



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Executive Summary

Disability Service Annual Report 2020-2021



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

The Trinity
Disability Service
Strategic Plan
2020-2025

Empowering
Students with
Disabilities

www.tcd.ie/disability/



Executive Summary

This is an executive summary of the Disability Service Annual Report covering the academic year 2020-2021. Below is a table summarising the Key Performance Indicators developed by the Disability Service (DS) to capture the breadth of work carried out by the service.

KPI Indicator	Year 2020-2021
Number of new UG entrants with disabilities entering with the required points (RP) / DARE ³ Mature Students (Age 23 – 61)	RP 92 DARE 205 Mature 19 Total 316
Number of new students with disabilities registering with DS – UG/PG/Foundation	UG 465 PG 95 Foundation 25 Total 585
Number of International students (non-Irish)	57 new in 20-21 Total 184
Number of students with disabilities in Trinity	1888 (12% undergraduate, 4% Postgraduate & 10 % total Student population)
Number of needs assessments carried out	617
No. of students in receipt of General Disability support	1323
Number of students supported/funded by ESF student disability fund	1605 (444 new in 20-21)
Number of students receiving exam accommodations	1674
Number of Assistive Technology assessments/appointments	91 / 192
Number of students receiving Occupational Therapy supports/appointments	300 students 1557 appointments

Number of students availing of Professional Placement support	132 (452 on professional course)
Number of students/parents supported pre-entry	1,385 Pre-entry events 771 Prospective student enquiries 185 Orientation events 429
Number of Student Engaging with the Ability Co-Op annually	85 Leadership Team 9 Ability Forum 76
Number of students availing of Erasmus outgoing	73
Number of students whose residential accommodations applications were supported	34 Semester 1 41 Semester 2
Number of DLO and departmental meetings	38
Number of students supported by ESW	32
Number of staff with disabilities supported	12

Introduction and Service Structure

Trinity College Dublin Disability Service (DS) addresses the needs of students with disabilities in Trinity by providing advice, support, and academic accommodations in partnership with service users and academic departments/schools and service areas.

The DS has two principle functions:

1. To provide supports and services to Trinity's disabled community (which comprises of students, staff, and indirectly, visitors) and to recommend policy and procedural changes as required.
2. To ensure Trinity is compliant with the Disability Act 2005 and other relevant legislation and codes of practice.

The newly launched DS Strategic Plan (2020-2025), 'Empowering Students with Disabilities' sets our priorities for the next five years of our inclusive university journey. We have built our strategic plan around Trinity College Dublin's strategic mission, priorities, and themes. Our people, the core of our staff and students, and our values are at the heart of our plan, while our themes, innovation, and civic engagement, underpin everything we do. Objectives will be achieved through innovative approaches and continuous review of service delivery while also maximising partnerships and joint working opportunities.

As we empower students with disabilities in achieving their potential, we will work together in this partnership in co-producing activities that will engage the University community in creating an inclusive transformational environment and provide a platform for innovation and inclusion.

This strategic approach enhances the student experience by engaging prospective students, current students, and staff, with the intention of improving practice and implementing change across the whole institution. It is an evidence-based approach, collecting data and evaluating supports on an ongoing basis to improve the student journey. Each DS Service is aligned to:

- the Strategic Objectives of Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin (Trinity).
- National targets for students with disabilities set by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in Ireland.
- DS Strategic Objective and implementation plan.

Since its inception in June 2000, the DS has undergone enormous growth and development. Students registered with the service have increased from 64 in 2000/01 to 1888 in 2020-21. During this time, a [comprehensive range of supports](#) have been developed to enable students with disabilities to pursue degree programmes across all faculties.

Disability Service Highlights 2020-21

- The Trinity College Dublin [Disability Service Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#) entitled 'Empowering Students with Disabilities', was approved and launched in December 2020. This Strategic Plan sets out the Disability Service's priorities for the next five years of its inclusive university journey. The Strategic Plan is built around and aligned with Trinity College Dublin's strategic mission, priorities, and themes.
- 259 new entrants admitted via the DARE scheme or with the required points, representing an annual increase of 20%.
- A specialised online transition programme for autistic students, 'The Autism Drop-In Group,' was facilitated over 18 sessions throughout the academic year.
- 585 students with disabilities sought reasonable accommodations and 617 needs assessments were carried out in AY 2020-21.
- 1888 students with disabilities are now studying in Trinity and sought some level of support from the DS in 2020-21, representing 12% of undergraduates and 3.7% of postgraduates.
- Disability Service enhanced [online supports](#) and presented lessons learnt from hybrid working at several national events including the HEA Access Forum and authored an article for the [AHEAD Journal](#).
- An [Erasmus Webinar](#) was held in November 2020 for students with disabilities who were considering applying for the Erasmus programme in 2021/22. Potential applicants were advised on how the Erasmus programme operates. Trinity Ability Co_op member Ailbhe Kelly authored an article on [her Erasmus experience](#) for the Ahead Journal.
- A new **bursary for students with disabilities** was made available for those who face financial difficulty in meeting the costs of accommodation on campus. The Bursary was funded by Trinity Development & Alumni and was made possible by the generosity of alumni and donors to Trinity. The Bursary is administered by the Senior Tutor's Office on behalf of the Disability Service.
- This year Academic Support (AS) and Assistive Technology (AT) were integrated into **Inclusive Learning and Technology (ILT)**, increasing collaboration with CAPSL and Trinity Inclusive Curriculum in the creation of Learning to Learn online module for new and continuing students and more inclusive teaching, learning and assessment.
- A new **Blackboard module ASKDS**. This enables students to engage with DS resources in the student virtual learning space.
- IS services adopted **Blackboard ALLY** after testing and roll out of this alternative format software.
- **Occupational Therapy Supports** saw a significant increase in the number of students who were met in Occupational Therapy (167 in 19/20 up to 279 in 20/21), the number of 1:1 student meetings (772 in 19/20 increased to 1557 in 20/21), and the students with the greatest identified need most had greater access to an OT.
- Support for transgender students DS collaborated with a transgender consultant to develop and deliver transgender training, which was attended by over 30 college staff.
- **Trinity Halls:** Disability supports were introduced in Trinity Hall with staff being available during the academic year 20/21 at times in line with College guidance on face-to-face meetings.
- **Marino Institute of Education:** 5-year Service Level Agreement agreed between Trinity Disability Service and M.I.E. in May 2021.

- The Equality Committee set up a sub-committee to review provision of support for staff with disabilities in September 2020. This committee called 'Staff Disability Working Group' was chaired by Professor Na Fu, Trinity Business School.
- **DS Social Media** a Student Social Media Content Creator was recruited at the beginning of the academic year to create and publish student-focused and informative social media posts consistently across DS channels throughout the academic year.
- **Social Media Accessibility:** Two social media accessibility campaigns were run, one in each semester. The first campaign highlighted the issues surrounding social media accessibility while the second campaign advised on how to address these issues
- In 2020-21 an Occupational Therapist was hired to enhance the supports offered to students particularly focusing on graduate attributes, employability skills and international mobility. Key deliverables included:
- **Connections:** Although remote working has brought about barriers to developing new connections with potential internal and external stakeholders, it has also posed as a significant influencer, expanding our reach to a wider community. This year we welcomed connections with internal services to include Careers, Employability, TCPID and Civic Engagement through various project work, and external organisations, to include Microsoft, DELL, Enactus, CAN, AHEAD.
- **Resources:** Development of resources to include the monthly SWAY have ensured that students are informed on several topics to include Disclosure and Reasonable Accommodations within the workplace at a critical time in the year when students will be moving on to employment and thinking about career development.
- **My Career, My Disability drop-in:** May 2021 saw the introduction of the My Career, My Disability Drop-in service for students with disabilities, delivered in collaboration with the Careers Service. Sarah Jones, careers consultant, is available for 1 hour every Friday to discuss career development with students with disabilities and connects students to a specialist careers consultant for sector/department advice or onto the disability service for further disability related support (i.e., disclosure of disability/reasonable accommodations within the workplace). Sarah will be collecting feedback for this drop-in throughout the academic year.
- **Internship Support:** A successful accessible and inclusive recruitment process for the internship programme was carried out from March-June of semester. Candidates were given many opportunities to request reasonable accommodations and disclosure disability throughout the recruitment and onboarding intern journey and each step of the process was assessed and analysed to ensure accessible and inclusive practice methods were utilised. Workplace passports were developed after a needs assessment was carried out with interns who wished to disclose, and these distributed to relevant team members for initiation of reasonable accommodations.
- **DS Internships:** In January 2021 the DS also embarked upon a recruitment process to employ a student Summer Intern and a student Graduate Intern to work with the DS from June 2021. An accessible recruitment process was developed and both internship posts were endorsed by TCD Student's Union. 27 students applied for the Summer Internship while 6 applied for the Graduate Internship. All students were invited to interview and were provided with constructive feedback if unsuccessful.
- **DS Systems and Processes** In 2019-20 a new mechanism for reviewing each of the Disability Service processes was devised. This mechanism was revised and updated for 2020-21. Each process lead was tasked with analysing their process(es) and identifying

issues and changes that could address problems arising. Process leads presented their proposed changes to the DS team as part of the annual peer review before consulting with the DS Director to sign off on their updated process document.

