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The evolution of university access programmes in Ireland

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Abstract

The aim of this report is to explore the historical development of third level access programmes in Ireland that is programmes aimed at helping improving the access to third level education of the socio-economically disadvantaged.. One key objective is to locate the UCD higher education access programme – New ERA – within the context of developments in national policy and access initiatives in Ireland. The report also presents a brief overview of previous evaluations of targeted initiatives in Ireland as well as barriers to Higher Education as outlined by Lynch & O Riordan’s 1996 study which provided the framework for the development of New ERA.

Section 2 provides a definition of ‘access’ and ‘disadvantage’. Section 3 discusses the development of relevant policy on access to higher education. Section 4 examines previous evaluations of targeted initiatives. Section 5 describes the evolution of New ERA and section 6 places the New ERA programme in the context of tackling barriers to access as outlined by Lynch & O’Riordan. Section 7 focuses on current and possible future developments in the New ERA Access Programme and finally section 8 concludes.

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1. Introduction

It has long been recognized that education plays a major role in social mobility. However, while the demand for skilled and educated labour has increased and the number of people attending higher education institutions is constantly growing, certain economic groups are benefiting more than others. In recent years the government has invested heavily in promoting access to higher education, particularly among lower socio-economic groups, but while the absolute number of student from these groups attending higher level education have improved, they have not kept pace with the growth in participation by other socio-economic categories.

Access initiatives and policy focus on tackling a broad range of recognized social, educational and financial barriers to access. There is a particular focus on the easing of financial and educational constraints.

In addition to these constraints, the culture of the university is recognized as an obstacle to the integration of students from lower socio-economic groups who may not have the cultural capital needed to adjust quickly to the university environment. This is generally left to be dealt with by the universities themselves as direct interference in college culture may be seen as imposing on the universities' autonomy.

According to the paper *'Power Privilege and Points'* by Fleming and Gallagher (2003), since 2000 there has been a growing consistency in the analysis of policy related to the development of access and participation in higher education. In particular, the evaluation of current access initiatives by Osborne and Leith (2000), Skilbeck and Connell (2000), Clancy (2001) and the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education (2001) have informed the development of access to higher education. Policy is also informed by The Report of Commission on the Points System (1999) and the White Paper: Charting our Education Future (1995a)

This report aims to provide a historical overview of the evolution of access programmes in Ireland by presenting a thorough review of policy initiatives, third-level programmes and research evidence on access in Ireland. This review is the first to be produced as part of the evaluation of the UCD higher education access programme – New ERA. Section 2 provides a definition of 'access' and 'disadvantage'. Section 3 discusses

the development of relevant policy on access to higher education. Section 4 examines previous evaluations of targeted initiatives. Section 5 describes the evolution of New ERA and section 6 places the New ERA programme in the context of tackling barriers to access as outlined by Kathleen Lynch and Claire O' Riordan. Section 7 focuses on current and possible future developments in the New ERA Access Programme and finally section 8 concludes. A summary of the Trinity, Maynooth and New ERA access Programmes can be found in the Appendix.

2. Defining Access and Disadvantage: The target group for the New ERA Programme

The effects of economic and social disadvantage on participation and performance in higher education are multifaceted and, as such, it is difficult to define what is meant by 'educational disadvantage' and 'access initiatives'. In Ireland many initiatives focus on tackling barriers to higher education and, as a result, these barriers have served as a working definition of access. The barriers of access to higher education are divided under three headings: financial, social and educational.

In policy discussions, the principal organising term is '*equity*' envisioned as

'fairness; equality of treatment where comparable features and conditions pertain; and opportunity to participate and contribute, without hindrance through prejudice and discriminatory customary practice' (Skilbeck and Connell, 2000)

Equity in this sense takes into account, not only equality of treatment, but also equality of opportunity. The term 'equity' encompasses as many dimensions of equality linked to education, including terms such as: equality of opportunity, equality of access, retention and participation. There is an added dimension to access and participation when looking at international literature in that the structural aspects of the educational system, in particular, the structure of second level, creates different barriers to higher education for different countries.

In defining educational disadvantage, initiatives such as New ERA and the HEAR (Higher Education Access Route) Scheme are focused on four main criteria for identifying and targeting students. A student is considered disadvantaged if there is

- no previous history of progression to higher level education in their family
- their family income is below a certain level
- they are students at a designated disadvantaged school
- they are a member of the six under-represented groups outlined by Patrick Clancy in *The Social Background of Higher Education Entrants* (2001).

2.1 Defining Access

According to Skilbeck and Connell (2000) 'access' can mean the process by which learners may start a programme of education and training where previous knowledge, skill or competence is recognised. Access is also understood to '*encompass not only entry to higher education, but also retention and successful completion*' (Skilbeck and Connell, 2000).

Fleming and Gallagher (2003) report that access is defined by the European Council as

'the widening of participation in good quality higher education to all sectors of society; the extension of participation to include currently under-represented groups; and a recognition that participation extends beyond entry to successful completion (Council of Europe, 1999).

However they point out that it is important to be aware of the difference between widening participation and increased access. While higher education may open its doors to under-represented groups and participation may increase it does not necessarily lead to the increased retention or the equal representation of lower socio-economic groups.

Increased demand has led to widening participation across the board as university education expands to incorporate market pressures for advanced skills in technology, industry and services. This growth however has not extended evenly across the socio-economic groups and, while there has been a net gain in the number of students from lower socio-economic groups attending university, it has not kept pace with the growth experienced in other groups. Patrick Clancy in *The Social Background of Higher Education Entrants* (2001) shows that even as the number of places in university has expanded, only 25% of the relevant population of Unskilled Manual Workers and Semi-Skilled Manual Workers participate in higher level education. By contrast, one half of the relevant population of Salaried Employees and Lower Professionals and 75% of the Employers, Managers, Higher Professionals and Farmers participate in higher level education.

The Council of Europe recognises that students from lower socio-economic groups suffer from two distinct forms of 'educational disadvantage' which affect their access to and participation in higher education. They suffer from 'horizontal' under-representation and 'vertical disparities'. This means that students from lower socio-economic groups are

firstly under-represented in universities as a whole, and secondly, when they do enter, they are less likely to be found in more prestigious courses, positions and universities (Fleming and Gallagher, 2003).

It is generally accepted that the main barriers to 'access' by lower socio-economic groups are financial and educational and as such, universities usually address the issue from these perspectives. For many third level initiatives, the focus is on financial and educational factors in particular. However, while both financial and educational barriers are substantial, to focus exclusively on these areas is to misrepresent the challenges facing initiatives that aim to promote inclusion.

According to Carpenter (2004), previous research on access to higher education highlighted not only the visible economic effects of broader socio-economic disadvantage but some of the more indirect social and psychological effects as well. The consequences of poverty were direct and immediate in that poverty created cultures in which people lacked a sense of 'ownership' in relation to higher education. The sense of being an outsider impacted negatively on students' hopes and aspirations through creating a sense of inferiority and of social exclusion.

