

From Directorate of Student Services to Directorate of Student Development

Underpinning the quality of DIT's education & the DIT Student Experience

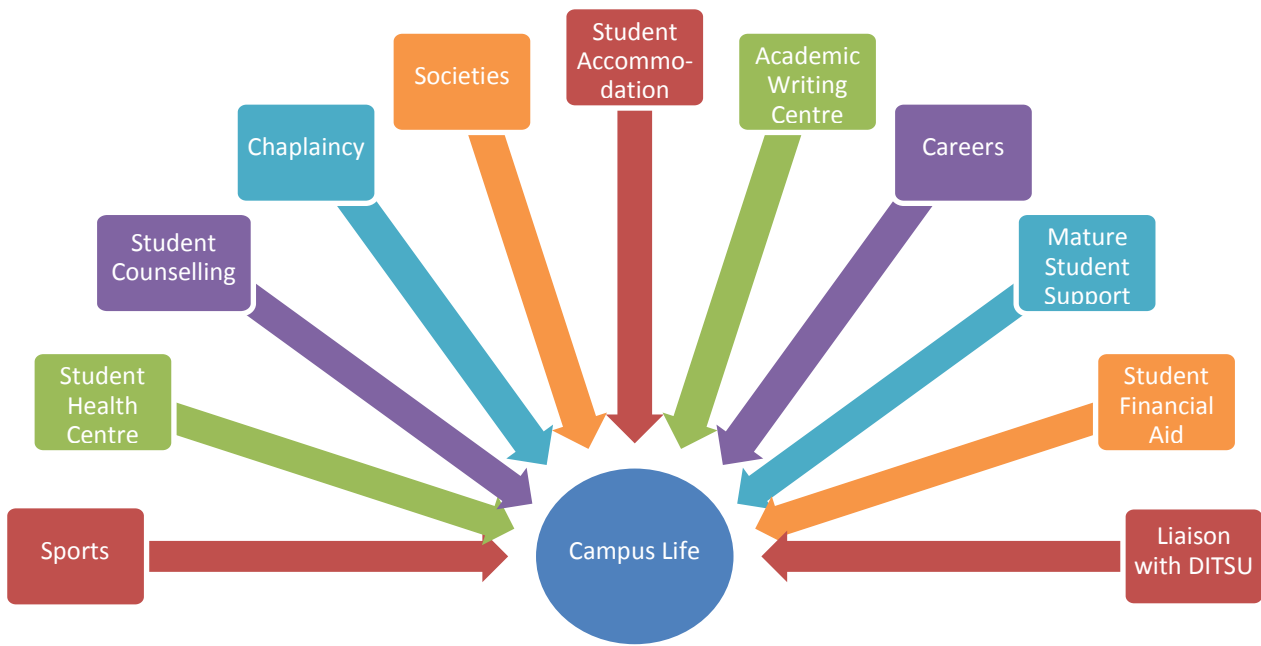
In 2010 the Directorate of Student Development was created with the reorganisation of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). The formation of this new directorate allowed many related areas to come together under a single directorate with a common focus on supporting DIT's student population of 20,000 students. Main areas of activity within the Directorate are as follows:

DIT Access & Civic Engagement	Access service, disability service, engagement outreach, students learning with communities, Grangegorman area-based childhood programme
DIT Campus Life	Sports, Health Centre, Counselling, Chaplaincy, Societies, Student Accommodation, Liaison With DITSU, Academic Writing Centre, Careers, Financial Aid
Student Administration	Registrations, Student Centres, Examinations, Timetabling
DIT Admissions	Enrolment Planning, Student Recruitment & Student Admissions
DIT Campus Planning	New Campus Development
DIT International Office	Recruitment And Management Of International Students
DIT Foundation (& Alumni Office)	Promoting Engagement

