Applying UDL as a Framework for Inclusive Curriculum Projects in Higher Education: A case study from Trinity College Dublin

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June 9th 2023

Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project (Trinity-INC)

Commenced in October 2020

Mandate: **to embed principles of diversity, equality and inclusion across all curricula at Trinity College Dublin**.

Based in the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Office**, in order to form part of the wider EDI agenda at Trinity.

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Why is there a need for an inclusive curriculum project?

Trinity-INC Alignment with Trinity Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Goal 1: We will foster an ever more diverse and inclusive student community

Goal 8: We will be one Trinity community.

By 2025, 25% of UG students will entered through access initiatives (TAP, HEAR/DARE) and from under-represented groups.

By 2025, 30-35% of all students will come from outside of Ireland.

An Inclusive Trinity supports the Trinity Graduate Attributes.
Education should be about forming not informing!

To **Think** Independently

To **Communicate** Effectively

To **Develop** Continuously

To **Act** Responsibly

Year 0: Conceptualisation and Consultations

- Review of literature and other inclusive curriculum programmes
  - Kingston College
  - Columbia University
  - AHEAD/UCD
- Review of previous inclusive curriculum initiatives in Trinity.

Year 0: Trinity consultations
"One size does not fit all" – need for tailored solutions & identify factors of resistance and facilitators (Fovet 2021)

- Mapping of Trinity support services and student societies

- >50 consultations with Trinity students and staff, and with external experts

- Creation of the Trinity-INC Advisory Board
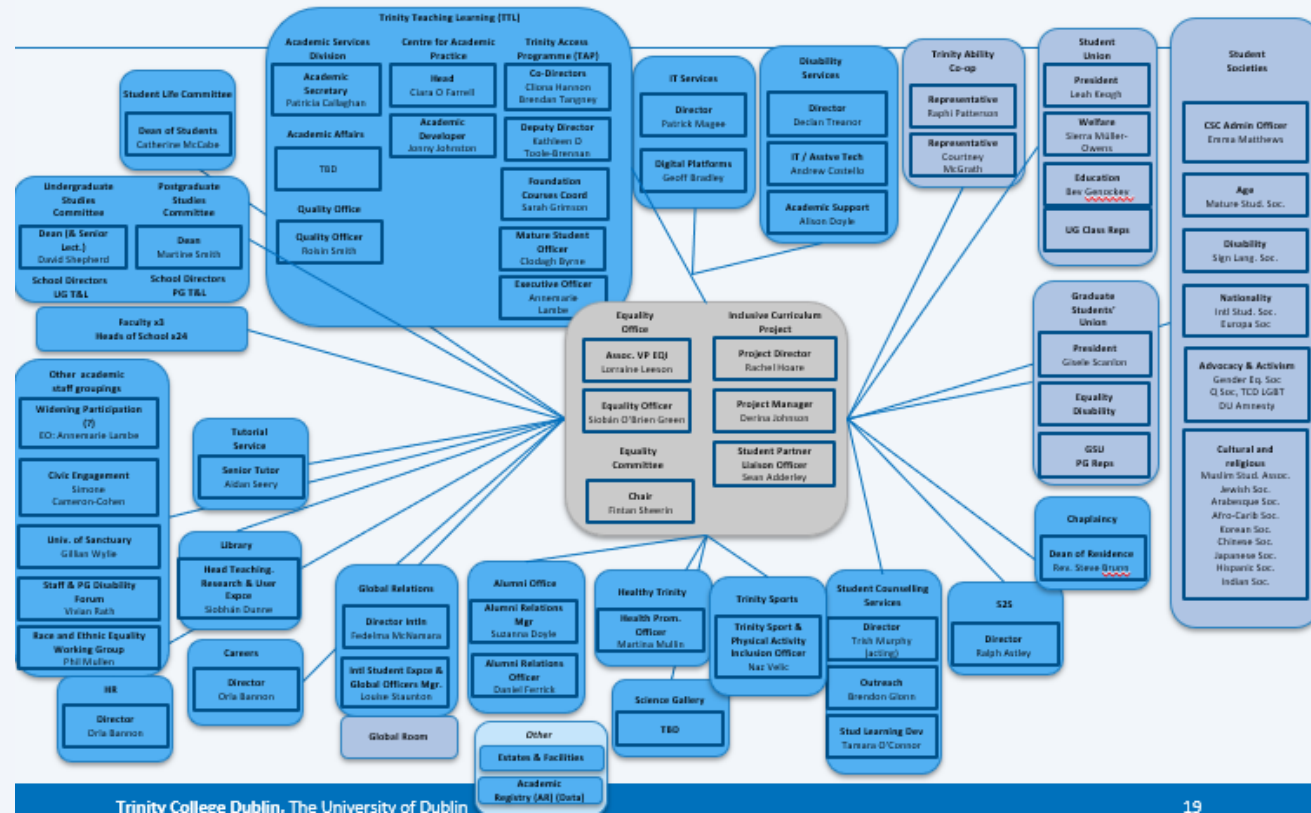
Year 0: Key (agreed) definitions