This extends into the very infrastructure of the university. The provision of general services which help facilitate the participation of a group with diverse needs and circumstances is important in providing an environment of inclusion. According to Carpenter (2004) it is not enough that the university opens its door, but once open, the infrastructure required for students to participate without sacrificing other responsibilities, needs to be provided.

2.2 Targeting

In order to participate on the HEAR Scheme students must provide documentation on family income below an income level that is loosely based on the 'local authority higher education grant part-maintenance' upper limit. The assessment of assets of own account workers and farmers may be taken into consideration. Applicants must be members of the six under-represented groups outlined by Patrick Clancy in *The Social Background of Higher Education Entrants* (2001), and confirm that parents have not attended third level education or have only done so as mature students. Applicants to the scheme will also

normally have to be in attendance at a school linked to the Access Office of a participating institution for the duration of their second level education.

The HEAR targeting criteria is not considered wholly inclusive, as right of access to special university schemes is largely determined by attendance at designated schools. In general, this works reasonably well in urban areas, and the students who participate perform above average at university, but there is the concern that focusing on designated schools may unfairly exclude students in need who attend other schools[†].

Students who were not linked to designated disadvantaged schools can be picked up in New ERA after they had already entered college, however as resources became stretched the number of these became limited. Through the UCD 150 scheme, students who did not qualify for the HEAR scheme but who were economically disadvantaged could enter UCD on their own merit and then receive financial support from UCD and educational support from New ERA. This scheme was only available to students entering UCD in the academic year 2006/07.

2.3 Conclusion

Initiatives such as New ERA target specific groups who are perceived to be disadvantaged in accessing higher level education and offers support based on the perceptible barriers to higher level education. This can be problematic in that the target criteria generally define what is considered as educational disadvantage. In particular, targeting students through schools which are designated as disadvantaged may also serve to exclude students in genuine need who do not attend these schools. Currently attention is being paid to the fact that educational disadvantage does not begin in third or even second level education, but is rooted in socio-economic inequalities in society as a whole. Carpenter 2004 cautions that it is important that *'the operationalization of equity categories are kept under review and do not become rigid'* (Carpenter, 2004).

[†] Based on communications with the director of New ERA

3. Historical Overview of Access Policy in Ireland

Several governmental acts and policy documents inform the development of policy in relation to the facilitation of access and participation in higher education of students deemed economically and socially disadvantaged. These Acts include: *The Higher Education Authority Act (1971)*, *The Universities Act (1997)*, *The Education Act (1998)* and the *Report of the High Level Group on University Equality Policies (2004)*. In 1995 the government produced two national policy statements which set out their objectives for tackling educational disadvantage: the 1995 White Paper on Education and a report by the HEA Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education. Recently the government has released a strategy statement for 2004-2007 and an action plan for 2005-2007 entitled '*Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education in Ireland*'.

3.1 Higher Education Authority Act (1971) and the Universities Act (1997)

The movement towards equity and the promotion of access to higher education in Ireland can be traced back to the Higher Education Authority Act 1971 and the Universities Act 1997. Under section 3 of the Higher Education Authority Act 1971 the Government has responsibility for:

- a) *promoting the democratisation of the structure of higher education*
- b) *furthering the development of higher education*
- c) *promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in Higher education*

(Skilbeck and Connell, 2000)

According to the Higher Education Authority's report entitled '*Access and Equity in Higher Education*' (2000), emphasis is placed on the role of the institutions themselves in promoting equity while the Authority plays a managerial role. Under section 18 universities are also given responsibility to support access to higher education for socially and economically disadvantaged groups in society. This commitment is extended further in that universities are also required to facilitate entry of these groups through the development and implementation of new policy initiatives.

3.2 White Paper: Charting our Education Future, 1995

The Green Paper: *Education for a Changing World's* (1992) objectives for improving transfer rates to third level education included

- *'The development of direct links between third level institutions and selected schools, with designation of an appropriate staff member in each third level institution to oversee this.'*
- *'The development of support and access programmes to increase access and improve retention'*

The White Paper '*Charting our Educational Future*' (1995a) recognized the effectiveness of securing a set number of places for those from disadvantaged backgrounds as a means of tackling educational disadvantage:

'Authority, in consultation with third level institutions, will be asked to advise on the most appropriate and effective means of achieving an annual increase in participation of 500 students from lower socio-economic groups in third level education over the next five years.' (Department of Education and Science, 1995a)

According to Carpenter (2004), the White Paper aimed for this policy to be delivered by the third level sector as a whole and not the universities alone. Each third level institution had to promote participation by providing financial, educational and cultural support to students from lower income backgrounds. Regarding financial support it was recommended that undergraduate fees in higher education institutions (HEIs) be abolished from 1996/97 and criteria for the allocation of student grants be revised. In addition, the value of the grant was to be increased.

In order to support students at second level the White Paper stated that:

'each third level institution will be encouraged to develop links with designated second-level schools, building on existing good practice.' (Department of Education and Science, 1995a)

In the short term it was envisioned that all designated disadvantaged second level schools would become linked to a third level institution which would

'support programmes within these schools which promote awareness and understanding among second level students and their parents of the opportunities

for, and benefits from, third level education'. (Department of Education and Science, 1995a).

Some of the strategies outlined included 'awareness seminars' and open days for students. Institutions would also be encouraged to help students make the transition from second level education to third. First year 'care programmes' or post entry programmes focusing on tackling educational support such as extra tuition and study skills were suggested. Mentoring and staff training were encouraged to help students to adjust to their new environment.

3.3 The Report of the Steering Group on the Future of Higher Education, 1995

The Report of the Steering Group on the Future of Higher Education (1995b) argued that universities should focus on developing targeted initiatives that would help tackle barriers to participation in higher education of socio-economically disadvantaged groups. It highlighted that students who came from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to leave school without completing the Leaving Certificate Examination, achieved significantly lower grades when they did sit it, and were less likely than similar scoring students from other groups to transfer to higher education.

However the report did not specify how institutions should tackle these three areas and urged institutions to publicly demonstrate 'ownership' of their policies (Carpenter, 2004). This resulting in different institutions developing different initiatives to tackle these areas based on the White Paper's recommendations. In particular the HEAR scheme became instrumental in putting into practice many of the recommendations set out in the White Paper though the creation of an alternative access route which was linked with disadvantaged schools. The report also highlighted the need for policies and interventions to be targeted at all levels of the education system.

3.4 The Commission on the Points System, 1999

The Commission on the Points System (1999) acknowledged three key areas where access to higher education could be improved. Firstly, it recognized that the continuation of strategies that focus on designated disadvantaged schools were necessary because of the high concentration of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in those schools.

Secondly, a national approach should be developed to allow for special access schemes to encompass students who were disadvantaged but not attending a designated school. Finally, it concluded that there is a need to develop clear definitions of a disadvantaged student based on the individual student.

