

Mitigating Educational Disadvantage During Covid19 Taking a Tertiary Education Wide Collaborative Approach

A Case Study of the Irish Context

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1



Department of Education and Skills Covid-19 Tertiary Education Response



2

Purpose of the Mitigating Educational Disadvantage Working Group

- Scope out main issues impacting disadvantaged learners accessing learning opportunities across all aspects of Tertiary Education arising from the Covid-19 public health emergency. In response to the risk that educational disadvantage is exacerbated during this emergency, this group will:-
 1. undertake / support the collation of information, evidence and data on impacts on disadvantaged students / learners including in relation to the scope for and extent of continuity of learning;
 2. ensure knowledge and communication of issues affecting disadvantaged learners cross over into other elements of Covid-19 planning for the Tertiary system;
 3. propose appropriate feasible short-term responses that are designed to mitigate these impacts;
 4. identify options for further examination to ensure that the requirements of disadvantaged students and learners inform ongoing / future contingency and scenario planning; and
 5. track the consistency and evenness of current provision across the different areas of tertiary education identifying any areas for priority action.

3

Department of Education and Skills Covid-19 Tertiary Education Response

- AONTAS - Chair and Secretariat
- Develop and disseminate papers to Covid TES Response Structure and stakeholders
- 15 online meetings held
- 31 members: 23 agencies, 3 academic experts to advise, 2 community education groups
- Meetings from 26 March 2020 , twice weekly, then to every 10 days to 15 June.



4

Mitigating Educational Disadvantage Working Group – Value of the Structure during Covid-19

Ní neart go cur le chéile- No Strength without Unity

- **Unique Structure** – unites Further Education and Training (FET), Community Education and Higher Education stakeholders - identify issues impacting on vulnerable learners and offer high level solutions to addressing educational disadvantage exacerbated by COVID-19
- Identify how a tertiary-wide **collaborative approach** to educational equality during COVID19 can be facilitated
- **Informed insights** into issues impacting educationally disadvantaged learners across TES – Clearing House (learner surveys)
- Strive to offer **solutions** that are learner centred and offer immediate impact enabling access across the TES
- Strive to address **structural marginalisation** of learners
- Support and complement the existing policy structures



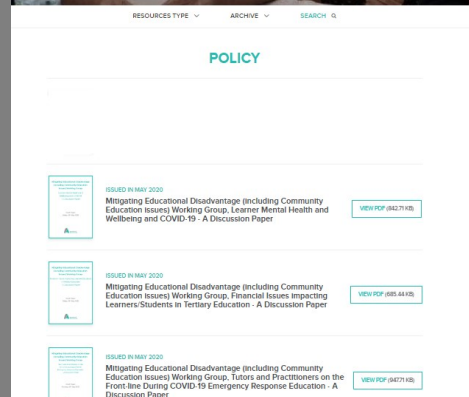
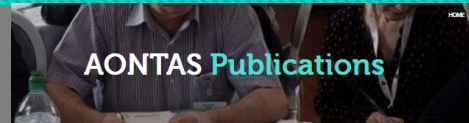
The Wishing Hand

5

Mitigating Educational Disadvantage Working Group – Outputs

MED Discussion Papers :

1. [Digital Learning](#)
2. [Assessment](#)
3. [Learner Engagement](#)
4. [Community Education](#)
5. [Educational Equity and Learner Cohort](#)
6. [Tutors and Practitioners](#)
7. [Financial Barriers](#)
8. [Mental Health](#)



6

Digital Learning and Disadvantage across Tertiary Education

Mitigating Educational Disadvantage (including Community Education issues) Working Group

Digital Learning and Disadvantage across
Tertiary Education – A Discussion Paper

Draft Paper
Tuesday, 7th April 2020

Emergency Remote Learning

- Ensure all learners are equipped with necessary technology to complete assignments before distributing any graded materials
- Provide free access to all software necessary to complete online assignments
- Develop a loan system for devices that can be provided to learners in need
- Work with business/home internet and phone providers to increase access to WiFi for all learners by removing data limits on all plans, opening public access to WiFi sites in public buildings, and increasing home sharing capacity on networks
- Ensure residential spaces with marginalised communities resident have free access to WiFi and appropriate technology resources (eg direct provision centres and temporary accommodation facilities)
- Develop a resource kit for learners and parents that equips them with time management skills and tips for effective strategies to succeed in a remote learning environment
- Provide training opportunities for remote learning to institution and teachers
- Develop a resource hub for educators to access materials digital learning materials

7

Learner/Student Engagement

Mitigating Educational Disadvantage (including Community Education issues) Working Group

Learner/Student Engagement across
Tertiary Sector – A Discussion Paper

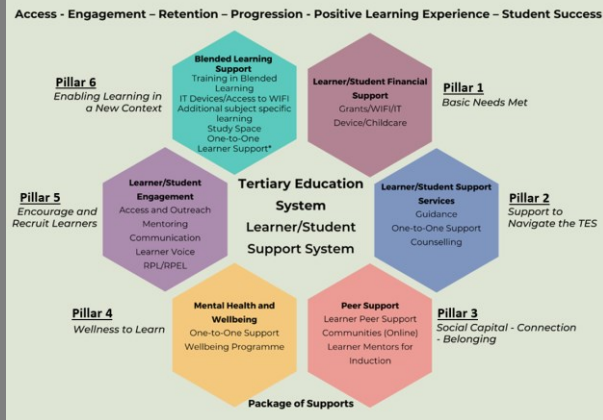
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Learner Engagement

- Prioritize identifying and supporting disadvantaged groups in each learning environment
- Ensure immediate and continued contact with learners
- Develop resources and policies to support staff engaging learners
- Articulate this is not business as usual and be mindful of the different experiences learners may having during this crisis (eg those affected by health concerns, those who have experienced recent bereavement, those in difficult home environments, etc)
- Maintain an empathy first based approach to all learners, as these are exceptional circumstances
- Use plain language in all communications and communicate messages across a number of platforms (eg mobile messaging, email, post, local media, etc)

8

Tertiary Education System Learner/Student Support Framework for New Learning Context 2020/2021



Proposal to Inform Budget Estimates based on a Tertiary Education Student/Learner Support Framework

- Pillar 1: Student/Learner Financial Support (Basic Needs Met)
- Pillar 2: Learners/Student Support Service (Support to navigate)
- Pillar 3: Peer Support (Belonging)
- Pillar 4: Mental health and wellbeing (Wellness to learn)
- Pillar 5: Learner/student engagement (Encourage and recruit learners)
- Pillar 6: Learner/student support (Enabling Learning in a new context)

Learners' Experiences During COVID-19

"I took time off because of mental health. The tutors stayed in touch and they were like 'there's no rush back to it. Take your time.'"

"We learn more from class discussions and social interaction than anything else. The interaction is part of the learning so this needs to continue somehow."

"We only have one laptop and three children using it."

"I can learn in my own time and spend as long or as short in it and when suits. It's helped me to take my own initiative."



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