- **SID Information Desk (SID):** Training, staff review and manual development: SID was introduced in July 2020 and was operational for the 2020-21 academic year. Training and an operational manual outlining improvements and enhancements was introduced.
- **Response to COVID-19:** The Disability Service reacted to the COVID-19 enforced closure of college by switching immediately to the provision of a full service remotely in March 2020. Throughout the 2020-21 academic year Disability Service staff were available to meet with students via MS Teams, Skype, by phone or via email. In person appointments were offered in certain circumstances where government restrictions allowed. A variety of online resources were developed and provided to students throughout the academic year including academic, assistive technology and online learning support through the ASKDS module on Blackboard; webinars and online group events covering a range of topics; and a dedicated webpage with information and links to resources relevant to studying and learning remotely.
- **disAbility Identity Project** - Preparations continued throughout 2020-21 for the Disability Service's transition to its new state-of-the-art home at the newly developed Printing House Square.
- **HEA Strategic Initiatives 2021:** Trinity Disability Service was successful in its funding application to develop strategic initiatives aiming to provide additional supports to Trinity's students with disabilities and to make Trinity a more inclusive and accessible University. Funding was awarded for strategic initiatives as follows:

Project	• HEA Funding
Sensory Processing Project	• €233,934
Inclusive Technology Project	• €67,956
Global Safety & Security Solution (Disability Functionality)	• €52,250
Physical Access Improvements	• €128,224
Total:	• €482,364

- **Trinity Sensory Processing Project** - is an ambitious development that aims to make Trinity more inclusive, by creating a variety of different sensory environments and resources to meet the needs of all students and staff across the various Trinity campuses. This involves reviewing and improving new and existing spaces across Trinity, creating increased awareness of the sensory environment amongst students and staff, and delivering specialist supports to students who experience any issues in managing and adapting the sensory environments of college. This project is part financed by funding secured as part of the HEA Strategic Initiatives 2021. A detailed progress update on the Sensory Processing Project is included as Appendix 4 of this report.
- **Trinity Ability Co_op** is a collaborative initiative between students, staff, and other stakeholders. The Co-op provides opportunities for students with disabilities to work together towards inclusion in Trinity. The Co-op is a great platform for developing skills in the areas of communications, teamwork, networking, and leadership, and

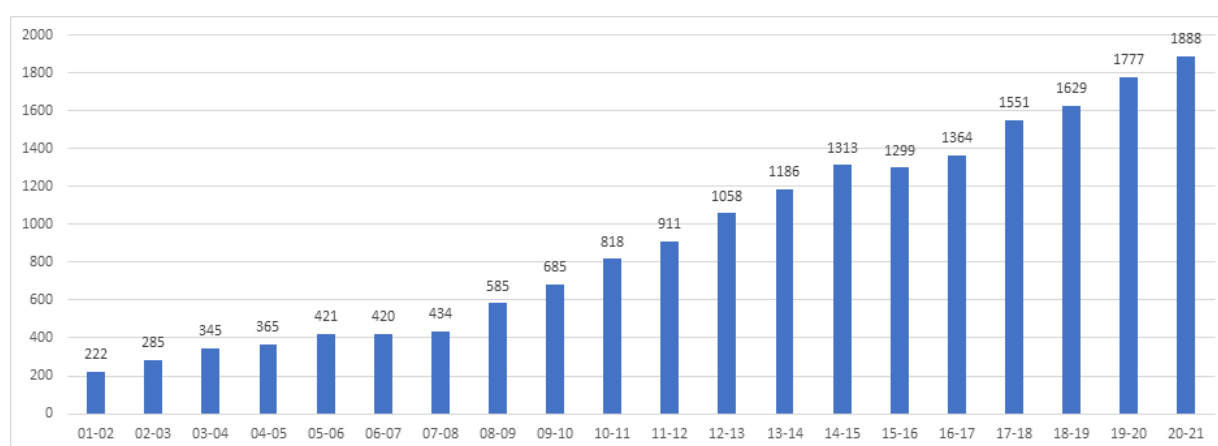
gathering experience that is beneficial for personal and academic development, as well as future employability and career-readiness.

- The Ability Co-Op is student-led, and all projects and activities are proposed and mutually agreed by its members. From media campaigns to creative workshops, students and staff can contribute and work together towards enhancing inclusion in Trinity. Projects completed during 2020-21 include:
 - The Anxiety Project.
 - Autism Awareness Project.
 - International Women's Week Project.
 - Inclusive Clubs and Societies Project.
- **Trinity Accessible Information Policy** was reviewed, updated, and approved to go to Board on 15th September 2021.

Appendix 1: Disability Service KPIs and Statistics 2020-21

Student journey through Trinity

A key feature of the Disability Service's strategy is the use of objective measures as part of the evidence base on which the service to students can be evaluated and improved. Keeping track of student registrations, disability types, and changes in the rates of progression, withdrawal, and completion allows the service to adapt to issues that may otherwise go unnoticed. The data in this section is presented to illustrate the key features of the student journey. The number of students registering with the Disability Service has risen significantly since 2001. The graph in **Figure 1** below illustrates steady increases in the years after the Service was established, with a doubling of registrations over 7 years from 222 in 2001-02, to 434 in 2007-08. In contrast, the rate of increase accelerated from 2007-08, with the numbers more than doubling in just 4 years to 911 in 2011-12, registrations have continued to increase up to 2020-21.



While student numbers in general have increased in Trinity since 2001, the rate of registrations for students with disabilities has also increased proportionately. **Figure 2** below demonstrates proportionate increases in line with the numbers above. In 2001-02, the proportion of TCD students registered with the DS was 1.5%, this had doubled to 3.2% by 2006-07. By 2020-21, the proportion of students registered with DS, as a percentage of the TCD student population tripled to 10%. The number of postgraduates with disabilities was first recorded in 2010-11. The trend shows a steady rise in postgraduate students registered up to 2014-15 and an increase in 2017-2018. The proportion of postgraduate students registering with the DS has risen slightly in 2020-21 but remains significantly smaller than the undergraduate proportion.

Year	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Total Students	911	1058	1186	1313	1299	1364	1551	1629	1777	1888
Undergrad Students	809	940	993	1063	1088	1185	1327	1474	1613	1689
% of Total Undergrad	6.7%	7.7%	8.0%	8.4%	8.6%	9.3%	10%	11.1%	12.0%	12.6%
Postgrad Students	102	118	193	250	211	179	199	155	164	199
% of Total Postgrad	2.0%	2.7%	4.5%	5.6%	4.7%	3.7%	4%	3.0%	3.0%	3.6%
% of All Students	5.4%	6.4%	7.1%	7.7%	7.4%	7.7%	8.6%	8.8%	9.4%	10%

Figure 2: Number and proportion of students registered 2011-12 to 2020-21

Registrations by Disability Type and Faculty

The figure below illustrates the number of registrations by disability type and Faculty during 2020-21. Students with disabilities tend to choose Arts, Humanities and Social Science courses above the other two faculties. However, in recent years there has been a relative rise in the numbers of students with disabilities in Health Sciences.

Disability Category	Total	Arts, Hum. & S. Science	Eng., Maths & Science	Health Sciences	Multi Faculty Multi School includes TSM
ADHD or ADD	153	74	40	20	19
Autistic Spectrum	155	47	76	8	24
Blind / Visual	30	12	6	8	4
Deaf / Hard of Hearing	41	26	7	6	2
DCD / Dyspraxia	108	48	33	10	17
Intellectual Disability	5	5	0	0	0
Mental Health	505	219	94	110	82
Neurological	81	25	19	18	19
Physical Disability	117	61	17	26	13
Significant Ongoing Illness	286	102	61	93	30
Speech Language & Communication Disorders	14	3	5	4	2
Specific Learning Difficulty	393	132	113	110	38
Total	1888	754	471	413	250

Figure 3: Breakdown of Total Students registered with DS by Disability Category and Faculty in 2020-21

