

**Evaluating the Impact
of the UCD New ERA
Widening
Participation
Initiative**

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Aim of the Study

It will evaluate the effectiveness of the New ERA programme in relation to...

- increased rates of progression to university from disadvantaged schools?
- conditional on admission....
 - retention rates?
 - overall exam performance?

Motivation

<i>Name</i>	<i>Rates of Admission</i>	<i>Rates of Retention</i>
<i>Dublin 14</i>	57%	86%
Dublin 4	50%	86%
Dublin 10	6%	73%
Dublin 17	6%	33%
<i>Dublin 8</i>	15%	70%

What is New ERA?

- UCD's Access Programme
- 20 Designated disadvantaged schools were linked to New ERA and the project was officially launched in 1997
- Lynch and O' Riordan-barriers to Higher level education
 - Financial Constraints
 - Educational Constraints
 - Socio/Cultural Constraints
- Pre-entry and post entry support
- Admits c. 100 students each year.
 - 40% CAO
 - 60% HEAR



Higher Education Access Route

- HEAR
 - Points remission
 - CAO system for Access Progs
 - Reserved places
- Eligibility criteria
 - Means tested
 - Socio-economic background
 - Parental education
 - Designated disadvantaged schools

Method

This study will be the first quantitative evaluation of the New ERA Widening Participation Initiative.

Datasets

- students' administration database
- the New ERA admin database
- School level data

Method

- **treatment group:** The current and past New ERA students
- **Control group:** sub-sample from the general college population which did not receive the programme
- **The statistical analysis used:** simple differences, 'differences-in-differences' estimators

Control Group

- Students who have the grant
- Certain socio-economic groups
 - Farmers?
 - Skilled manual
 - Semi-skilled manual
 - Unskilled Non Manual
 - Semi Skilled Non Manual
 - Other Non-Manual
- Went to Schools of similar nature to New ERA schools
 - Take advantage of gradual expansion
 - c. 50 in 1999
 - 307 currently
 - 100 more in 2008



School Survey: Aim

The school survey will allow the research team to examine:

- the effect of New ERA on the rates of progression
- identify barriers to progression
- These issues cannot be addressed fully using UCD administrative data as UCD data only allows investigation of New ERA's activity amongst those already at UCD.




School Survey: Response Rate

- A total of 159 schools responded which gave a response rate of 51 percent.
 - 24 (45%) linked to New ERA responded,
 - 34 (69%) from Schools linked to Maynooth
 - 100 (48%) from schools linked to the four other universities participating on the HEAR Scheme.
- An effective response rate of 40% was calculated based on the number of students sent to UCD by each of the schools that participated in the survey.

Recommendation

- School survey should be carried out once every two years




Overview of the Study: Output

Literature Review on Access Programmes

- **'The Evolution of University Access Programmes in Ireland** focuses on policy initiatives and the development of HEAR and New Era
- **'The Effectiveness of Access Programmes: Best Practice'**
is more academic and focuses on the effectiveness of access programmes through international literature.

Retrospective Evaluation of New ERA

- The literature review and data analysis will be used to produce a paper on the impact of new era on retention rates and academic performance and the final evaluation report will focus on the overall effectiveness of the New ERA programme.



'The Evolution of University Access Programmes in Ireland: Future challenges

- Call for a National strategy
- A call for more comprehensive criteria in defining educational disadvantage
- Recognition of the influence of disadvantage in earlier stages in the education system
- On-going evaluation
- Improved data collection
- Recognition of the importance of Community, Parents and Peers