



S2S

Peer Support

Handbook

2024/25



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

S2S 
Student 2 Student

Welcome Message

Breda Walls



Breda Walls
Director of Student Services



Dear Peer Support Team,

I am thrilled to welcome each of you to our newly reintroduced Peer Support Service. Your dedication to becoming Peer Supporters exemplifies a commitment to fostering a supportive community within our College.

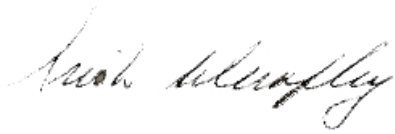
Peer Support is a cornerstone of our student support system, emphasizing the power of one student listening to another, offering guidance without judgment. Your role as volunteers is crucial, providing a confidential and empathetic ear to your peers. Your willingness to undergo 35 hours of training really showcases your dedication to making a positive difference!

As you embark on this journey, embody honesty, openness, and approachability. And mind yourselves and your studies too. Never hesitate to reach out to each other or to Shauna and Ralph if you need help. With your help we can create a campus where everyone feels heard and supported.

Thank you!

Welcome Message

Trish Murphy

Patricia Murphy
Student Counselling Service Director

Welcome to the S2S Peer Support handbook.

This programme is an essential part of the overall Student Counselling offering, and you are a crucial part of our stepped-care model.

Students will benefit from your presence, listening ear, and focused attention that can be availed of for as long as required. This allows students to select the support that suits them, when they need it and in a place that works for them – this is unique and acts as a wonderful addition to the supports students can avail of.

The Peer Support programme is a leader in Ireland, and we are very proud of its existence and development. The whole team in Student Counselling is grateful for your involvement and for the important role you play in the college's approach to student mental health.

We salute you!

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Introducing S2S

Trinity College's Student 2 Student (S2S) Mentoring and Peer Support Programme is part of our Student Counselling Services, and specifically designed to ensure every student in Trinity knows that they belong here. Through S2S, students can get information and support from another student, find a friendly face to have a chat, talk things through or just ask a few questions when they're not sure who to approach.



Valerie Tsukanova
2023/24 Mentor

'To me, S2S means helping others and making college a more positive experience. This means helping any students struggling to meet people or struggling to navigate college life.'

Mission of the Trinity Counselling, Learning Development and Student 2 Student Services:

Support through collaboration, connection and compassion.

Vision of the Trinity Counselling, Learning Development and Student 2 Student Services:

To be an internationally accredited service, delivering accessible social, academic, mental health and emotional wellbeing services across the Trinity community, keeping students at the centre of everything we do.

Policies

As a member of S2S there are certain policies that you must be aware of to ensure your safety and the safety of the students accessing our services.

We value you, our volunteers, and want you to get involved at all levels of the organisation. We aim to train, support and supervise to the best of our abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise, and we are proud to uphold the **TCD Volunteer Charter**.

By volunteering with S2S you agree to uphold our data protection and confidentiality agreements. You will also be required to sign an accountable space agreement.

You must familiarise yourself with some key S2S policies, including:

- **S2S Diversity and Accountability Policy**
- **S2S Reimbursement Policy**
- **S2S Room Booking Policy**
- **S2S Volunteer Policy**

As a student of Trinity, you are also expected to uphold **University Policies**, of note:

- **Dignity and Respect Policy**
- **Equality Policy**
- **Accessible Information Policy**

Policies

Data Protection

As S2S Peer Supporters, you are required to adhere to the **Student Counselling Service's Privacy Notice** and to be mindful of how and why you process personal data.

Personal data you are likely to encounter as an S2S Peer Supporter includes:

- Students' contact details (TCD email addresses).
- Emails written to you by other students.

To ensure that everyone's data and their privacy is respected, you must:

- Use the contact data shared with you from S2S Staff. Don't download or save these contact details anywhere else.
- Delete emails once you have dealt with them. If emails contain personal/ sensitive data that may be needed in the future, please consult with the S2S office about secure storage on the SCS Titanium system.

Please refer to **Trinity College's Data Protection Handbook** for more detailed information.

Policies

Confidentiality

As part of volunteering with S2S, it is important that you follow the **S2S confidentiality policy**.

The relationship between a student and an S2S Peer Supporter is confidential to the service. This means that nothing a student tells you can be disclosed to anyone outside the Counselling Service. There are exceptions to this, including:

- 1.** If the S2S Peer Supporter is concerned about the **risk of harm to the student or a third party**. In these circumstances you must raise your concerns with staff in the S2S office as a priority (following the referral process wherever possible). S2S will make every effort to discuss the situation directly with the student(s) concerned and to involve them in the disclosure process.
- 2.** S2S staff form part of the Student Counselling Service, who are mandated reporters under The Children First Act 2015. Information regarding **past or current abuse of children (aged under 18)** given to SCS must be reported to the Irish Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) if there is a reasonable suspicion that there is a child (aged under 18) at risk at the time of reporting. Records relating to such matters will be kept indefinitely, in accordance with current legal guidelines.
- 3.** Case notes kept by S2S staff relating to student engagement with an S2S volunteer may be **subpoenaed by court order**. This, along with GDPR, is a good reason not to keep notes unless absolutely necessary for the student's wellbeing. Please make sure not to keep written records of conversations you have with students as a Peer Supporter.

