-2013 plan was carried out in 2011.

Table 3 below outlines the targets for the participation of these students and progress made to date. As can be seen good progress has been made. A final review of targets will take place later this year.

Table 3 - National Access Plan Disability Targets

Category of Disability	National Access Plan Target 2013	Students Supported under the FSD 2012	Actual as % of Target
Physical/Mobility impairment	380	317	83%
Deaf/Hard of hearing	252	190	75%
Blind/Visual impairment	130	138	106%
Multiple disabilities	170	334	196%
Total	932	979	105%

The ESF-aided funds outlined above have also assisted in the further development of a support framework for students designated as in need of targeted support. The funds are complimentary to the range of state supports in place (such as the student grants system or the recurrent annual funding for Access and Disability Services in higher education institutions).

The Fund for Students with Disabilities provides a relevant example of the improvement in processes in recent years. As part of the application for support students will undergo an assessment of need at institutional level. This needs assessment will inform the application for supports from the Fund. The application process for the Fund itself has been streamlined considerably in recent years to alleviate and guard against delays in assessments and avoid duplication of administrative tasks.

For example, students who have been previously been approved for support do not need to submit an application for support the following year(s). Under the streamlined processes of the fund this element of the application is now completed electronically through an information management system. The supports for students who have already been approved are now automatically renewed. Institutions will then confirm the updated registration status of the students approved to ensure they are registered in their institution for the relevant academic year.

From 2010-11 academic year, an approach was implemented to the application and assessment process for higher education institutions in receipt of support through the Fund for Students with Disabilities. The assessment of students for eligibility for funding was decentralised to disability officers at institutional level. Institutions then submit a claim for funding based on the numbers of students that meet the eligibility criteria. This model was extended to the Further Education sector in 2013-14.

Implementation of the new model of assessment and allocation began in September 2010 and it is eliminating administrative duplication and, in turn, significantly improving the timeline for approval of funding. Feedback from institutions in respect of the new allocation model has been very positive to date.

10. Publicity

The 2013, ESF calendar included a photograph of a student from DCU, who was supported under the Fund for Students with Disabilities. This calendar was circulated to all projects. The ESF newsletter contained articles on how students from NUI Maynooth and the Institute of Technology Sligo benefited from financial assistance under the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

Please see below a screen shot from www.studentfinance.ie. Website. This site contains information on ESF-aided funding programmes and carries the required logos on each page of the site.



11. Proposals for re-profiling of expenditure (where applicable)

None

12. Proposals to amend Programme Activity Implementation Plans (where applicable)

None