- **Curriculum**

- **Inclusive Curriculum**

Curriculum

- what is to be taught and how it is to be taught

- "intended educational experience" in lecture theatre, laboratory or seminar room PLUS "hidden curriculum" in library, work placements, as well as classroom culture (Barnett & Coate 2005)

Inclusive Curriculum

- One in which all students, regardless of personal circumstances, or learning backgrounds, abilities or strategies, have equitable opportunity to engage fully in their studies and achieve their learning goals.

Acknowledging resistance

- Fear of increases to academic workload

- Assumption that accessibility/inclusivity requires technological expertise

- Perceived threats to academic standards , integrity and freedom

- No buy out / link to professional progression.

- Siloed student services often working on complementary inclusive initiatives.

Student responses

- Huge and varied inclusion challenges

- Often intersectional

- Appreciation of being listened to

- Need to be included in the conversation

Four equal & interconnected pillars of project initiatives

Top down | Bottom up
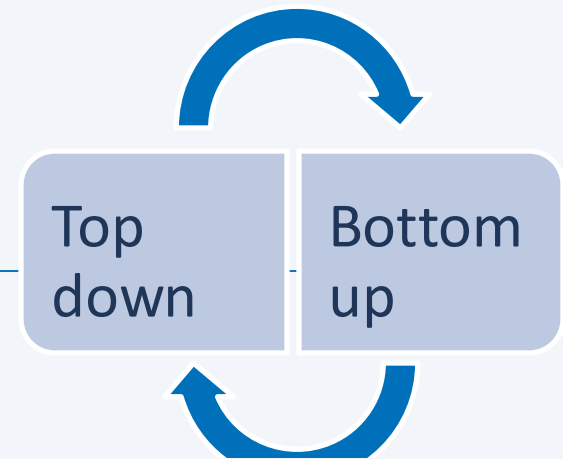
Academic
Supporting professional development and creating a community of practice at the School level

Student
Supporting awareness raising of inclusion challenges and successes, in real time.

Institutional
Embedding inclusivity in College policies, discourse and other key documentation.

Infrastructure - **as 'wraparound pillar':** Sharing knowledge and building capacity across College support services and other areas to meet needs of all students, and developing a College-wide intersectional standpoint.
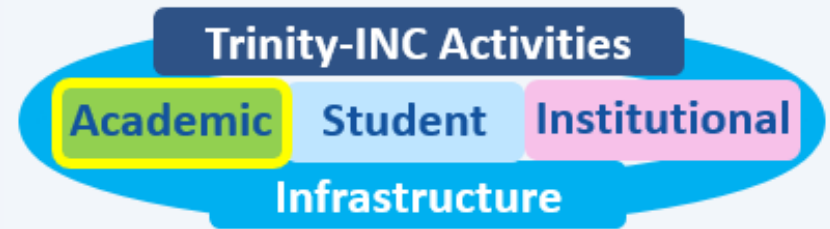
Trinity-INC Advisory Board

Academic Pillar

Trinity-INC Academic Pillar

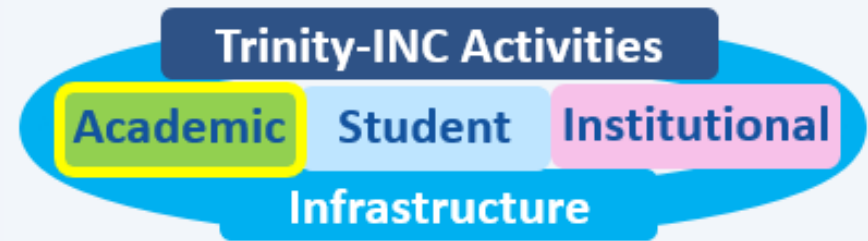**Supporting professional development and creating a community of practice at the School level.**

Context / Barriers:

- **Varying nature of diversity and exclusions across disciplines.**

- **No buy-out / direct progression link to this work – busy and overstretched staff.**

What do you do?