It noted that throughout the process of consultation, there was concerns that initiatives to tackle disadvantage should be capable of reaching out to all disadvantaged students and not just those in designated areas or schools, particularly as identification is problematic in rural areas. As regards tackling educational, cultural and financial barriers to higher education, the Commission did not rule out the possibility of providing access courses for disadvantaged school leavers. However, it also stated that it was not convinced that school leavers from disadvantaged backgrounds needed to undertake a substantive course prior to entering third level, as the extended number of years in education may actually discourage them from participating.

In relation to financial support, the Commission recommended that additional finance over the current maintenance grant scheme should be made available for disadvantaged students. Overcoming the cultural barriers to education involved support services for students when they entered higher education. The Commission considered that it was important that support services should not *'develop in such a way as to isolate them from the rest of the student population but would lead to their successful integration into the community of the third level institution'*. (Department of Education and Science, 2001)

3.5 The Report of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education, 2001

According to Carpenter (2004) *'The Report of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education'* (2001) is currently informing all policy initiatives in the area of social class inequality and higher education in Ireland. The report recommended that a National Office for Equity and Access to higher education be set up within the HEA and sets out a number of recommendations that aim to tackle financial, educational, social and cultural barriers to higher education. It concludes that *'a proliferation of additional interventions is unlikely to bring about any radical change in the situation unless they are deployed in a suitable structural environment that can coordinate and intensify their effect'*.

The report also examines the community dimension of under-participation and proposes that *'the disadvantaged area dimension must form a part of the national programme to radically increase participation in third level education by socio-economically disadvantaged student groups'*

The action group recommended that:

'the National Office should fund encouragement and access-promoting programmes based on local school networks involving partnership and community groups and college access programmes. These programmes should be integrated into a long term strategy-at least the span of the NDP-and funding should be allocated on a multi-year bases, subject to fulfilment of performance criteria'.

The report suggests that the Millennium Fund should also be made available to groups and organizations that support students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

3.6 The HEA Strategy Statement 2004-2007 and Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education in Ireland: Action Plan 2005-2007

The HEA strategy statement for 2004-2007 sets out several goals in relation to widening participation in higher education. These are mainly related to evaluation, data collection and the development of a national plan to support equity of access to higher education. It also aims to allocate funding to facilitate equity of access to higher education and to review funding programmes that promote wider participation in higher education. The Action Plan sets out six goals with action points for the period 2005-2007. These goals are:

- *Communicate the rationale for equity of access to higher education*
- *A National Framework of Policies and Initiatives to achieve Equity of Access*
- *Routes of Access and Progression to Higher education*
- *A broader Range of teaching and Learning Practices in higher education*
- *Necessary Financial Support and resources*
- *Learning from what works*

(Department of Education and Science, 2005).

3.7 Conclusion

The Higher Education Authority Act (1971) and the Universities Act (1997) brought equality in accessing higher education to the foreground when forming the development of higher education in Ireland. The Higher Education Authority was established to further develop higher education and promote equality of opportunity. The White Paper '*Charting our Educational Future*' (1995), *The Report of the Steering Group on the Future of Higher Education* (1995) and *The Commission on the Points System* (1999) helped set the agenda for the development of access initiatives through identifying barriers to higher education and by providing recommendations as to how these barriers could be addressed.

The 'Report for the Action Group on Access to Third level Education' (2001) led to the development of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education in 2003 to coordinate efforts to tackle educational disadvantage and to develop a national strategy. 'The HEA Strategy Statement 2004-2007' and the 'Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education in Ireland: Action Plan' 2005-2007 are currently setting the agenda for further developments in access to higher education.

4. Previous Evaluations of Access Initiatives in Ireland

To date several evaluations of targeted initiatives have been carried out by the government in an attempt to develop best practice in dealing with access and participation in higher education. Previous evaluation of such initiatives include: Osborne and Leith (2000), Skilbeck and Connell (2000) and the Report of the High Level Group on University Equality and Policies, commissioned by the HEA Equality Review Group in 2004 .

4.1 'Access and Equity in Higher Education: an International Perspective on Issues and Strategies', 2000

Skilbeck and Connell's report entitled '*Access and Equity in Higher Education: an International Perspective on Issues and Strategies*' (2000) recognizes that the issue of equity in higher education is not just educational but also economic, cultural and social. It states that educational policies alone cannot abolish educational disadvantage and recommends that further progress will require more coherent, coordinated approaches across several sectors.

The report promotes a wide ranging approach to increasing access based on state legislation, expanding provision, increased flexibility, policy coherence, partnership and integration across educational levels. It argues that opportunities should be extended through all levels of the educational system. The report recognizes that well-targeted financing will continue to play an important role in equity strategies, but that it is poor economy to admit large numbers of students and then to accept high failure and drop-out rates.

4.2 'Evaluation of the Targeted Initiatives on Widening Access for Young People from Socio-economically Disadvantaged Backgrounds', 2000

Osbourne and Leith (2000) recommend that a national strategy should provide a broad framework in which '*individual universities and other institutions can evolve distinctive practices which reflect their own circumstances.*' They also recommend that a national strategy funded by the state '*should have clear objectives and measures available for progress to be measured*'.

Issues identified by the report for consideration during the development of a national strategy include: a framework which is flexible enough to allow universities to respond to their own circumstances, monitoring, data collection and evaluation. The report also called for the recognition of the importance of alternative progression routes such as post leaving cert courses and partnership between the different stakeholders involved in access. The report proposes that *'Institutions should demonstrate their commitment to widening access by either rising external funding or allocating resources from their block grants or both'*.

4.3 'Report of the High Level Group on University Equality and Policies', 2004

According to the *Report of the High Level Group on University Equality and Policies* (2004), while there are benefits for individuals involved in targeted initiatives, there can be little prospect in the short term that the continuation of these initiatives, even on a substantial level will bring about radical changes in representation. However it was recognised by the report that these initiatives do keep the issue of representation to the forefront, demonstrating what can be achieved on the ground when resources are specifically targeted at disadvantaged groups.

Throughout the process of consultation for the report, the idea emerged that access could be improved by incorporating weighting in favour of students who are severely disadvantaged. Also universities could benefit from block grants based on their intake of disadvantaged students.

The report endorsed the approach put forward by the Forum on Educational Disadvantage:

'in setting targets for the educational system as a whole, the emphasis should shift from the concept of participation (e.g. prevention of early leaving from school programmes leading to the Leaving Certificate) to benefit (outcomes for the individual, irrespective of where the learning has taken place).'

The team also highlighted that:

'The point that was made repeatedly to the review team that intervention should be made at an earlier stage in second level education. Students and parents in disadvantaged areas may not be alert to the possibility of higher education until

after the Junior Cert and by then it can be too late due to subject choice constraints in schools.'

The report recommends that data collection and evaluation should be improved. It emphasises that the National Office for Equity and Access has a key role to play in the development and implementation of a national strategy for tackling educational disadvantage with coordination being a key directive. It suggests that funding could be linked to performance in promoting access and participation from disadvantaged students. It puts forward the idea that access initiatives could be funded on a multi-annual basis (for at least three years).