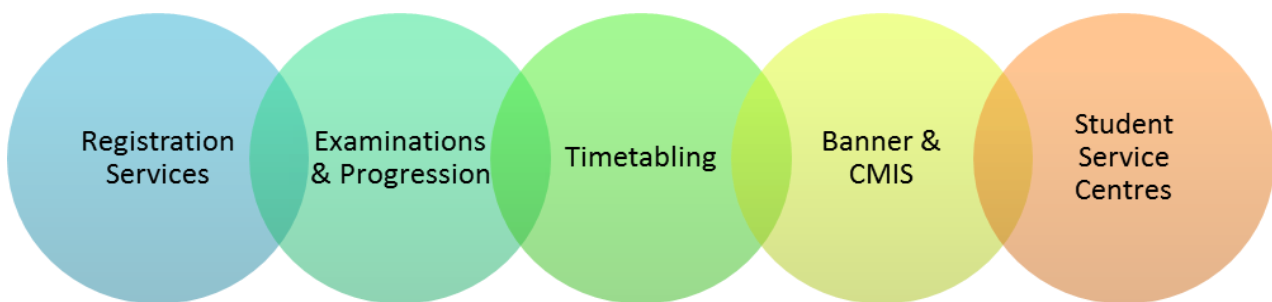
Directorate of Student Development



Campus Life Summarised as follows:



Student Administration summarised as follows

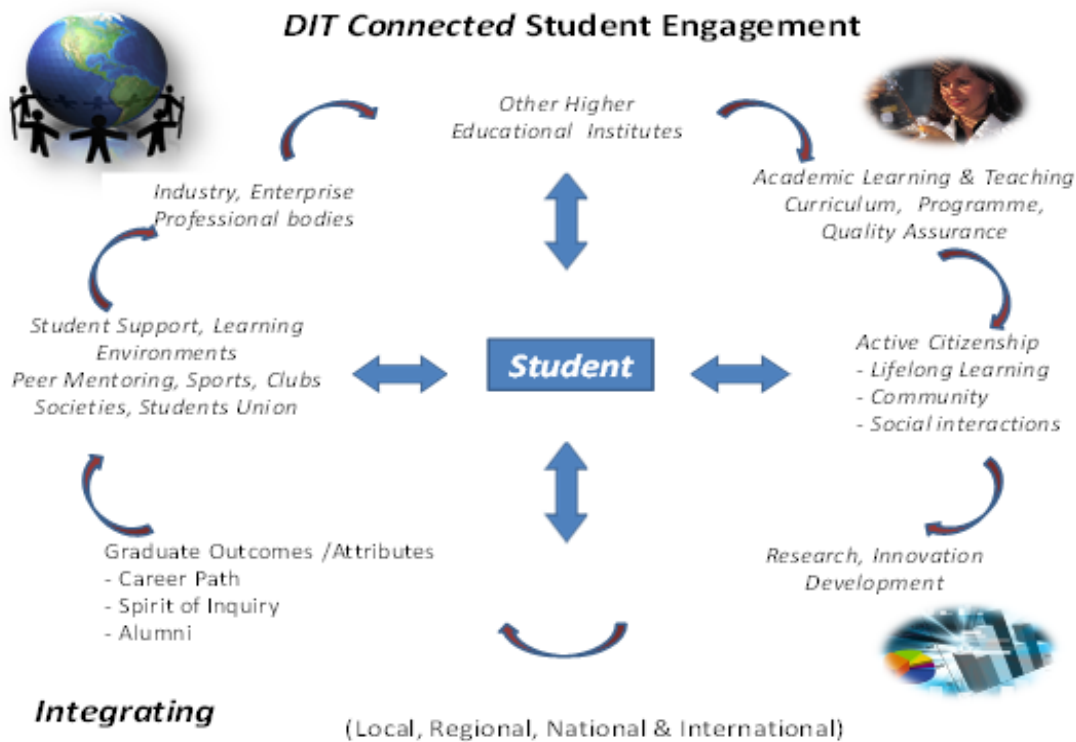


The creation of a Directorate of Student Development reflects a trend within higher education to better coordinate and integrate Student Development and provide enhanced supports to a growing and increasingly disparate student population. In a period of mass education and in an environment where Government policy views higher education as a means of addressing many social, cultural and economic objectives there is a real need for Higher education institutions to respond with solutions which provide better services often with limited resources. Within DIT there was a real sense that there was a need for a consistent institute-wide approach to student facing activities and that a single directorate could assist in this regard.