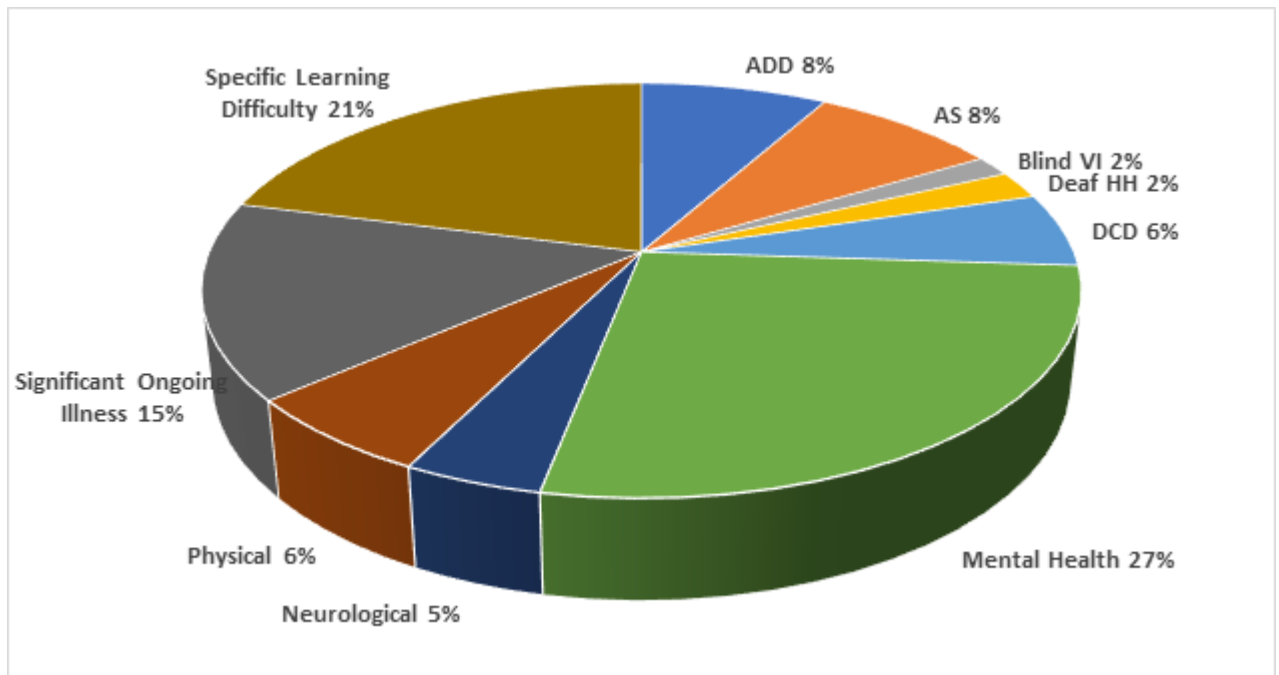


Figure 4: Breakdown of Total Students registered with DS by Category of Disability for 2020-21

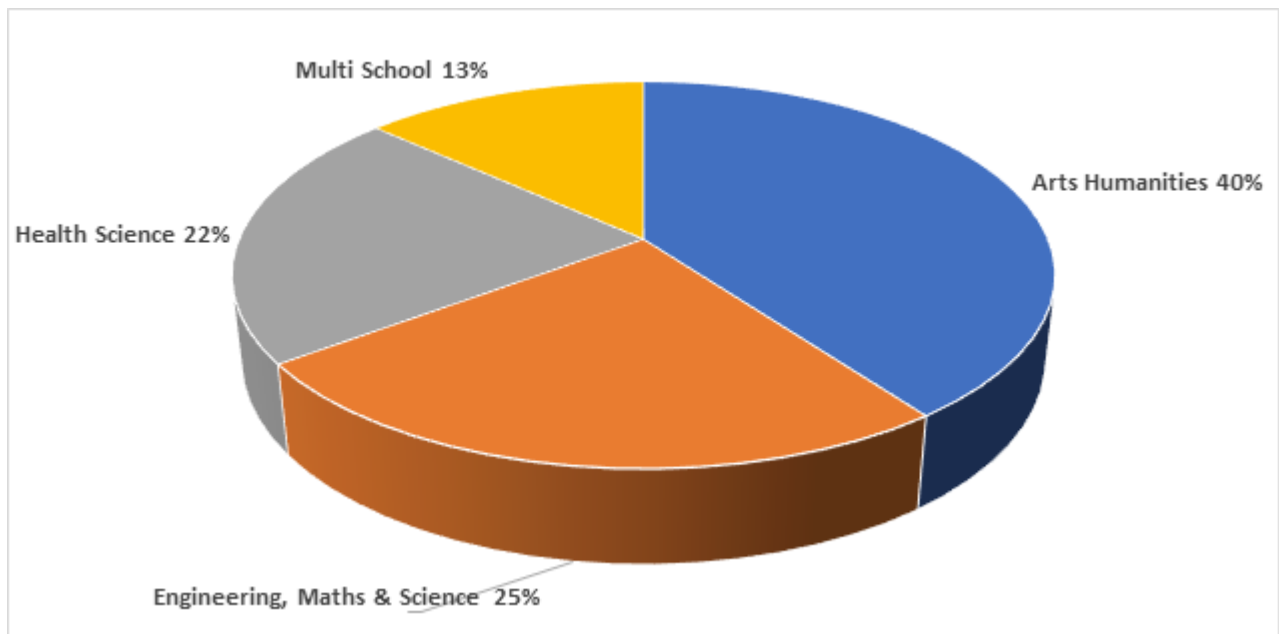


Figure 5: Breakdown of Total Students registered with DS by Faculty for 2020-21

Rate of increase or decrease of student registrations by disability type

The graphs below (**Figures 6 to 13**) illustrate the individual growth patterns of student registrations by disability type over a 10-year period: 2010-11 to 2020-21. The number of students with physical and sensory disabilities continues to remain low and under-represented compared with other disability types.

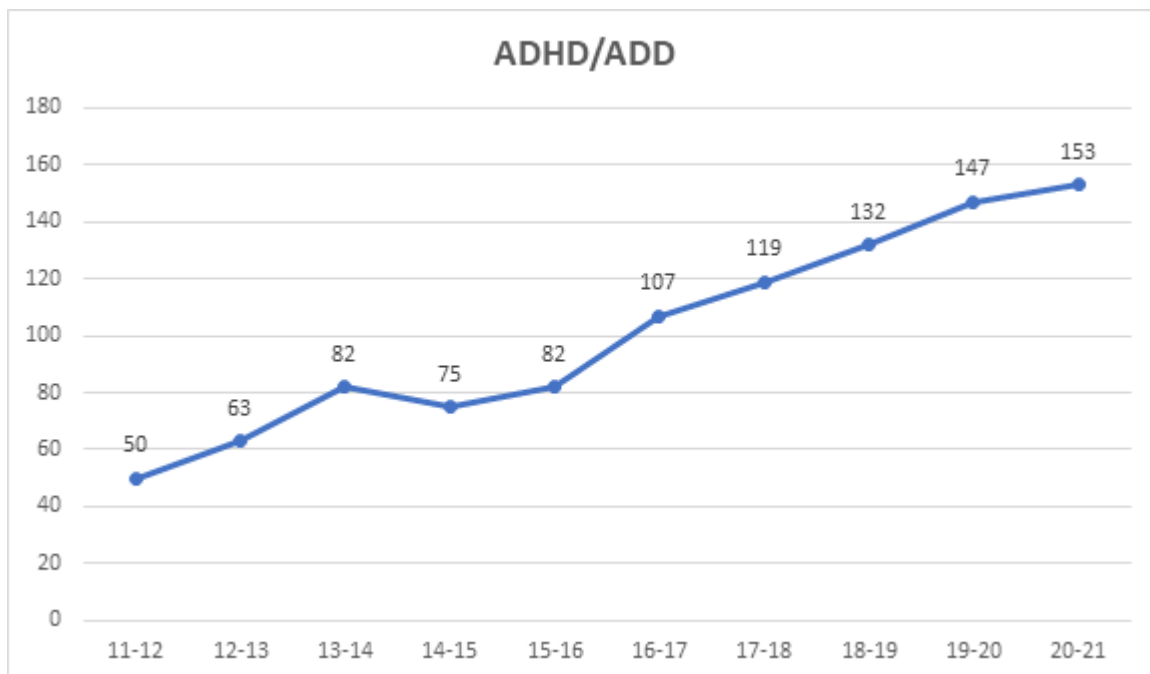


Figure 6: Students with ADD or ADHD 2010-11 to 2020-21

Students with ADD or ADHD are an emerging group since 2007-08. Like students with Autism and DCD prior to 2007-08, as a group they are more likely to be “hidden” among the general student population, or among those with Specific Learning Difficulties.