Academic Pillar
- What we did

Supporting professional development and creating a community of practice at the School level.

- **School Champion Programme**

  - Challenge: STEM representation

  - Challenge: Voice and decision making

  - Ethos: Plus ones!

- **Trinity-INC Inclusive Initiatives**

- **Trinity-INC Professional Learning Module in Inclusive Practices for Teaching and Learning**

Trinity-INC Professional Learning Module in Inclusive Practices for Teaching and Learning

Aims:

- To support professional development

- To bring academic and support staff together to share perspectives and together move towards a shared vision and community / culture of inclusive practices (Wenger, 1998). Challenging the silo mentality (Fovet, 2021)

➢ Open to all who teach / support teaching at Trinity

➢ Tailored to Trinity context – peer learning.

➢ Student voice (UDL - engagement)

➢ Plus ones (Tobin, 2018), easy wins, tolerance for error (UD)

UDL informed Module

Engagement

- ✓ Learning UDL by doing
- ✓ Tailored to Trinity context
- ✓ Approx. time against each task per week provided; most weeks no more than 2 hours engagement
- ✓ Hybrid & recordings
- ✓ Self-directed learning, and optional extra reading
- ✓ Peer group meetings, held at time of convenience

Representation

- ✓ Accessible materials (headings, alt-text, colour contrast, etc)
- ✓ VLE clearly laid out
- ✓ Closed captions
- ✓ Variety of formats: Read – Listen – Watch – Do
- ✓ ISL Interpretation
- ✓ Seminars/Webinars are recorded and available on Trinity INC YouTube Channel

Action and Expression

- ✓ No check list – assignment based on reflection on own practice
- ✓ Plus ones and easy wins
- ✓ Assignment can be as presentation to peers (submission of PowerPoint), video or written
- ✓ Accessibility checklist required for submission of assignment

Blackboard Ally and Accessibility

Low (needs help) — Medium (A little better) — High (almost there) — Perfect!

- Blackboard Ally provides staff with feedback on the accessibility of their documents, and what they can do to improve them.

- Ally then allows students to download documents according to their needs – Audio / HTML / Tagged pdf etc.

- Various strategies to engage:

  - Ally report shared across Schools and T&L committees;

  - Student testimonials;

  - 5-min how-to tips on each main issue (Trinity-INC YouTube);

  - Accessibility tips and weekly drop in;

  - Accessibility Champions
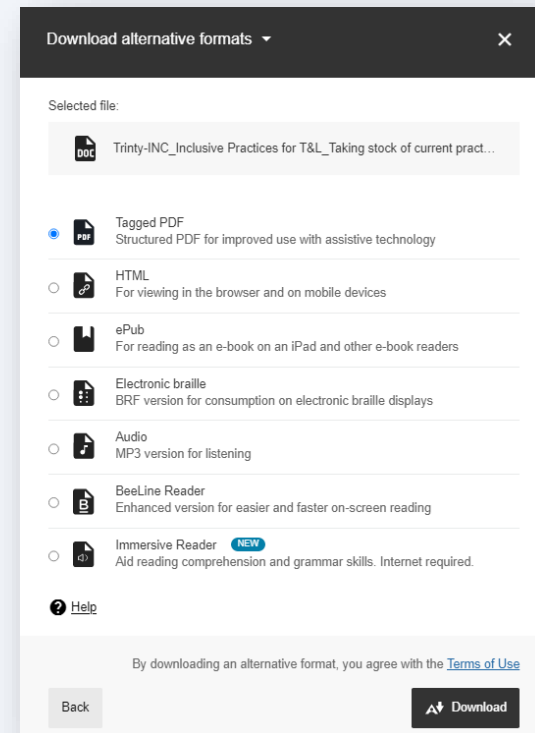
Student Pillar

Trinity-INC Student Pillar

Supporting awareness raising of inclusion challenges and successes

Context / Barriers:

- **Constantly evolving nature of diversity**

- **Exclusions ever changing (COVID)**

- **Hard to reach students who are underrepresented / face barriers in HE (time poor)**
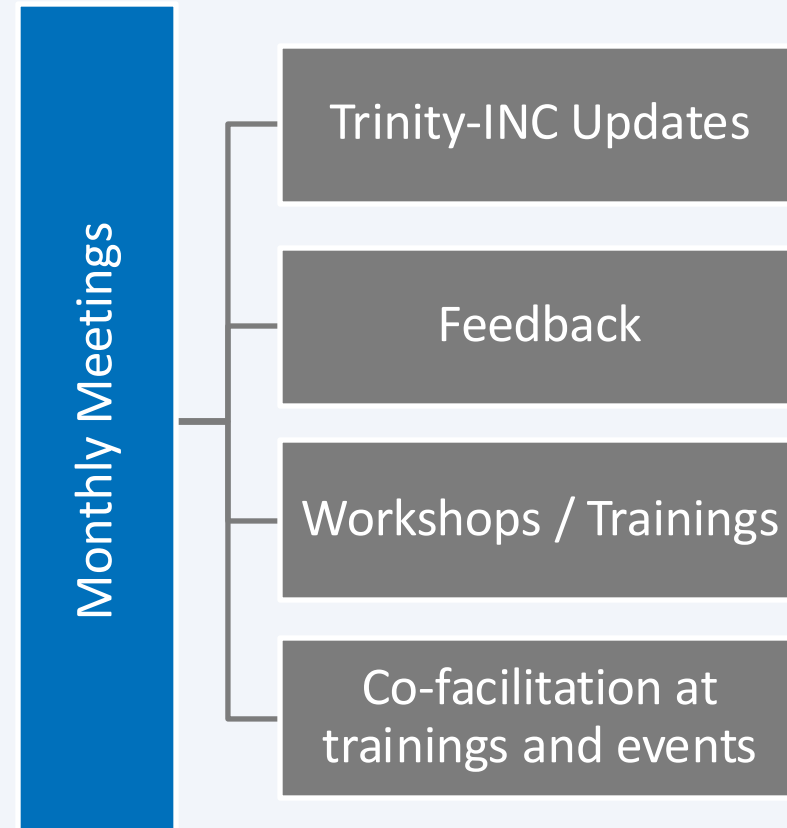
What do you do?

Student Pillar
- What we did

Trinity-INC Activities
Academic Student Institutional
Infrastructure

Supporting awareness raising of inclusion challenges and successes

- **NB voice of students from backgrounds/experiences often underrepresented / who face barriers in HE.**

  - Nine grounds of equality; socio-economic disadvantage; care-giving responsibilities; other self-identifying.

- **Summer Student Partner Programme**

  > **Student Partner Committee**

- Share inclusion/exclusion issues in real time.

Monthly Meetings

- Trinity-INC Updates
- Feedback
- Workshops / Trainings
- Co-facilitation at trainings and events

UDL infused across project – with students

Engagement

- Inclusivity commitment stated at the beginning of every meeting

- Flexible involvement

- Paid involvement

- Hybrid

- Agency

- Diversity is valued

Representation

- Accessible materials (headings, alt-text, colour contrast, etc)

- Use of plain English

- Closed captions

Action and Expression

- Never have to be the 'voice', but encouraged and supported to use their voices

- Contribute in meeting or afterwards written/voice-note/one-to-one meeting

- Development of materials

- Co-facilitation at all seminars and events

Institutional Pillar
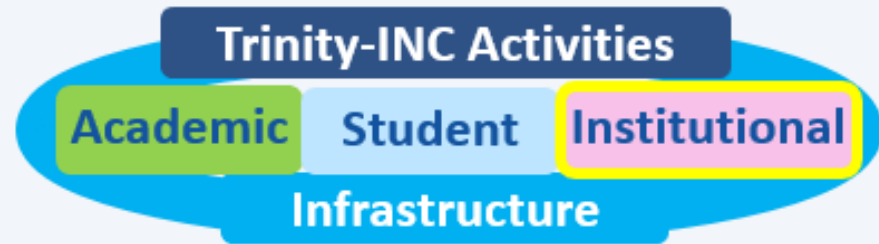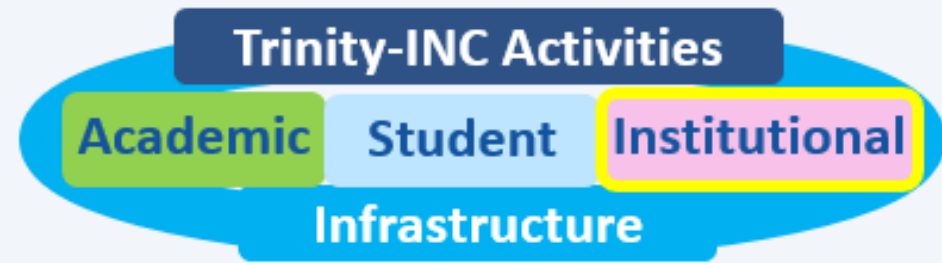
Trinity-INC Institutional Pillar

Embedding inclusivity in College policies, discourse and other key documentation.

