

Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (2007- 2013)

Progress Report Template

FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD: January to December 2011

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

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 200+% between 2005 and 2010.

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 was continued in 2011-12.

Demand for support is also increasing in respect of the Student Assistance Fund. HEA data indicates that new entrants to higher education of mature age increased from 11% in 2007 to 15% in 2010. In addition, HEA data also indicates that 37% of new entrants to higher education in 2010 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 2010-11 was €17.7m. This funding supported 6,871 students with disabilities in the further and higher education sector. The number of approvals in 2010-11 represents an increase of +13% over the previous year when 6,097 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 €9m in 2011-12. €5m was allocated in 2010-11 and this provided 8,301 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: 2010-11 is the fourth 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 2010-11 was published in January 2012 in the HEA's *Higher Education Key Facts and Figures 10/11*. The report can be accessed here, http://www.heai.ie/files/HEA%20Key%20Facts%20%26%20Figures%2010.11%20Final_0.pdf

Studentfinance.ie: The HEA's website on financial support for further and higher education, www.studentfinance.ie, won Ireland's Education eGovernment award 2009. The Education eGovernment award recognises an organisation's effectiveness in harnessing information technology to deliver better services, information and efficiencies to its target audience.

www.studentfinance.ie is funded by the Department of Education and Skills and was developed by the HEA in line with a recommendation of the *Review of Funding to Achieve Equity of Access*. Since it has been launched (2008), there have been over 1.98m visits to www.studentfinance.ie with over 13.9m page-views.

Mid-term review of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2008-2013: The HEA undertook a mid-term review of the National Access Plan on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills in 2011. The review provides a comprehensive overview of progress since 2008 by the range of partners working on access to higher education. It also includes new information, including progress on 2010 participation targets. A copy of the report can be accessed here http://www.heai.ie/files/files/HEA%20Mid-Term%20Review%20National%20Plan%20of%20Equity%20Access%202008-2013_0.pdf

4. Progress in relation to physical performance indicators and targets

Performance indicator data is not currently available in relation to 'Result' and 'Impact'.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:							
Annual and Cumulative Indicators							
A. OUTPUT							
	Region	Current period/Year:			Cumulative totals 2007-2011**		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. The number of students supported by the Student Assistance Fund 2010-11 academic year	BMW	581	981	1562	2897	5624	8521
	SAE	2602	4137	6739	9343	15003	24346
	NAT	3183	5118	8301	12240	20627	32867
	Region	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2. The number of students supported by the Fund for Students with Disabilities 2011-12 academic year	BMW	711	593	1304	1487	1422	2909
	SAE	2869	2497	5366	4406	3874	8280
	Unknown	85	116	201	351	366	717
	NAT	3665	3206	6871	6244	5662	11906
B. RESULT							
	Region	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. The number of students supported by the SAF successfully completing the academic year	BMW						
	SAE						
	NAT						
	Region	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2. The number of students supported by the FSD successfully completing the academic year	BMW						
	SAE						
	NAT						
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						

**Refers to data from 2007-8 to 2009-10 academic years inclusive.

NUTS III Activity Indicator Report for reporting period (Jan – Dec. 2011)

Activity: <i>Student Assistance Fund 2010-11 (provisional)</i>			
Indicator Used:			
Region	Total	Gender break-down	
		Male	Female
<i>Border Region</i>	541	194	347
<i>Midland Region</i>	223	82	141
<i>West Region</i>	798	305	493
BMW Total	1562	581	981
<i>South East Region</i>	941	381	560
<i>Mid East Region</i>	416	155	261
<i>Dublin Region</i>	3502	1255	2247
<i>South West Region</i>	962	395	567
<i>Mid West Region</i>	918	416	502
SAE Total	6739	2602	4137
National (BMW + SAE)	8301	3183	5118

Activity: <i>Fund for Students with Disabilities 2011-12 (provisional)</i>			
Indicator Used:			
Region	Total	Gender break-down	
		Male	Female
<i>Border Region</i>	478	244	234
<i>Midland Region</i>	157	81	76
<i>West Region</i>	669	386	283
BMW Total	1304	711	593
<i>South East Region</i>	493	271	222
<i>Mid East Region</i>	417	209	208
<i>Dublin Region</i>	2782	1496	1286
<i>South West Region</i>	1090	560	530
<i>Mid West Region</i>	584	333	251
SAE Total	5366	2869	2497
Unknown	201	85	116
National	6871	3665	3206

5. Progress with regard to expenditure

Table 1 – Expenditure for the Reporting Period Jan. to December 2011 (€m)