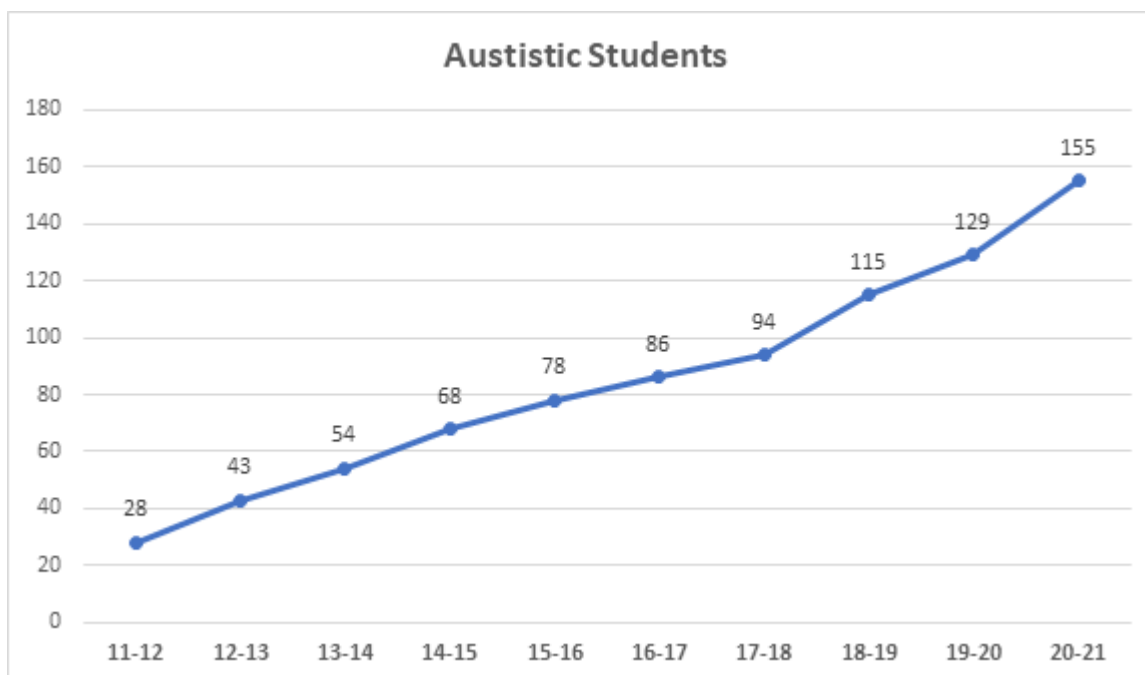


Figure 7: Autistic Students 2010-11 to 2020-21

The increase in Autistic students attending Trinity is significant, albeit from an exceptionally low base, since 2007-08. Like the rationale for students with mental health difficulties, there was (and still is), a legacy of under-diagnosis and under-disclosure to 'catch up on.' Also, through the work of numerous staff and students in various departments over the past decade, Trinity has a reputation for being a supportive environment for Autistic students.

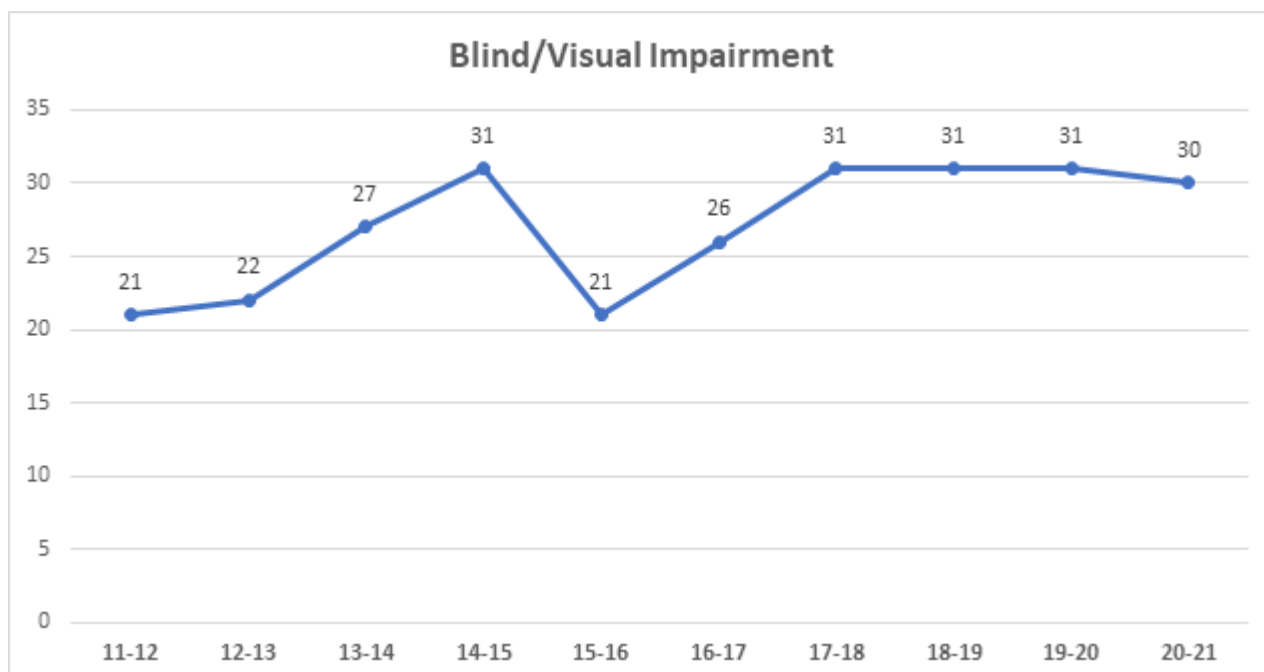


Figure 8: Blind/Visually Impaired students 2010-11 to 2020-21

Students who are blind or visually impaired, like those who are deaf or hard of hearing, enter Trinity in small numbers. In contrast to those who are deaf or hard of hearing, however, they are at minimal risk of withdrawal.

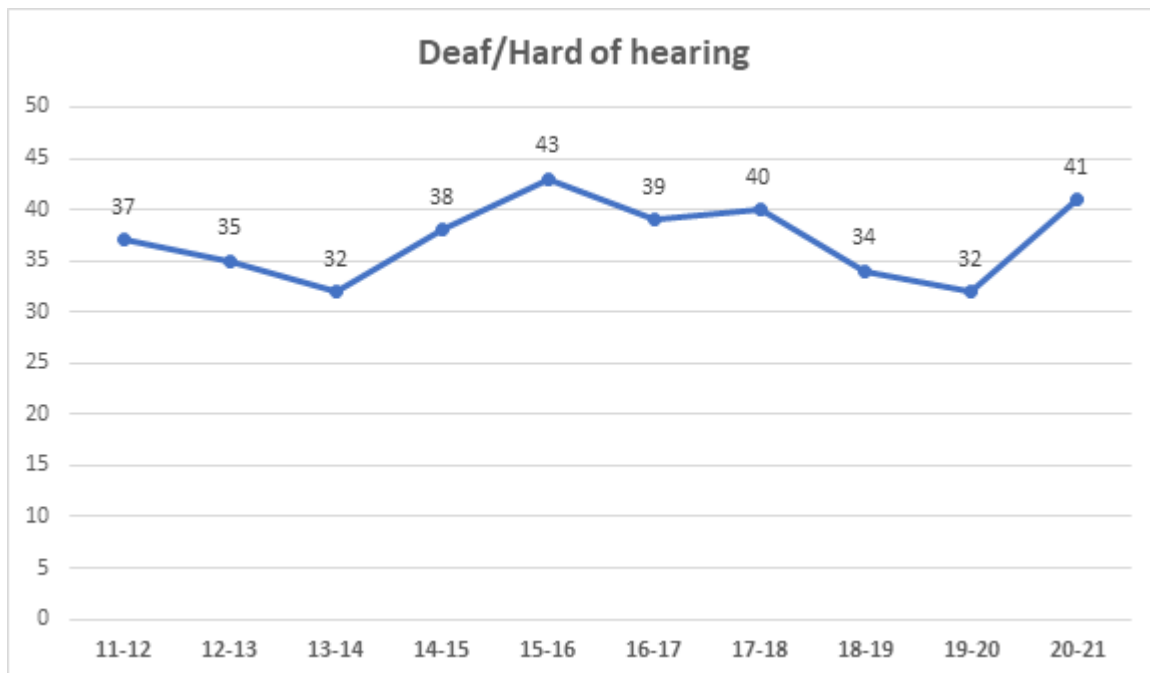


Figure 9: Deaf/Hard of Hearing students 2010-11 to 2020-21

As stated above, deaf, or hard of hearing students enter Trinity in exceptionally small numbers. As a group, they face considerable difficulties in post-primary education, are less competitive at admissions, and are at higher risk of withdrawal from higher education than any other group by disability type.