Six years later it is timely to reflect on the formation of the Directorate of Student Development (Student Services) and how it might position itself to better meet the needs of a growing student population and overall higher education institution into the future. This Working Paper has been developed to contribute to discussions around organisational structures currently underway across the institute and within a wider TU4D context. What is clear is that the activities undertaken by the Directorate of Student Development (Student Services) have a significant impact on the overall student experience.

Access to key resources such as student counselling, careers, the medical centre as well as delivery of the new campus at Grangegorman or indeed the Steinway pianos impact in fundamental ways on the overall student experience and on the development of each student. Research clearly points to the real benefits of exposing students to deep learning activities such as community interaction, volunteering, and co-curricular activities in areas such as sports, clubs and societies as key ways in building a connection between the student and the Institute.

Student Enrolment and Admissions, facilitates and provide access to the Dublin Institute of Technology's programmes in a fair, transparent and unbiased way, through the recruitment, admission and engagement of students of all ages and backgrounds. Managing all applications at undergraduate and postgraduate level from Ireland and internationally. Provides the leadership and co-ordination of the promotion of the Institute's programmes Provides leadership in responding to the external environment ie leading the submission for Labour Market Activation. Develop and provides an admissions system, automated or otherwise, to increase numbers and constantly improve the myriad of admissions processes. Collates, interprets, analyses and disseminates appropriate data to internal and external stakeholders on the application, offer, acceptance, retention and engagement of students so as to inform said stakeholders on management and market information



It is this connection or engagement that underpins student motivation and retention and sustains the student during his/her time in the Institute.

Fostering Graduate Attributes through the Student Experience:

In recent years DIT Academic Council has approved a number of graduate attributes that DIT seeks to achieve amongst all our graduates. These include being *engaged, enterprising, enquiring, effective and expert in their chosen discipline*. Co-curricular activities contribute to the achievement of such attributes. Activities such as participation in sport foster collaboration, resilience, honesty, ethics, character building, communication,

teamwork and leadership skills. Access and civic engagement bring students often from differing disciplines and year groups together to address issues and projects in the community and in the process apply their knowledge and develop a sense of being civically engaged and being socially responsible.

With the reorganisation of DIT in preparation for the emerging Technological University of Dublin there is a real opportunity to build on the experience of recent years with a central focus student development. Recognition that the formal and informal curriculum coexist and complement each other to the benefit of the student is well established and can be enhanced further in a new TU4D. Recognition that the student experience is complex and is experienced at an individual student level has led to many initiatives to target special cohorts of students from access to mature to first years. Integrating the formal and informal curriculum in a fundamental manner can uniquely position DIT and TU4D to compete within the higher education sector.

Within the Directorate of Student Development (Student Services) there is a real sense that as we move forward the development of the individual student should remain the dominant focus of our activities and that the notion of student services does not adequately reflect where we need to go.

The concept of student development is central to the role of any higher education institution and embedded within our institution. Moving from *service* to *development* provides a richer focus and draws in staff to a deeper level of engagement and understanding of student needs. This deeper relationship places a greater emphasis on what the individual student needs to prosper and advance within the institution. It suggests a greater focus on student needs analysis and the coordination of appropriate responses. In many respects this is well underway in many areas at present in particular in areas such as the access office, counselling, chaplaincy etc.

Taking this more holistic view to the overall learning and development experiences of each student leads to an enhanced quality of education for that student. Drawing together these activities into a more coordinated offering makes these resources more readily available and accessible to each student. Accordingly, as we move forward there is an opportunity to draw into this Directorate areas such as the Maths Learning Centre and Academic Writing Centre. Ultimately, all of these areas will be physically co-located in the Academic Hub at Grangegorman.