It is proposed that increased investment in career guidance should be provided in designated disadvantaged second level schools, as well as efforts to provide alternative arrangements for students wishing to take higher level course. It also advises that links between second and third level should be strengthened and on ongoing career development and job security should be provided for access officers.

4.4 'Towards a National Strategy: Initial Review of HEA Targeted Initiatives to Widen Access to Higher Education' (2004)

The HEA commissioned an initial review of targeted initiatives to widen access to higher education entitled 'Towards a National Strategy'. A discussion paper was drawn up in February 2004 and circulated to 122 people including students, senior college officials, Access Officers, the adult learners association, the Union of Students of Ireland and staff of the HEA. The review put forward four review questions:

- *What examples of best practice have emerged from the scheme?*
- *What barriers can be identified?*
- *To what extent can quality and equality co-exist in higher education?*
- *What further work is required?*

Group and individual meetings were held with over 80 participants to gather reactions to the discussion paper. The initial draft discussion paper referred to the fact that further work was needed to identify indicators of progress on access initiatives.

The report found that, while the need to widen access as a policy priority for the state had been expressed many times, a coherent plan or strategy had not been followed. In

relation to activities already started, participants felt that while the importance of inputs and process elements of activities had been highlighted, there was less emphasis placed on the results of such activities. They recommended that *'systematically collected data on participation in higher education is needed on a scale that has not happened to date'*.

The participants also recommended that *'coherent organization of access personnel and reporting structures are required'* as well as *'an institution wide policy to widen access'*. They stated that

'A key element of such policies is effective connections and partnerships between each sector. Such partnerships should build strong collaborative relationships between teachers and access personnel and senior staff in each sector'

Referring to the community, the review team recommended that links should be developed further between local and regional partnerships, other education and training providers and HEIs.

Current alternative entry routes of access to higher education were believed to be in need of development, as they were *'not formally articulated and students often find them difficult to navigate'*. Students highlighted the importance and success of concrete initiatives focused on tackling social and educational barriers faced by students after entering higher level education. Innovative teaching and learning strategies were also encouraged to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

Students stated that acceptance and positive interaction with their peers was seen as essential in the transfer to and participation in higher education. Learning and pastoral support for new entrants to higher education were suggested as a means to helping students overcome the fear of the unknown and isolation. They also felt that the wider student body should be included in the development of an *'inclusive institutional ethos'*.

4.5 Conclusion

These evaluations highlighted that there was a call for a more coherent national strategy which allowed greater co-ordination between the different stakeholders in education. While the initiatives scheme successfully targeted disadvantaged students due to links with designated disadvantaged schools, there was a need for more comprehensive criteria in defining educational disadvantage. There was widespread recognition that educational

disadvantage did not begin at second or third level and the identification and support of students at risk needed to begin at an earlier stage in their education. It was also recognized that there was a need for on-going evaluation and improved data collection in order to assess the impact of these initiatives on access and participation. It was acknowledged that the site of education disadvantage was not limited to the education system. Parents, peer groups and community factors all play a part in the formation of student expectations and aspirations.

While there have been several reports on access initiatives in Ireland, most focus on the institutional level, with no detailed analysis of student characteristics or outcomes. While consultation does take place, this is with the aim of identifying and tackling barriers to education rather than the effect of each barrier on student retention. These reports examine the experiences of economically disadvantaged students without reference to their performance or to the performance of the access programmes themselves.

5. The Formation of the New ERA Programme

This section of the report examines the development of community initiatives and alternative routes to higher education which impacted on the initial formation of the New ERA Programme. It also discusses the Ballymun Initiative for third level education which formed the foundation on which access initiatives in the HEIs would be built. It then describes New ERA's initial involvement with the National College of Ireland's summer workshops entitled 'Discovering University'. It also discusses the current HEAR scheme which is the basis for access to the New ERA programme. Students must qualify for HEAR in order to participate on the New ERA Programme plus schools are linked to New ERA through HEAR.

Osbourne and Leith (2000) state that the HEA provided funding of £260,000 in 1996, £475,000 in 1997, £695,000 in 1998 and £785,000 in 1999 to the universities to develop special schemes to improve the participation of students from disadvantaged social backgrounds. Also, the National Development Plan (NDP) has set aside £120 million for a third access fund for the period 2000-2006, aimed at tackling under-representation by students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students, students with disabilities or from ethnic minorities. The universities themselves also support the initiatives either through core funding or support from benefactors.

According to the Action Group on Access (2001) a 'Third Level Access Fund' of IR£95million was provided by the NDP over the period 2000-06 (IR£60.8m in the Southern and Eastern region and IR£42.2m in the Border, Midlands and West region). The total cost of student support amounted to more than £250m in 2000. This does not include tax relief. Funding also became available for students through the European Social Fund. Some was kept centrally and used as a college-wide student assistance fund.

5.1 Community Based Initiatives

On the community platform, the formation of the area-based partnerships in 1991 supported community based initiatives aimed at helping students to access third level education. *The targeted/strategic initiative scheme was preceded by a number of pilot schemes which developed the link between targeted intervention and progression to higher*

level institutions' (Gallagher, 2003). One of these pilot schemes was the Ballymun Initiative for Third Level Education (BITE) established in 1990.

The Ballymun Initiative for Third Level Education (BITE)

The Ballymun Initiative for third-level education was developed as an access programme for the students of Ballymun Junior and Senior Comprehensive Schools. The programme became linked to eight local primary schools and included initiatives such as homework and activity clubs (Gallagher, 2003).

At second level the initiative focused on creating awareness of third level for both pupils and parents, and on augmenting the skill base of students through training in computer skills and extra tuition for the Leaving Certificate. Programme elements at third level focused on alleviating financial stresses through the provision of scholarships and on social barriers by providing parent and student support meetings. PLC scholarships were also made available.

The National College of Ireland: 'Discovering University'

Initially New ERA was involved with the National College of Ireland's summer workshops entitled 'Discovering University' The programme is a summer camp run for fifth, sixth and transition year students, designed to give students from lower socio-economic groups a taste of university life. The National College of Ireland liaised with UCD as the university had a number of facilities available for the programme to use. The New ERA team organised two to three days for students to visit Belfield campus and provided activities ranging from science and academic subjects to drama, art and sports. New ERA also helped provide funding for the group. This continued until NCI moved to the Docklands which was outside UCD's target area as two other major universities were operating in the Inner City.

5.2 Alternative Access Routes: A brief overview of TAP and HEAR:

Two different approaches to alternative admission are in operation in Ireland. The first approach provides access to higher education to the general student body, as well as mature students and early school leavers, through the augmentation of students' skills via access

courses, PLCs, Certificates and Diplomas. The second approach allows points breaks for students sitting the Leaving Certificate but who may not have obtained enough points to access a specific course. An example of the first approach is the Trinity Foundation Course for Higher Education and Certificate in Liberal Arts (TAP), and an example of the second is the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR).