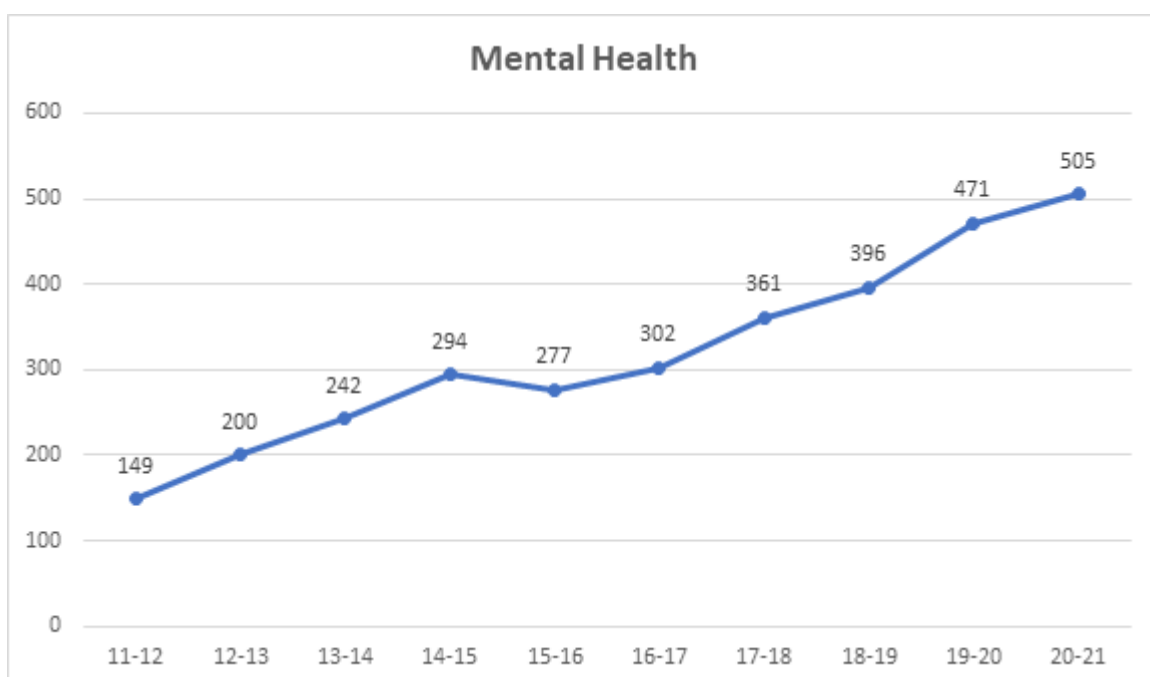


Figure 10: Students with mental health difficulties 2010-11 to 2020-21

Trinity has the highest number and the highest proportion of students with mental health difficulties of any HEI in Ireland (AHEAD surveys). Numerous factors have been suggested by way of explanation. Firstly, mental health conditions are regarded as the most prevalent of all disability types and therefore it is likely that they are simply under-diagnosed and under-disclosed in other HEIs. In Trinity, there are considerable resources available to diagnose and support students with mental health difficulties. The Health Centre provides a Psychiatric Service, and the Disability Service provides Occupational Therapy support. There is also a College Counselling Service and a Tutorial service. It is suggested that collectively, these supports also attract a higher number of students with mental health difficulties among CAO applicants.

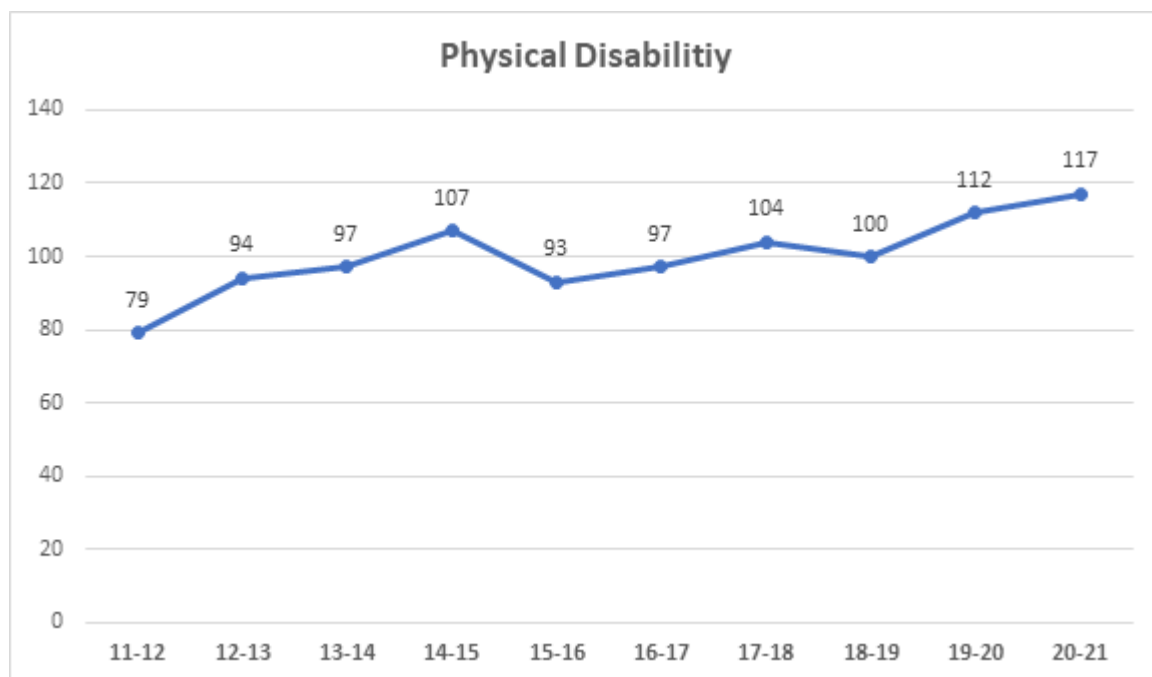


Figure 11: Students with physical disabilities 2010-11 to 2020-21

Students with physical disabilities are under-represented in Trinity and Higher Education nationally compared with other disability types. However, in recent years the numbers have increased compared to those with sensory disabilities.

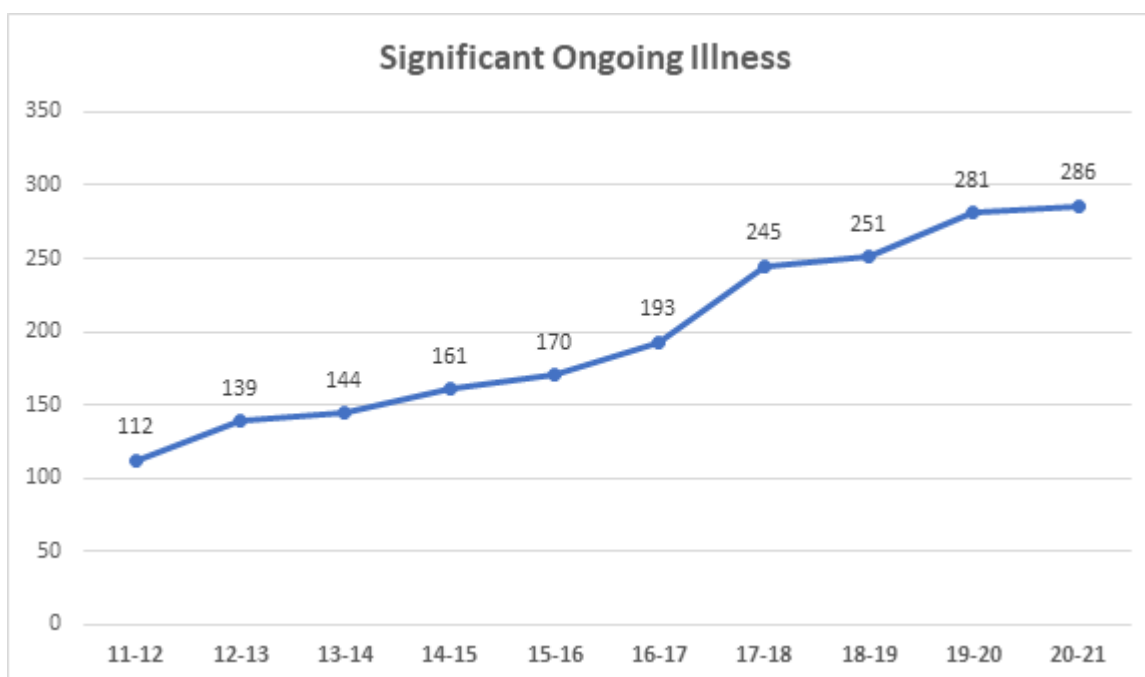
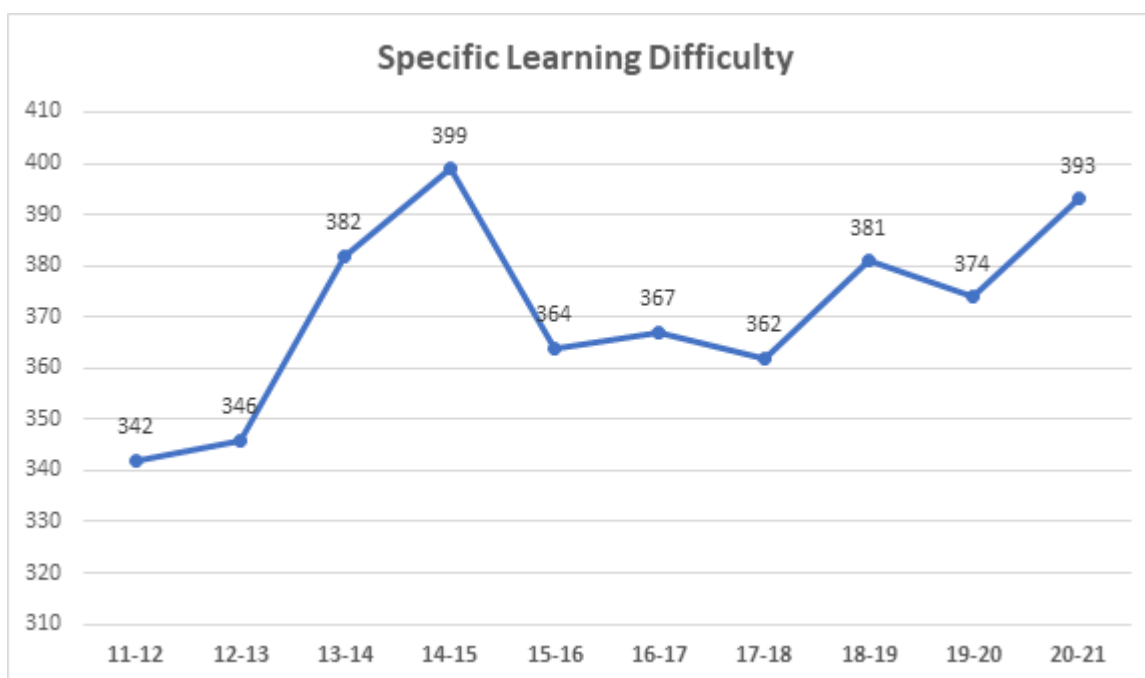