Key Developments to deliver the revised vision and objectives

An increased emphasis on integrating student development activities into core institutional strategies with a strong interaction with colleagues within the colleges and other directorates will be a central focus in addressing student development into the future. A strand of this integration relates to the blending and alignment of curricular and co-curricular activities in a more fundamental way. There are very good structures in place to support each student through this/her time in DIT. These structures should be retained and developed further to meet growing needs of the DIT and ultimately TU4D. This cooperative approach will be central to achieving success.

As we move forward we would revisit some areas of activity within the Directorate. While much progress has been made over recent years and structure and roles have evolved there remains potential to provide greater coherence within the following areas:

- a) DIT Campus Life – counselling, careers, medical centre, sports, clubs- societies, chaplaincy, mature student support, and now to include the Academic Writing Centre;
- b) DIT Access & Civic Engagement – Access, mature student, Community engagement, Disability;
- c) Student Administration- registrations, student centres, examinations, timetabling,
- d) Enrolment and Admissions
- e) Campus Planning – new campus development;
- f) International Office;

- g) DIT Foundation & DIT Alumni Network to create a more coherent approach to fund and friend raising within the university and also to provide graduates with support;

DIT Admissions provides an opportunity for developing greater coherence an integration between student – facing activities, in particular integration with Student Administration and the International Office.

Build on existing strengths – retain key aspects of current approach

To enable Directorate of Student Development (Student Services) to fulfil its role in the collaborative delivery of a quality student experience, there are some features of the existing approach that should be retained and built upon.

Currently each function area has key function-specific knowledge that enables it to lead the development and delivery of a service. This knowledge is derived from research, involvement in international and national policy, evaluation and review of international, national and HEI practice and legal and ethical issues. It is this professional knowledge base that provides the service with its ability to lead the development of relevant DIT strategy, policies, targets and practices. It is critical that organisational structures continue to place this integrated knowledge at the centre of a function. In effect this is the function's discipline knowledge. The central line management of relevant staff is a requirement in any new organisational design. It is also the case that further developing the relationship between the Directorate of Student Development and the Colleges is a key next step.

High-quality student experiences through collaborative working between colleges and student services

All DIT staff play a role in enabling students to transition into the Institute and progress through and enjoy their experience while acquiring relevant graduate attributes and enable students to achieve graduate success.

From the student perspective all aspects of their experience are interlinked and key to their success. Providing an integrated, high-quality and consistent student experience can only be achieved through collaborative working between colleagues and

In summary

The Directorate of Student Development has achieved much since its establishment six years ago. It is also true to say that while the Directorate was newly established many activities have been operating successfully for many years but clustered under the new directorate for the first time. The concept of one DIT and an Institute-wide consistent approach has served well and certainly will be of great assistance in rolling out a wider TU4D approach. The grouping of activities under Student Development works well with campus life and Access and Civic Engagement often cooperating on student facing activities. The Campus Planning office and Student Administration supports Campus Life and the overall student experience while complementing the work of the DIT Foundation. In recent DIT Staff Surveys the Directorate performed well and morale is good amongst staff and across services.

There is an opportunity to continue to build on progress to date with a stronger emphasis on student development. This greater emphasis on development will require a deeper relationship with colleges and directorates but yielding an enhanced quality of education. This will require more embedding of student development activities within core institute activities. In the case of the new campus development at Grangegorman there will be a requirement on DIT to coordinate with all necessary stakeholders a capital

programme extending to several hundred million euros. Much of this capital investment relates to student facing facilities such as student accommodation, sports and recreational facilities as well as the academic hub and academic space. The existing structure of the Directorate is now well established and the rationale for the creation of the Directorate has been justified. There is now an opportunity to further refine the focus of the Directorate to better reflect the needs of the Institute and also to prepare for a TU4D.