In 1998 the Trinity Access Programme developed an alternative access route by providing a foundation course that would help develop the skill set necessary for accessing higher education. This was developed further in 2004 with a certificate in liberal arts for participating students wishing to study Arts or Social Sciences. The foundation course offers an alternative pathway to young adults who have been in attendance at a TAP school, are eligible for a Local Authority Grant and have achieved a minimum educational standard at the Leaving Certificate. Students attending access courses at other institutions are also considered and supporting evidence from schools of eligibility and merit can also be taken into account. The programme offers students a course where they are awarded a certificate which then qualifies them for higher education. Direct financial support and mentoring is offered. Bursaries are also raised externally via the Trinity Foundation Office.

In order to increase the national number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds to 500 students, as recommended by the 1995 White Paper, the HEA introduced the Targeted Initiatives Scheme in 1996. The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) Scheme was established as an alternative route of entry to third level education. It allows both direct entry and points remission for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The scheme allows students under the age of 23 from linked schools to apply for reduced point entry to any participating HEI. The scheme is supported by the HEA's Strategic Initiatives Fund and all other cost is divided between the seven participating organizations. The HEAR Scheme is, in part, a response to the suggestion made in the White Paper '*Charting our Education Future*' that designated disadvantaged schools should become linked to universities.

The seven HEIs involved with the HEAR Scheme collaborated to create the Direct Application Scheme (HEDAS) in 2001. Through this scheme students could apply to the participating institutions through the CAO and a supplementary application. The scheme

also allowed Access Offices to avoid duplicate applications and to pool their reserved places.

5.3 The Initial set up of New ERA

In 1994, the UCD Committee on Equality of Participation was constituted by the then registrar, John Kelly, and sustained by his successor Caroline Hussey. Lynch and O' Riordan's study entitled '*Social Class, Inequality and Higher Education; Barriers to Equality of Access and Participation among school leavers*' was commissioned by the Committee in 1995 to identify barriers against participation. This work was commissioned in order to develop a frame of reference for how New ERA would tackle access. New ERA was established by UCD in 1997 and adopted the HEAR scheme in targeting and providing financial support and points remission to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The points remission, granted by UCD's New ERA programme, falls within 20% of the CAO guidelines, however New ERA was reluctant to take students who scored less than 300 points in their Leaving Certificate as they may not be able to cope with their course.

Initially twenty 'designated disadvantaged' schools were linked to the programme and the project was officially launched in 1998. Schools were chosen from the west end of the City as two other major universities were operating access initiatives in the Inner and the Northside of the Dublin city. Schools were chosen based on whether or not they were in a Partnership Area. A rural school located in Enniscorthy was also linked to New ERA.

UCD has a quota of reserved places with some flexibility where the number of applicants exceeds this. Places are allocated by individual Programme Boards in conjunction with the Access Office. (HEAR Users Manual, 2007) The total number of students taking part in New ERA amounted to 402 in the academic year 2007/2008. The programme works in close partnership with primary and second level schools, as well as the local community, to deliver an extensive outreach programme. New ERA's aim, according to its website, is to

'facilitate students who have the ability to benefit and succeed in higher education to access reserved places in UCD. Having achieved entry to the University the

programme then enables students to participate fully in UCD life and reach their full potential' (UCD website).

6. The Evolution of New ERA: Tackling Barriers to Education

This section looks at the barriers to participation in higher education outlined by Lynch and O' Riordan and how New ERA tackles them. Lynch and O' Riordan's study provided the framework through which New ERA would tackle access and is pivotal to the understanding of the development of New ERA.

As there was the recognition that educational disadvantage starts before one has entered third level, New ERA aimed to tackle disadvantage through both pre- entry and post-entry support, based on Lynch and O' Riordan's recommendations. Pre-entry programmes of action focused on raising student aspirations, creating an awareness of college, and the provision of academic support for the Leaving Certificate. Post entry programmes of action focused on academic tuition, social events, orientation and financial aid.

6.1 Lynch, K. and O' Riordan, C. (1996) Barriers to Equality of Access and Participation among School Leavers

The study by Kathleen Lynch and Claire O' Riordan became the cornerstone of the development of UCD's access initiative for students from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds. One hundred and twenty two people were interviewed for the study. These represent the views of community activists, school personnel and second and third level students. The report concluded that there are three key types of constraint that operate as the principal barriers to equality of access and participation in higher education for low income, working class students. These are economic constraints, institutional constraints specific to the educational system, and broader social and cultural constraints (Lynch and O'Riordan, 1996).

The report considered financial constraints as the main barrier to access as it has direct consequences for the purchase of educational resources and maintenance; this extends to include difficulties for the family in terms of loss of earnings. It was also recognised that isolation from college culture was a major disadvantage.

'Cultural discontinuities were also experienced by working-class students within higher education as they felt their class backgrounds were neither reflected nor

affirmed within the colleges. They experienced themselves often as outsiders in an insiders' world where other students appeared to 'have been there before, done it all, know everyone' (Lynch and O'Riordan, 1996).

Community activists highlighted the need for an increase in the maintenance grant as a strategy for tackling financial barriers to education. They also pointed out that students from disadvantaged backgrounds often had to prioritize resources such as time, in order of necessity, with household income being paramount. Second level students suggested increased financial support, improved social support within the university and making the college visible and accessible to working class students as important for developing access to higher education. Third-level students mentioned the provision of financial information, help with accommodation, the reform of the points system, improved lone parent and childcare support and improved college services as beneficial.

6.2 New ERA - Economic Support

In order to tackle the financial barrier to higher education New ERA provides a basic grant to all New ERA students. Alternatively students who are severally economically disadvantaged could also avail of an AIB sponsored scholarship which provided €2500 to 30 first-year students for the duration of their undergraduate career. Students can also be funded through the Bank of Ireland Millennium Scholars' fund and UCD 150. A UCD 150 scholarship provides €3000 per annum for students during their undergraduate career. In addition, the Scholarship holder is also given priority in the allocation of places in UCD residences for their first year in UCD. A student can only hold one scholarship at a time. Other student scholarships included the Irish life and Boylan Sisters Grants. In addition to the basic New ERA grant, a supplementary grant towards travel and accommodation costs became available on a year-to-year basis. In-kind support including book tokens and photo copy cards is also available.

6.3 Lynch and O' Riordan's Study-Institutional Constraints Specific to the Educational System

In terms of educational barriers Lynch and O'Riordan found that:

‘Community activists perceived educational institutions as being inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of working class students. They claimed that the ethos of schools and colleges were pre-dominantly middle class, noting that the curriculum did not reflect ‘working class life style, culture, values or mores’ (Lynch and O’Riordan, 1996).

The relational character of inequality was underlined. The education system was considered to be an unfair competitive market for students from lower income families as they did not have equal purchasing power when it came to aid such as grinds. Suggestions made by community activists on how barriers could be tackled by college outreach programmes included education on working class culture, parental involvement in education, modifications in curriculum and assessment, changes in school organization, and an increase in support personnel and alternative access routes.