Figure 12: Students with significant ongoing illnesses 2010-11 to 2020-21

Students with significant ongoing illness (SOI) represent the most varied disability type as they are categorised by the broadest criteria. There is no definitive list of all the medical conditions that could be considered SOIs, but the most common conditions are: cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, Crohn's disease, diabetes, and multiple sclerosis. There is also an overlap between some SOIs and other categories of disability. For example, arthritic conditions vary and can be considered a physical disability due to the impact on mobility; epilepsy has more recently been considered a neurological condition, and mental health conditions can overlap with fatigue conditions. These discrepancies in categorisation make it difficult to think of the SOI group in clearly defined terms.



The number of students with specific learning difficulties, predominantly dyslexia, have decreased marginally over the past 6 years. These decreases due to two factors: firstly, the increase in the diagnosis rates of ADHD, Autism, and DCD has lessened the numbers seeking a diagnosis specifically for dyslexia (there is a high comorbidity among these conditions); secondly, the criterion for DARE ensures that only those with two or more literacy difficulties (at or below the 10th percentile) are eligible for a points reduction at admission.

When do students register with the Disability Service?

Knowing when students register with the Disability Service is useful because certain groups tend to register early and others later. It is also useful to consider how supports and resources are 'front loaded' at the start of the year. Most students (401 or 73%) that registered with the Disability Service in 2020-21 registered in the months of August, September, and October, while the remaining students (189 or 27%) registered in comparatively small numbers in the other months of the year.

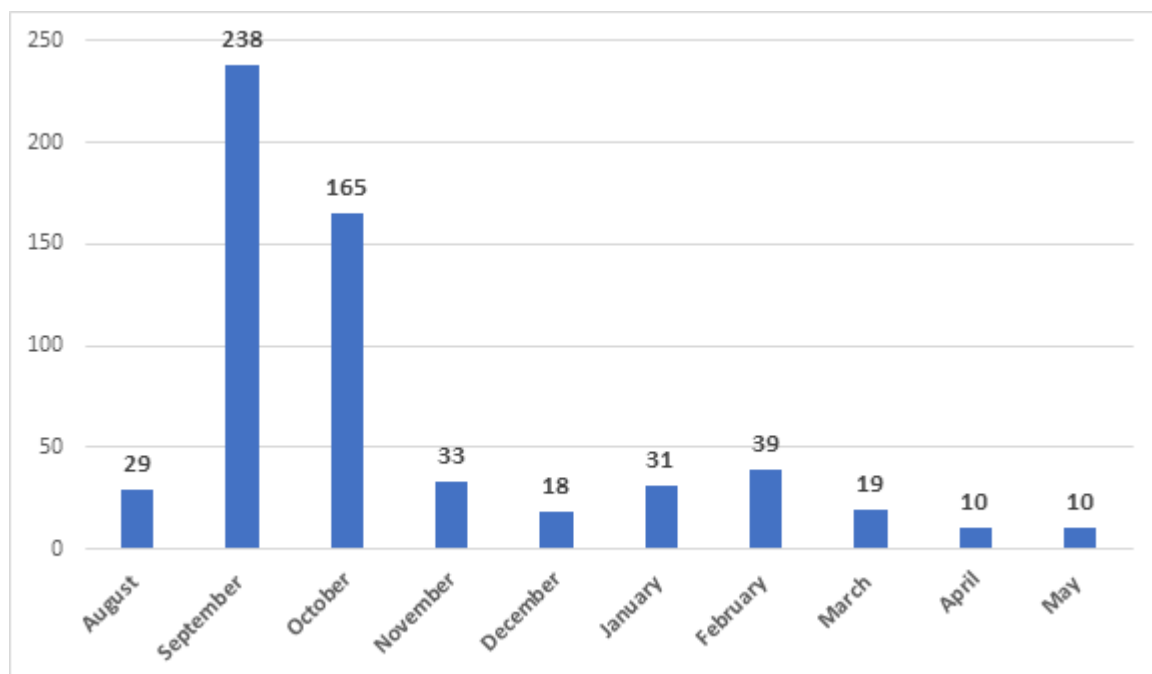


Figure 14: All New DS Registrations by Month August 2020 to May 2021

New first year undergraduate registrations

Most students registering in any one year are first year students. Between 2010-11 and 2014-15 the number of first year students registering with the DS averaged 193. In the past 5 years, 2016-17 to 2020-21, that average has increased to 325.

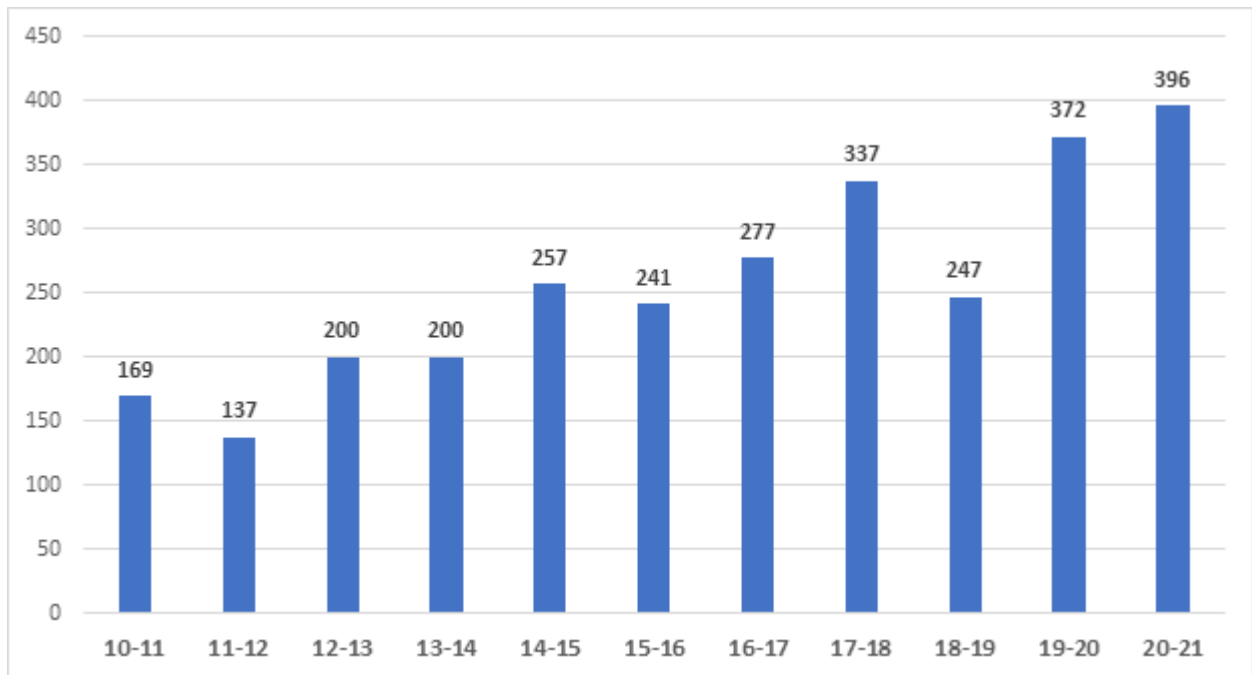


Figure 16 below illustrates the breakdown of new first year registrants by entry route: DARE, supplemental (205); Merit or required points (92); and Mature Students (19).

