Case Study of Good Practice

Mature Student Evaluation: A New Entry Pathway for Mature Students

Case Study Synopsis

The College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences (CACSSS) invited Adult Continuing Education to develop a proposal for a new assessment to replace the Mature Student Application Pathway (MSAP). The MSAP is a two-hour psychometric test that is designed to test an applicant's verbal reasoning and written ability skills. It has been used by CACSSS for over 10 years to assess applicants who apply via the CAO to study undergraduate programmes in the College. ACE welcomed the invitation and created a project team to research the current offering and work on options for a new assessment. Prior to the use of the MSAP, the CACSSS College Office oversaw the operations of the entrance exam for mature candidates. The paper consisted of several essay-style questions. The new Mature Student Evaluation was developed taking inspiration from both the MSAP, and the former CACSSS Mature student paper in the design of the new pathway. ACE collaborated closely with colleagues in Mature Student Support, UCC Skills Centre, UCC Admissions Office, and CACSSS to ensure the new assessment, named the Mature Student Evaluation (MSE), would meet the needs of these offices, while prioritising the learner's experience.

Key Words: *Mature Students, inclusive assessment, entry pathway, UDL, collaboration, student success.*

Intended Enhancements

Following ideas from the UN report on SDGs, 'Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development' (unsceb.org), the team at ACE took a social justice approach, incorporating ideas from Universal Design for Learning, placing the student at the centre of the process. Moving away from the MSAP style of psychometric testing, the new paper incorporates a picture and pre-seen contemporary poem or text, sent earlier with UDL in mind. The redesigned pathway accommodates diverse learning styles and enhances the opportunity for student success.

Key Impacts

One of the key benefits for candidates beginning their academic journey in CACSSS, is that this pathway introduces students to the Skills Centre. The inaugural MSE was held on March 23rd, 2024 on the UCC campus. Prior to the assessment, applicants were invited to attend preparatory workshops facilitated by the UCC Skills Centre. These workshops not only guided applicants on preparing for the MSE but also aimed to welcome them to the campus and integrate them into the UCC community. Early feedback on the MSE sample paper has been overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the success of the collaborative efforts to create an inclusive and effective entry assessment for prospective students.

Additional Information

Feedback on the MSE Process was positive:

"It was explained very clear what was going to happen and the workshop beforehand was fantastic".

"Every step was very clearly explained so I had absolutely no doubt about what was expected!"

"It made me think about current affairs and issues facing the modern world in which we live. The exam also concentrated on essay writing, which will be essential going forward in UCC". "It was not a very straight forward application process, but UCC provided a lot of help for that".

Area/s of Alignment

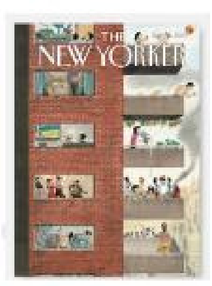
- ☐ **Research & Innovation**
- ☒ **Student Success**
- ☐ **Global Engagement**
- ☐ **Our Staff, Our Culture Our**
- ☐ **Place, Our Footprint**

The Strategic Plan notes, "From Acorn to Mighty Oak' represents the journey that each student completes while attending UCC. The MSE sows the seeds for Student Success!

Graphics











Presenters:

Dr Patricia McGrath; Maria Keane; Katie Nolan; Damien Butler; Danielle Byrne; Eadaoin Regan; Martha Henchion