HCIOP €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>
Source of information within financial tables		Column		Column	Column	Column	Column
Region							
Dublin		5.719	N/A	5.740	2.870	2.870	0.00
South East		0.659	N/A	0.662	0.331	0.331	0.00
Mid East		0.734	N/A	0.737	0.368	0.368	0.00
Mid West		1.642	N/A	1.649	0.824	0.824	0.00
South West		2.153	N/A	2.161	1.081	1.081	0.00
SAE Total	0.00	10.908	N/A	10.949	5.474	5.474	0.00
Border		1.359	N/A	1.364	0.682	0.682	0.00
Midland		0.400	N/A	0.402	0.201	0.201	0.00
West		1.669	N/A	1.675	0.838	0.838	0.00
BMW Total	1.000	3.428	343%	3.441	1.721	1.721	0.00
National (BMW + SAE)	1.000	14.336	1434%	14.390	7.195	7.195	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 2009 claim amounts as a percentage of the 2009 Total programme spend. The EU Social Funds amount is at the revised activity aid rate of 50%.

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

HCIOP €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>
Source of information within financial tables		Column		Column	Column	Column	Column
Region							
Dublin		25.029	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00
South East		3.214	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00
Mid East		3.220	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00
Mid West		6.530	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00
South West		9.147	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00
SAE Total	8.571	47.141	550%	52.143	26.071	26.071	0.00
Border		4.946	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00
Midland		1.924	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00
West		7.008	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00
BMW Total	11.800	13.878	118%	13.934	6.967	6.967	0.00
National (BMW + SAE)	20.371	61.019	300%	66.077	33.038	33.038	0.00

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. The EU Structural Funds amount is at the revised activity aid rate.
- **Total co-financed spend amounts for the period 01/01/2010-31/12/2011** are estimated by calculating the percentage of Total Programme spend that is eligible for co-financing. The percentage applied is based on the 2009 claim amounts as a percentage of the 2009 Total programme spend. The EU Structural Funds amount is at the revised activity aid rate.
- It is anticipated that the actual claim amounts for the period 01/01/2010-31/12/2011 will be available for the Autumn 2012 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

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

The information provided in section 6 refers to the **Fund for Students with Disabilities, 2011-12**. Similar data for the Student Assistance Fund is not available at present.

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Entrants: (a) (First year)	1367	1187	2554
Leaving: (b) (Final year)	829	742	1571
Carry-over to next year (other years) [(a) less (b)]	1469	1277	2746
Total:	3665	3206	6871

6.2 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Participants:	3665	3206	6871

6.3 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO STATUS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Employed (Total number of employed, including self-employed)	121	105	226

Self-employed	9	6	15
Unemployed (Total number of unemployed including long-term unemployed)	143	113	256
Long-term unemployed	101	87	189
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)	3401	2988	6389
Inactive persons in education or training	3189	2804	5993
Note: Employed + Unemployed + Inactive = Total number of Participants (by Gender)	3665	3206	6871

6.4 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY AGE

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Young people (15-24)	2981	2594	5575
Older workers (55-64)	30	28	58

6.5 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY VULNERABLE GROUPS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATIONAL RULES

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Minorities:			
Migrants:			
Disabled:	3665	3206	6871
Other disadvantaged people:	3183	5118	8301

6.6 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2)	61	32	93
Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	3018	2576	5594
Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)	268	290	558
Tertiary education (ISCED 5 AND 6)	153	179	332
Unknown	165	129	294
Total	3665	3206	6871

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. In 2011, the HEA and the Department of Education and Skills hosted briefing meetings for all institutions to update and remind them of the reporting and other requirements as part of the Third Level Access funding process. This included procurement, publicity, communications information 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).
- Mature students will comprise at least 20 per cent of total full-time entrants by 2013 (13 per cent in 2006).
- Mature students will comprise 27 per cent of all (full-time and part-time) entrants by 2013 (18 per cent in 2006)
- The number of students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities in higher education will be doubled by 2013, from 466 (2007) to 932 (2013).

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 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	6,871 (provisional)	11.7m

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	Not yet available	9m

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 from the data, 96% of the targets for the four categories have been achieved. Therefore it is expected that all four targets will be exceeded by academic year 2010-11.

Table 3 - National Access Plan Disability Targets

Category of Disability	National Access Plan Target 2010-11	Students Supported under the FSD 2009-10	Actual as % of Target
Physical/Mobility impairment	285	235	82%
Deaf/Hard of hearing	189	173	92%
Blind/Visual impairment	98	116	118%
Multiple disabilities	127	144	113%
Total	699	668	96%

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, a new 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.

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

In 2011, the HEA and the Department of Education and Skills hosted briefing meetings for all institutions to update and remind them of the reporting and other requirements as part of the Third Level Access funding process. This included publicity and communications information.

The 2011, ESF calendar included a photograph of support provided to students with disabilities in Trinity College Dublin, which is provided for by an allocation through the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

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

Progress Report for the HCI-OP 2007-2013



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

N/A

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

N/A