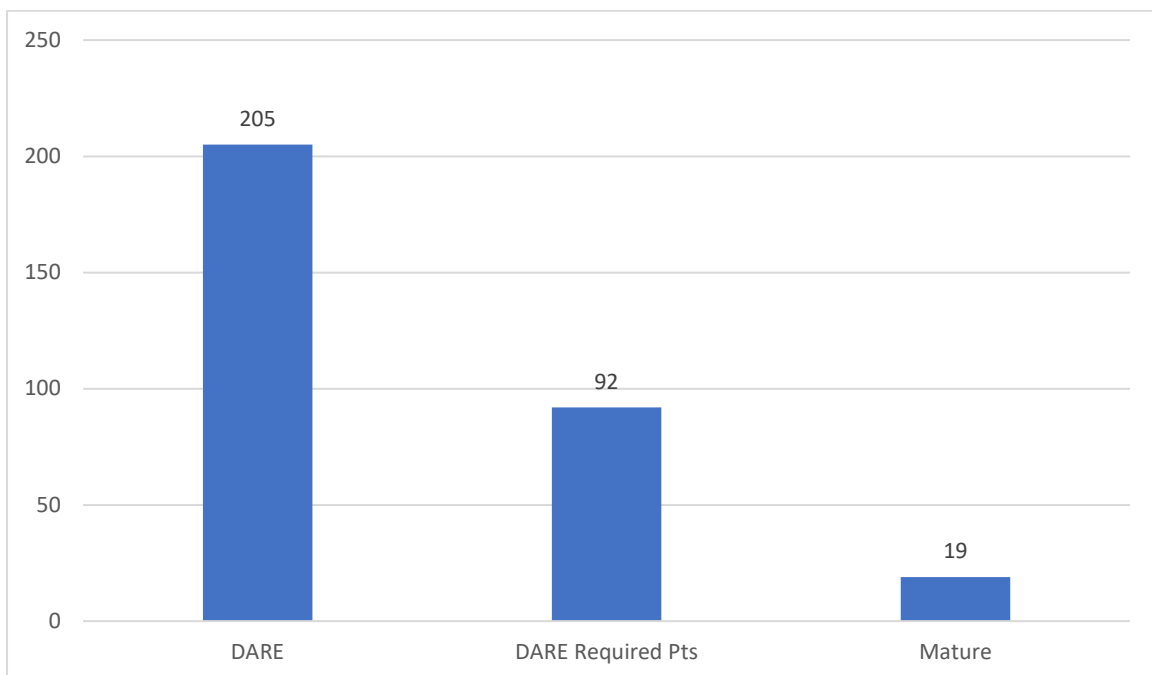
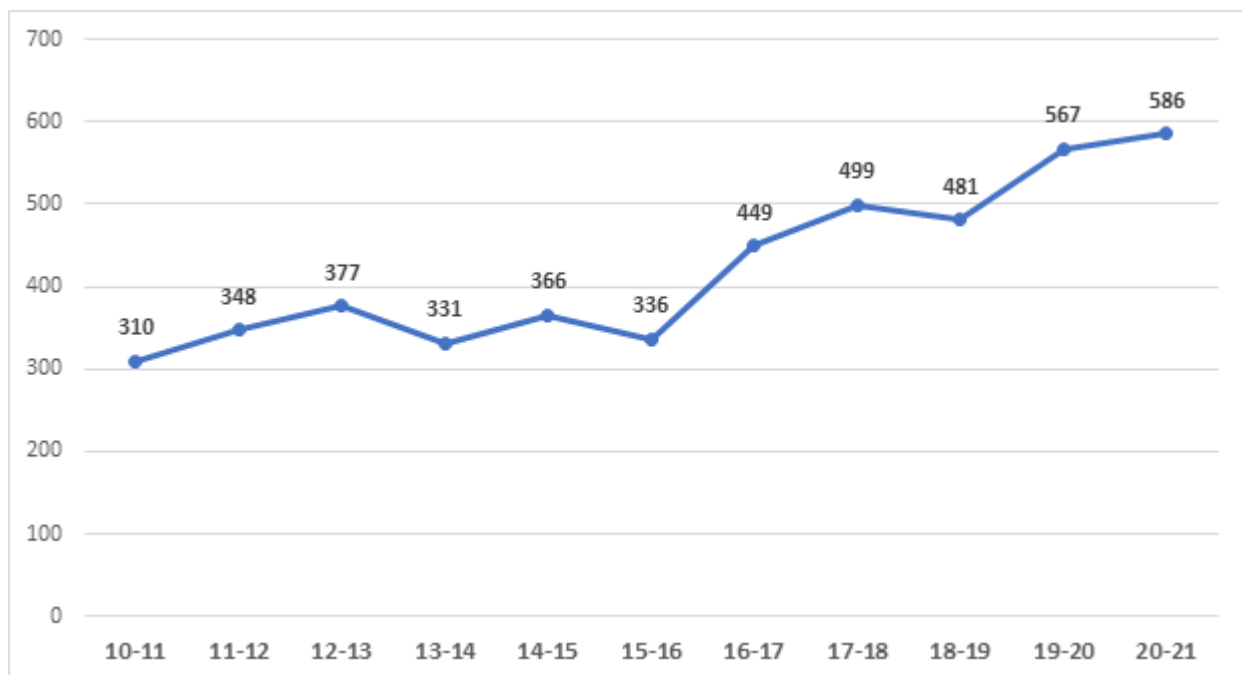


Figure 16: New first year undergraduate registrations by entry route 2020-21

Figure 17 below illustrates the number of new students registering with the DS by Academic Year from 2010-11 to 2020-21.



The chart below illustrates the breakdown of newly registered students by disability type for the academic year 2020-21.

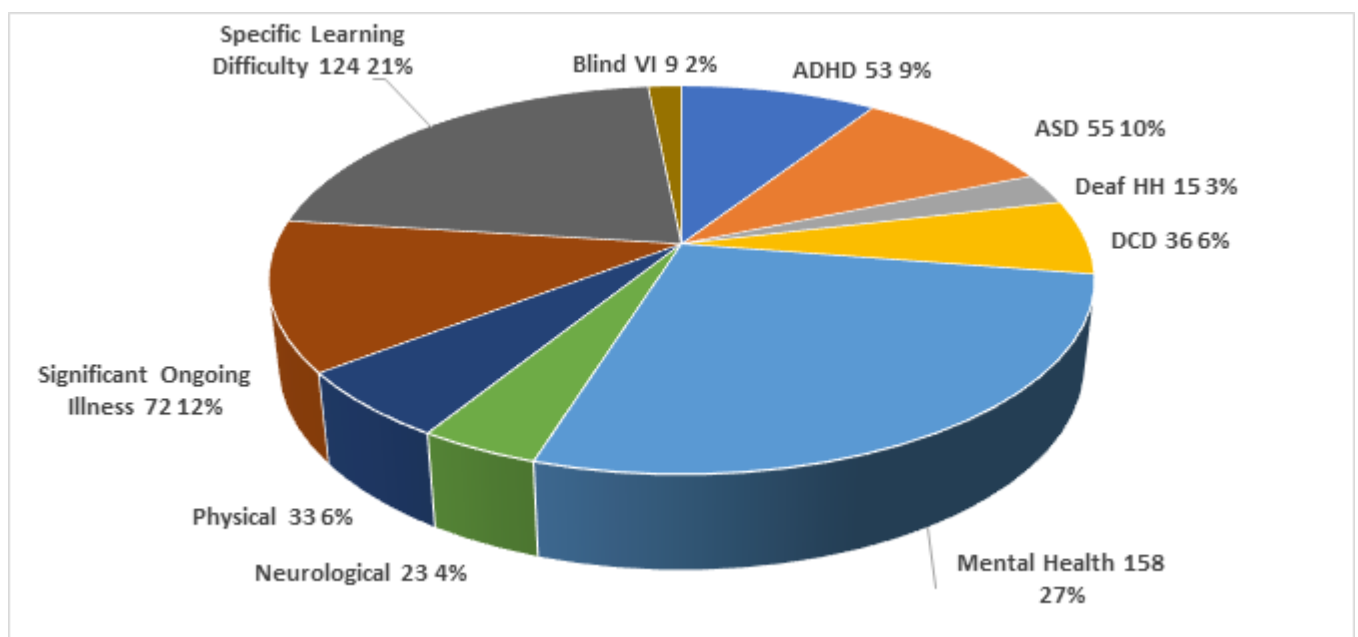


Figure 18: Illustrates the Category of Disability for all new student registrations 2020-21

The chart below illustrates the percentage breakdown of new registrants by Faculty for the academic year 2020-21. Students with disabilities tend to choose Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences courses above the other two Faculties. However, in recent years there has been a relative rise in the number of students with disabilities in Health Sciences.