School personnel recommended modifications to the curriculum, mode of assessment and selection, and reserved places in university for disadvantaged students. Educational barriers to participation mentioned by teachers were lack of study skills, lack of the training required for independent learning and low educational self esteem. Students placed emphasis on study pressure, choosing the wrong course, problems with facilities in college and the attitude of college staff.

6.4 New ERA-Educational Support

New ERA provides additional tuition for Leaving Cert students in order to address the gap between those who can and cannot afford private tuition. Pre-entry academic supports aimed at tackling this disparity consisted of Leaving Certificate workshops and fifth year summer schools.

Initially, New ERA provided post entry academic support in the form of additional tuition for subjects that students may not have been exposed to during second level. This shifted over time to a more proactive approach as it became apparent which courses students needed the most help with. Set sessions were offered to groups as opposed to individuals seeking help for a particular subject. It became easier to identify courses where group tutorials would be advantageous. There was a structure placed on internal support

with varying degrees of compliance from the students. This made it easier to identify whether students were attending and became a source of informal information.

6.5 Lynch and O' Riordan's study-Broader Social and Cultural Constraints

Community activists stressed the broader social-economic constraints that act as barriers to higher education. Relative poverty was regarded as the principal barrier to equality of access. It impacted on performance, student hopes and aspirations, and created social exclusion which left people unaware of how education itself functioned.

Improved community and adult education to tackle social and cultural barriers were given as possible solutions. Other recommendations included improved childcare facilities in universities and social policy initiatives aimed at relieving financial stress on households with students attending second level and higher level.

Social barriers to participation in higher education, mentioned by students, included possible separation from former school friends and difficulty mixing. In terms of social and cultural constraints the community activists viewed the under-valuing of working class culture as a barrier to access.

'They held this institutionalized devaluation of working class culture to be, in par responsible for the lower educational self esteem which working class students experienced vis-à-vis their middle class peers' (Lynch and O'Riordan, 1996).

Community activists and educationalists also perceived social isolation in college as a major barrier to equal participation. The educationalists emphasized the importance of home resources for study if students were to perform well in the Leaving Certificate. School personnel recommended that improved support systems and a partnership between schools and colleges should help tackle social and cultural barriers to education.

According to second level students, one of the major barriers to access was the notion that higher education lay outside the realm of their collective experience and was perceived of as 'remote' and 'alien'. A minority of working class students believed that higher education (esp. universities) was beyond their reach. The second level students also identified a lack of facilities and supports at home as a major barrier to their access.

For third level students the difficulties arose from making the transition to college. Social exclusion and even the 'alien nature' of the language used in university created

difficulties in coping, whereas middle class students were seen as already being equipped with the cultural capital necessary to navigate their first year through college. Working class parents did not have knowledge of the educational system and could not provide the support that middle class parents familiar with the workings of a university could provide.

6.6 New ERA-Cultural Support

In order to tackle the cultural isolation experienced by students from lower socio-economic groups, New ERA aimed to create awareness of university among students in second level. It was also recognised that this needed to extend into the community and to parents who may have had no experience of higher education and therefore were unable to guide students through application procedures, course choices, matriculation requirements and their adjustment to university culture.

New ERA visits schools linked to the programme and provides information to students about the HEAR scheme and its supports. It also organises shadowing and pre-entry orientation programmes. On a community level it has given presentations to meetings of parents and contributions to community based events.

Post-entry, New ERA aims to tackle social isolation through personal support and advice, facilitating group events and occasional social events, and by monitoring and tracking students' progress. New ERA students can mix with one another and share their experience of university. Students started a social club and a New ERA chat room. Often students who had studied in university through New ERA returned to their home school to teach after completing a Higher Diploma in teaching at UCD. They remain involved with New ERA and are an important resource for students from lower socio-economic groups, highlighting that university could be accessed by people from the same background.

6.7 Conclusion

In conclusion New ERA aimed to tackle the three main barriers outlined by Kathleen Lynch and Claire O' Riordan through pre-entry and post entry support. It was recognised that in order to affect progression, second level students needed to be supported in completing the Leaving Certificate and encouraged to access higher level education. Once

students had entered university they also needed to be supported financially, educationally, culturally and socially. As well as acting as a mediator between the students and the institution, New ERA provides a contact point for students from similar backgrounds.

One of the positive unanticipated benefits of New ERA is that students who complete third level education then become role models for other students in their communities, acting as living examples creating awareness and highlighting that higher level education is not out of reach.

7. Current and Future Developments

This section looks at future developments relevant to New ERA. In particular, there is a focus on developments that are linked to national and institution-wide policy. The Strategic Plan of the Office of the Director of Access is built directly on changes in national policy. There is greater emphasis placed on collaboration and on the relationship between how access is perceived and how this translates into practice.

7.1 The Office of the Director of Access, *Strategic Plan 2006 -2008*. UCD

UCD's Office of the Director of Access put forward a Strategic Plan 2006-2008 which set out a number of goals to advance the widening participation/equality agenda based on the reports of Osborne and Leith (2000), Skilbeck and Connell (2000), Clancy (2001) and the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education (2001). These major goals include: widening participation to include under-represented groups, the creation of an inclusive teaching and learning environment, the delivery of relevant support for students, the promotion of lifelong learning, research driven practice and policy and ongoing evaluation and review. (UCD Office of the Director of Access, Strategic Plan 2006- 2008)

It also concentrates on the development of strategies to recruit and support those groups currently under-represented in higher education as well as the establishment of partnerships with other education providers and an increase of collaborative work with schools and communities in areas of urban disadvantage. Specifically, in relation to the widening of participation to include under-represented groups, the strategy aims to define the 20% target for the recruitment of under-represented groups in more specific terms i.e. per group, per programme and per school/college.

In line with the Strategic Plan of the Office of the Director of Access, New ERA set out the goal of expanding its outreach programme into primary education with its 'Uni For You programme', and the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown After School Fun Through Sport (DRAFTS) joint primary schools programme

New ERA also improved its collaboration with the different participating universities on the HEAR scheme through its involvement with the 'Take 5' and 'Uni for

You’ (also aimed at primary school students) and the City West Community Investment Programme.

In reference to the university’s strategy to improve research and evaluation, in 2004 New ERA conducted a review of the programme by Kevin Hurley aimed at identifying factors which led New ERA students to withdraw from UCD. It also recognised that parents play a key role in the development of educational aspirations among students and established links with parents through linked schools. However this strategy needs to be developed further.

7.2 Collaborative and Primary School projects

‘Take 5’ is a five-day summer project involving one hundred participants from designated disadvantaged second level schools attending five participating higher education institutions. This project aims to introduce students to the physical, academic, cultural, sporting and social environments of the five different institutions through a range of activities, such as academic workshops, laboratory sessions, and project group work. Each group produces a piece of work to showcase at the end of project award ceremony, where students receive a certificate of participation and exhibit their project work. Parents are invited to this event (AMA Collaborative Practice Working Group 2006-2007).