Context / Barriers:

- **Limited sustainability of previous "TIC" project**

- **No identified champion among university leadership**

- **Complex network of decision making committees and slow change processes**

Institutional Pillar
What we did

Trinity-INC Activities
Academic Student Institutional
Infrastructure

Embedding inclusivity in College policies, discourse and other key documentation.

- **Knocking on doors!**

  - Undergraduate / Postgraduate Studies Committees

  - Student Life Committee

  - School Committees

  - Electives

- **Elective Module proposal; others in train (slow)**
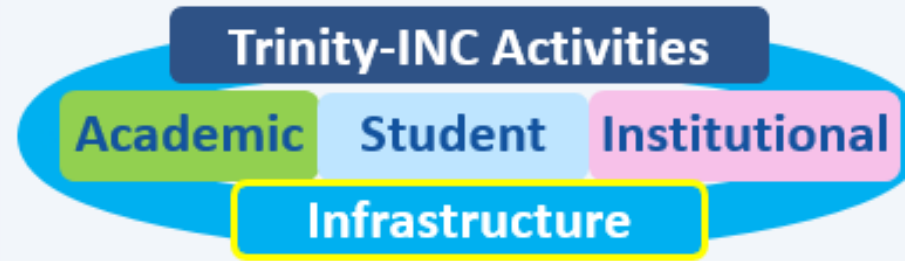
- **Easy wins and longer asks**

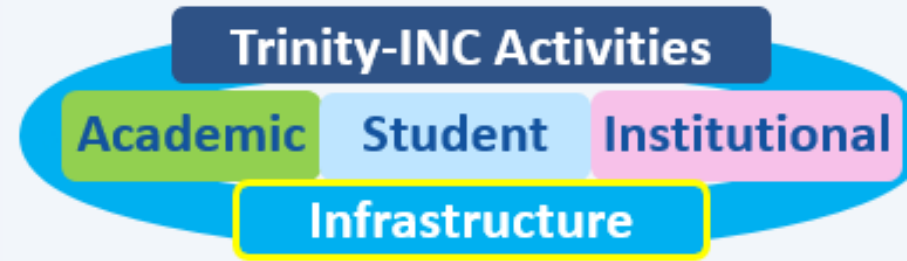# Infrastructure Pillar

Trinity-INC Infrastructure Pillar

Sharing knowledge and building capacity across College support services and other areas to meet needs of all students, and developing a College-wide intersectional standpoint.

Context / Barriers:

- **Strong student supports, but can be unaware of each other's initiatives.**

- **Inclusion seen as work of service, not as everyone's business**

- **Supports treating different aspects of student, rather than student as a whole. (Fovet 2021)**

- **What do you do?**

Infrastructure Pillar – what we did

Sharing knowledge and building capacity across College support services and other areas to meet needs of all students, and developing a College-wide intersectional standpoint.

- **Advisory Board**

- **Inclusion of support staff**

- **#InclusiveTrinity Week**

- **Communication and connections**
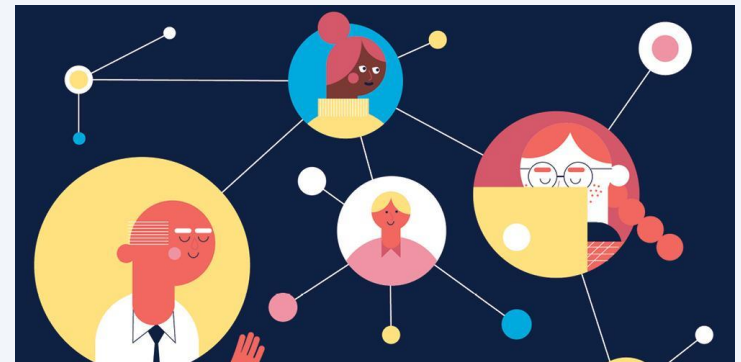
Conclusion

- **Open and half-open doors**

- **Easy wins, plus ones – supporting not blaming**

- **Student at heart of everything - the power of impact**

- **Respectful teaching and dialogue**

- **Learning with**

- **Being comfortable with resistance!**

Questions, suggestions or other Feedback

**Please contact us at trinityinc@tcd.ie
or see:
https://www.tcd.ie/equality/projects/inclusive-curriculum/**