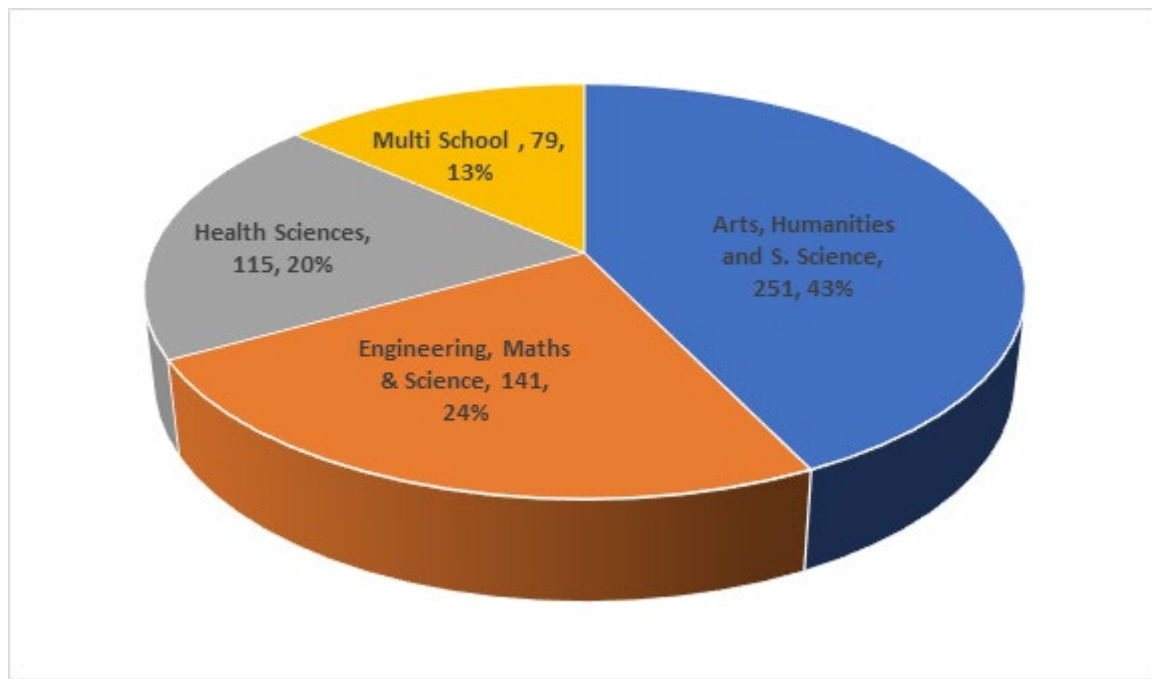
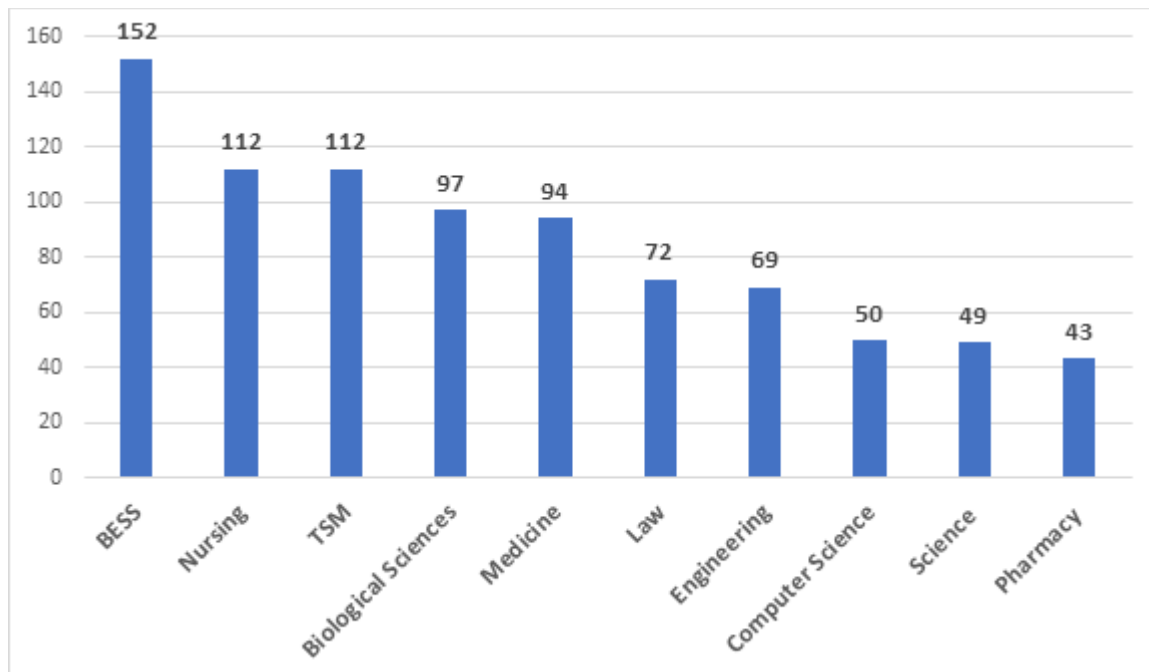


Figure 19: Percentage breakdown of new registered students by Faculty 2020-21



Disclosures through LENS reports

The table below shows the number of disclosures through the issuing of LENS reports in the year 2020-21. These are students registered with the Disability Service who agree to disclose their disability and reasonable accommodations to their school or department via their LENS report in SITS.

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences			718
Business	34	Linguistics, Speech and Communication Studies	40
Drama, Film and Music	18	Law	74
Education	25	Psychology	50
English	32	Religion	15
Histories and Humanities	74	Social Science and Philosophy	222
Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies	29	Social Work and Social Policy	40
AHSS Multi School	265		
Faculty of Engineering, Maths and Science			444
Biochemistry and Immunology	3	Genetics and Microbiology	2
Chemistry	6	Mathematics	24
Computer Science and Statistics	81	Natural Sciences	10
Engineering	90	Physics	5
EMS Multi School	223		
Faculty of Health Sciences			402
Dental Science	16	Pharmacy	50
Medicine	111	Occupational Therapy	27
Radiation	6	Physiotherapy	21
Nursing and Midwifery	143	Human Nutrition and Dietetics	6
HS Multi School	22		
Trinity Multi Faculty			240
Total			1804

Figure 21: Disclosures through LENS

Examination Accommodations

The graph below illustrates the changes in the provision of exam accommodations over a three-year period from 2018-19 to 2020-21. The changes reflect increases in students registering with the Disability Service over the same period.

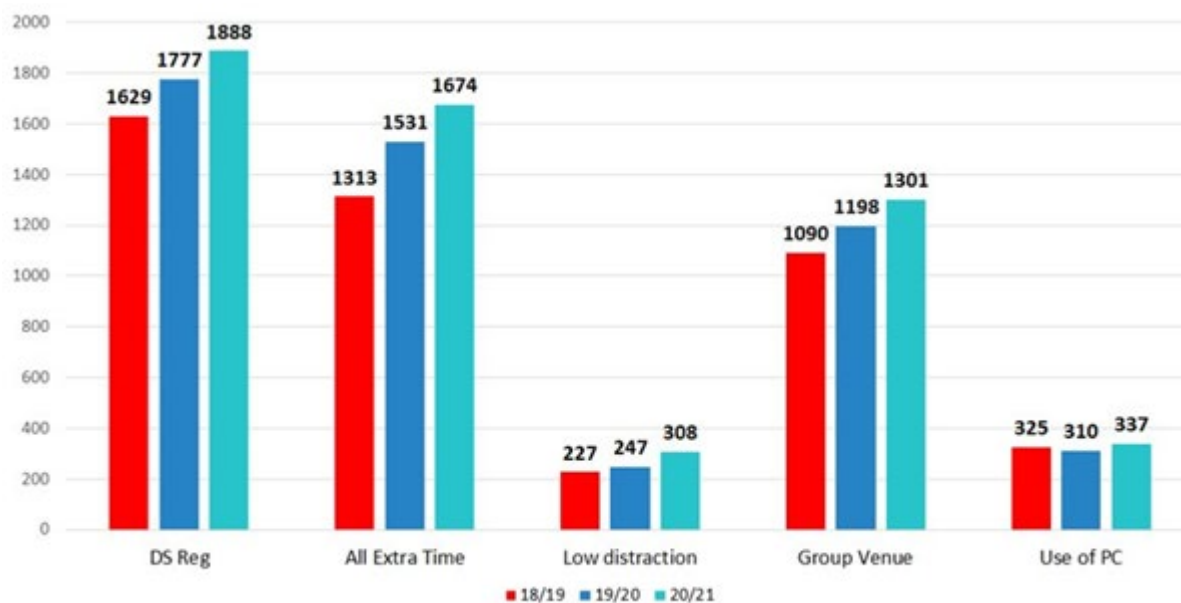


Figure 22: Increases in exam accommodations from 2018-19 to 2020-21

- DS reg: All students registered with the Disability Service
- All extra time: All students with extra exam time including 10, 15 and 20 minutes extra per hour
- Low distraction: All students who attend a low distraction venue
- Group venue: All students who attend a Group Venue (alternative to the main venues)
- Use of PC: All students who use a computer in exams

Changes in exam accommodations 2016-17 to 2020-21

The table below lists the changes in exam accommodations during the five-year period, 2016-17 to 2020-21. Most students registered are accommodated with extra time of 10 minutes per hour and a group venue. Additional supports beyond this 'baseline' are allocated in small numbers. Since semester 2 in 2019-20 most exams moved online, and additional supports and services were required to ensure students were supported.

	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
Students registered with DS	1364	1551	1629	1777	1888
Total with exam accommodations	1109	1241	1400	1526	1674
Total with no exam accommodations	255	310	229	251	214
10 mins per hour	1023	1192	1253	1443	1580
15 mins per hour	28	29	42	38	53
20 mins per hour	6	10	15	23	19
Low distraction venue	122	148	227	247	308
Individual test centre – general	58	68	83	78	78
Group Test Centre	891	1019	1090	1198	1301
Reader	2	2	4	0	0
Scribe	10	6	6	0	0
Use of computer	278	298	325	310	337

Figure 23: Changes in exam accommodations 2016-17 to 2020-21