In conjunction with DCU, TCD, ITT and the City West Campus, UCD’s New ERA is also involved with the City West Community Investment programme which aims to develop second level students entrepreneurial skills. It encourages and supports students in investigating career opportunities and developing links with local businesses. Twenty four students from six schools participated in the pilot year of this programme (AMA Collaborative Practice Working Group 2006-2007).

‘Uni for You’ is a three-year structured suite of activities for primary school pupils, aged 10-12years old. Activities include a homework and sports club delivered on campus for six weeks, summer and Easter camps, preparation for secondary school workshops, book review tutorials and story telling seminars. The aim is to develop the child’s communication skills and confidence. The project also includes parents of participants at the opening and closing ceremonies and the ‘Preparing for Secondary school workshops’.

Since 2000, the project has involved 114 primary school pupils in 4th, 5th and 6th class each year (AMA Collaborative Practice Working Group 2006-2007).

Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council Sports Development Office teamed up with New ERA in their running of the Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown After School Fun Through Sports (DRAFTS) Programme. This programme involves a number of primary school students taking part in sporting activities. The students visit UCD and take part in a treasure hunt around the campus as well as attending taster workshops and exploring career opportunities in sport (AMA Collaborative Practice Working Group 2006-2007).

7.3 Community Outreach

Links with the community and parents were made mostly through the school but New ERA also has had contact with the Clondalkin Higher Education Access Project (CHEAP) and the Accessing College Education (ACE) programme.

The Clondalkin Partnership supported the CHEAP and ACE programmes, which included bursaries, supervised study and tuition for students. In 1997 the Clondalkin Higher Education Access Project was set up. The programme runs in three Community Colleges in the Clondalkin area. The programme concentrates on activities in second level and includes tuition and extra academic support for Leaving Certificate students, as well as scholarships amounting to €80 each. It also includes a mentoring programme supported by past CHEAP participants and has direct entry arrangements with a number of colleges in the Dublin area.

The ACE programme focuses on programmes which improve student performance at second level and provides extra tuition and support for the Leaving Certificate. It also has a parent programme which provides information sessions for parents and a handbook. It hopes to expand into Primary Schools and the Junior Cycle at second level. At third level, in order to facilitate participation in higher education, the ACE programme provides scholarships (sponsored by the Millennium Fund) and ongoing support.

7.4 Research and Review

In 2003 Kevin Hurley completed a study commissioned by the New ERA programme to identify factors which led New ERA students to withdraw from UCD. In particular the

findings were to inform the design and delivery of pre and post entry supports for New ERA students and in the management of student withdrawal. The report was entitled '*Connection/Continuity/Change: Lessons from the Withdrawal from University College Dublin from Direct Entry Students*'.

The researcher interviewed students who had withdrawn from UCD in order to explore pre-entry/external factors which may require further understanding and consideration in order to effectively support non-traditional students.

The report recommended that Outreach activities should focus on connection with communities and involve a meaningful partnership with the schools, parents and all other interested parties. Awareness of the programme could also be developed through the orientation programme and through student advisers. Liaison at department level, individual meetings and academic preparation were also given priority.

In creating continuity it was recommended that serious attempts to facilitate career guidance should be undertaken at pre-entry, post entry and prior to graduation or withdrawal. Smaller group teaching was considered, as well as support for staff redirecting their pedagogical practices towards a more learning centred approach.

On-campus accommodation, social activity, and mentoring also could help to provide continuity. The development of a database for support purposes were also recommended to improve New ERA's activities.

In relation to change the report recommends that wider access and participation should be incorporated into the university's strategic statement, thereby reflecting its determination to fulfil its obligations under the Universities Act. Faculties and departments should also arrange for their literature, codes and practices to reflect this.

7.5 Parents

Parents are recognised as being fundamentally important in improving access to higher education throughout the policy and literature available on access and participation of students from lower socio-economic groups. Parents who lack confidence may be reluctant to help their children at home without guidance (Cuckle, 1996). In practice, while parents' views are consulted when discussing barriers to higher education, they are a group that are difficult to access.

New ERA tries to reach parents and build their awareness of higher education through parent teacher meetings and through the distribution of material to students. However the initiatives are located within the education system and links to parents are often mediated through the schools and community outreach programmes.

7.6 Defining Disadvantage

The future focus is to recognise that there are multiple dimensions to disadvantage. In addition, students who are socio-economically disadvantaged and who also have a learning disability may not be diagnosed in time to prevent long term damage to their education. In this sense, disadvantage compounds for vulnerable subgroups.

The HEAR scheme picks up the more motivated and able students. The difficulty is accessing students who have worked hard throughout their school careers, but who did not perform well in their Leaving Certificate. There is a current debate centred on the extent to which universities should be involved in Secondary education. Currently, the access programmes bring students just over the bar; picking up the students who have a realistic chance of completing higher level education.

7.7 Conclusion

The Strategic Plan 2006-2008 recognised that educational disadvantage is not only rooted in the educational system, but it is also located within the family and the community. An increase in collaboration between HEIs, schools, and communities, in areas of disadvantage is needed in order to move forward. New ERA is already addressing these concerns through the establishment of links with parents, the broader community and primary schools. It is also recognised that research and evidence of the ways in which educational disadvantage is defined can play an important role in the development of access initiatives.

8. Conclusion

Policy is built on broad definitions of equity. Factors such as access, equity of opportunity, participation and retention are debated within the literature. There is a focus on the autonomy of educational institutions while at the same time recognising that the culture of higher education can pose problems for the progression of certain social groupings. Partnerships between different stakeholders in education is recommended, as well as evaluation and the development of a national framework for educational disadvantage.

In relation to government policy there is a focus on the development of a National Strategy to deal with educational disadvantage, in addition to partnership across all sectors. Evaluations of initiatives already in place recognize the importance of development supported by the monitoring and tracking of changes as well as improved data collection.

While the initiatives scheme was successful at targeting disadvantaged students due to links with designated disadvantaged schools there was a need for more comprehensive criteria in defining educational disadvantage. It is acknowledged that the site of education disadvantage is not limited to the education system alone. The effects of economic disadvantage on participation and performance in higher education are multifaceted. It is not enough to focus on higher education institutions but also on the cultural values and norms of students from lower socio-economic groups and how these are often undervalued in the educational system. Lower socio-economic groups value education highly, however a lack of knowledge and experience of higher education institutions within the community and the family may act as a barrier to entry.

In terms of rural urban disadvantage, there is a compounding of educational disadvantage in urban areas if the community is homogenized. Marginalisation can occur and hence it becomes difficult for students to receive a different experience or view of life. This is less of an issue in rural areas as students have more exposure to different views as they mix more with middle class students.

Future research and development on educational disadvantage and access should focus on a more encompassing definition of disadvantage as well as more partnership and connection between the different stakeholders in higher level education.

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Appendix: Summary of the access programs in UCD, TCD & NUIM

N.B.: Material in this appendix has been taken directly from their sources and is presented here as reference only.

Programme	UCD, New ERA
Date established	1997
Funded by	HEA Strategic Initiatives Fund, private funding, European social fund.
Allocation of places	Assessed and allocated by individual program boards in conjunction with Access Office. Quota of reserved places with some flexibility where the number of applicants exceed quota.(HEAR users Manual 2007) [‡]
Intake	Total number of students 2003/2004 is equal to 276. 93 entered in 2003/2004
Aims	UCD New ERA aims to encourage and facilitate increased participation in higher education by students who, for a variety of economic or social reasons are under-represented in university.(website) [§]
Focus	The programme works in close partnership with primary and second level schools, as well as the local community to delivery an extensive outreach programme. UCD New ERA facilitates students who have the ability to benefit and succeed in higher education to access reserved places in UCD. Having achieved entry to the university the programme then enables students to participate fully in UCD life and reach their full potential.(website)
Pre-entry Support	Awareness rising and career guidance with students at second level, presentations to meetings of parents, contributions to community based events, shadowing Days, voluntary student tutoring scheme, 2 nd and 5 th year summer school, leaving certificate workshops, pre-entry orientation program, achievement awards, primary school workshops. (Connection Continuity, Change)
Post –entry supports	Annual New ERA Grant, personal support and advice, additional academic support, facilitated group events, occasional social events, monitoring and tracking and career seminar for final year students (Connection Continuity, Change)
Outputs	“ <i>Connection, continuity, Change. Lessons from the withdrawal from University college Dublin by some direct entry students</i> ” “ <i>Annual report 2003/2004 office of the director of access</i> ” “ <i>Joint Annual Report of Disability Support Service and New ERA Programme 2002/2003</i> ”
Action plans	Design and implementation of a tracking system for all aspects of the New ERA programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International student exchange programme with an access initiative abroad • Development of policy and strategy for working effectively with minority ethnic groups • Further expansion of the Outreach Programme • Research project on factors affecting retention and progression of New ERA students (<i>Annual report 2003/2004</i>)^{††}
Community Links	ACE and CHEAP, Citywest community Investment programme, discovering maths, Take five, university access for travellers

[‡] Hear User Manual 2007

[§] <http://www.ucd.ie/access/newera.htm>

^{**} Hurley, K. (2004) Connection, Continuity, Change: Lessons from the withdrawal from University College Dublin by some direct entry students, A study commissioned by the New ERA programme.

^{††} Annual report 2003/2004 office of the director of access

Programme	Maynooth Access Programme, MAP
Date established	1998 (10 gaining entry to arts, science and computer science)
Funded by	HEA Strategic Initiatives Fund,
Allocation of places	All eligible applicants in random selection process (HEAR users Manual 2007)
Intake	10 in the first three years, 30 in the next three years, 78 in 06. 200+ undergrads at present
Aims	The Maynooth Access Programme (MAP) focuses on under-represented groups in third level. The Maynooth Access Programme (MAP) aims to encourage these under-represented groups to consider Higher Education as a real option and endeavours to provide access routes and post entry supports. The Maynooth Access Programme (MAP) also works with its link schools on a range of pre-entry activities.(website) ^{‡‡}
Focus	There is a strong focus on Community links and geographical disadvantage.
Pre-entry Support	School support, orientation program, KITE Activities, 5th Year Honours Math's Courses, Campus Days, TAKE 5, Special Awards, Biology Experiment Day on Campus(Website) parents days on Campus, parent and student evening, NUIM&UCD Collaborative Community Science project. Oral exam preparation, transition from primary school to second level talk, 6 th class Science classroom experiments Seminars for principals and guidance teachers. Workshops for link school staff as part of their in-service.
Post –entry supports	MAP Orientation, Workshops: study skills, revision, budgeting, one to one meeting, group meeting with Access Officer, Academic Support, Referral to University Student Services, peer support and mentoring, Access Graduate participation in the activities, social events, Financial Support.
Outputs	Annual report to the HEA, information booklets
Awareness building	Dissemination of HEAR Information
Action plans	Parental activities, Expansion of mentoring system,
Community Links	Kildare Into Tertiary Education (KITE) with the Kildare partnership, Donegal Partnership, bookmarks, sowing the seeds of science, Take five

^{‡‡} <http://access.nuim.ie>

Programme	Trinity College Access Programme (TAP)
Date established	Since 1993 Trinity College has provided a set number of reserved places to students whose educational experiences have prevented them from realising their full potential. In 2004 Trinity College implemented a new College policy that as of the academic year 2005-06 15% of CAO places for all Trinity College Courses would be reserved for non-traditional students which include mature students and students with a disability as well as students from a socio economically disadvantaged background. In 2000, Trinity joined the collaborative Higher Education Access Route (HEAR). HEAR facilitates school leavers from schools linked to any one of the third level access programmes of the following Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to apply for access places in these institutions.(website) ^{§§}
Funded by	HEA Strategic Initiatives Fund,
Allocation of places	15% of CAO places allocated to all non-traditional Students on a meritocratic basis and proportional to those qualifying from each group.(HEAR users Manual 2007)
Intake	6 in 1997, 12 in 98, 14 in 1999, 24 in 2000, 42 in 2001
Aims	The Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) are part of Trinity's contribution to tackling social exclusion, through a range of, targeted initiatives for individuals who, for socio-economic reasons, have not yet realised their full educational potential. (website)
Focus	TAP's mission is to work in partnership across the education sector and with families, communities and businesses to widen access to third level by addressing the reasons contributing to the under-representation of lower socio-economic groups and ethnic minorities at third level. (website)
Pre-entry Support	TAP Educational Achievement Awards, Student's Union/TAP Student Shadowing Day Programme, TAP Summer School, Take- 5 Summer Programme, Multi-media TAP Newsletter Project, School Visits,CRITE/ Cruthu (Centre for Research into IT in Education)/SUAS/TAP Computer Clubhouse, Educational Workshops in College, Exploring Options Day, E-mentoring, The Honours Math's Revision Programme, Parents Evening, TCD Medical Day, Study Skills, Trinity Business Alumni (TBA) Leadership Seminar: Dare to be Different, to Believe, to Achieve!, Public Speaking Competition (website)
Post –entry supports	The Studio, The Laptop Library, The Writing Resource Centre, The Maths Help Room (website)
Outputs	<i>"An inquiry into withdrawal from college"</i> (a study conducted at trinity college Dublin) <i>"A Multi-level and Integrated approach to student retention at TCD"</i> (Tamara O' Connor) <i>Retention at TC: promoting and supporting freshman students Orientation and Integration to 3rd level. New Entrants Website</i> (Derek Richards)
Awareness building	Dissemination of HEAR Information
Community Links	Bookmarks, Citywest Community Investment Programme, Business to Schools e-mentoring, Take Five, University Access for Travellers

^{§§} http://www.tcd.ie/Trinity_Access/