S2S Staff



Ralph Armstrong-Astley

S2S Coordinator
Pronouns: She/Her

Ralph leads the S2S team and is responsible for the strategic development of the service. As part of the Student Counselling Service Management team, she represents S2S volunteers and the students they support in steering and advisory groups across Trinity College, and within the National Consortium for Peer-led Transition.



Shauna O'Connor

S2S Programme Officer
Pronouns: She/Her

Shauna manages the daily function of the S2S volunteer programmes and volunteer engagement. She provides students support and debriefing to S2S volunteers. She also assists in the strategic development and representation of the service.



Chloe Staunton

S2S Executive Officer
Pronouns: She/Her

Chloe assists with the administrative work of the programme and the daily function of the S2S Student Space in House 47. She manages student and volunteer queries, volunteer reimbursement and assists with the orientation process.

Here to Support You

Email: student2student@tcd.ie

Phone: 01 896 2658

Ralph's mobile: 085 7833 548

Address: House 47, Trinity College Dublin

Book a **drop-in session** with an S2S Staff Member

In an emergency, please use the **after hours services information**

Peer Supporters

A Peer Supporter is a volunteer available throughout the year to meet with students one-to-one as requested. You must be willing to listen confidentially and without judgement to any student who requests support. Having your own experience of significant difficulties in no way stops you from being a Peer Supporter, so long as you are currently in a safe and resilient place.



What is involved?

Peer Supporters must be available for an intensive 35 hr in person training from 27th – 31st May 2024.

Once trained, Peer Supporters must be available over email to take requests, and to arrange in-person meetups with students.

They must also attend:

- Refresher training every term (approx. 3 hours)
- Monthly group supervisions with Student Counselling
- Regular debriefing with S2S staff

Peer Supporters may also be requested to:

- Provide emergency accompaniment to students referred to A&E.
- Participate in programme strategy meetings.
- Participate in service promotion activities.

What do you get?

- Extensive training in support work, active listening, challenging personal values, exploration skills, referral, managing significant distress and self-care.
- Substantial student and staff support frameworks.
- The opportunity to do something positive and rewarding.
- Guaranteed references based on involvement.
- Strong social network within S2S Society.

What is expected?

- Attend a full week of in-person training.
- Undergo Garda Vetting.
- Be available to take casework as of September 2024.
- To regularly check and respond to your TCD emails.
- Attend regular debrief sessions with S2S staff.
- Attend monthly group supervision with SCS staff.

House 47

Student Space

You can find us here: **House 47, Trinity College Dublin**
(check us out on the **TCD Sense Map** for accessibility information).

S2S is based in House 47, where there is a dedicated student space for you! Equipped with a microwave, cutlery and tea and coffee facilities for you to use. You can use this space to have lunch, or just come hang out. We're working on getting a set-up that will allow you to stream movies too. Something you'd like to see in the space? Let us know!



Along with the communal space, there is a bookable Zoom Room and Private 1:1 space. If you have an online appointment, need to study or want to have a private convo with someone, you can book these spaces!



Booking Links:

The Zoom Room (Room 7)

The 1:1 Room (Room 8)

Student Space (for group meet-ups)

Please see the **S2S Room Booking Policy**.

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What is Peer Support?

Peer Support is based on mutuality; using lived experience to help people in a similar circumstance and/or with a similar issue. A Peer Supporter needs to be enough of a contemporary that someone seeking a listening ear doesn't feel intimidated or inferior.



Your S2S Peer Support training is not designed to turn you into a counsellor, or any kind of professional expert. It's designed to help you hear and understand the issues people come to you with, to give you the space to have compassion, without it having a negative impact on you.

Ultimately, the S2S programme is designed not only to provide on the ground, easily accessible support to students in need; it also aims to help you to develop your own resilience strategies and support mechanisms, and to impart that knowledge to your fellow students as you learn and cultivate it yourself.



Core Conditions

There are three core conditions of effective peer support: acceptance, genuineness, and empathy. These conditions encourage a sense of equality and co-operation; we all feel more comfortable approaching someone with our difficulties when we see them as equals.

The ability to listen is probably the most valuable skill in communication. People often just need somebody to listen and hear them.

Active listening involves the ability to take in the whole message, accepting what is said without judging, and understanding not only the words spoken, but also the feelings that underlie the words. Everyone can listen, but active listening is a life-long skill to be cultivated.



Acceptance:

When helping others, demonstrate that you accept and respect them for who and what they are. This helps them to feel safe to share and explore problems without the threat of embarrassment or ridicule.



Genuineness:

To effectively help others, be genuine as a person and as a peer supporter. Being “real” builds a foundation of trust for the helping relationship.



Empathy:

People often confuse empathy with sympathy. If you sympathise with someone you think of how you would feel in their situation. If you empathise with them, you understand how it feels for them.

The Ideal Helper

Let's do an exercise and think about a person who you have reached out to for support. When you have that person in mind answer these questions:

- What was it about them that made you choose them to reach out to? Observe your behaviour with others over the next week and note any useful attributes and behaviours as you practice your skills.
- What specific aspects of their personality or behaviour did you find helpful?
- What did they say or do which may have helped you to relax and encourage you to confide in them?



Joanna Jarmolowicz **2023/24 Peer Supporter**

‘Not giving advice is hard in the beginning but with practice it gets easier.

Every case is very different but it's crucial to be your authentic self each time as well as caring, because that's how you make a connection with the students and you can help them more effectively.



Valuing Diversity

The world is full of people with different beliefs, views, and values. They come from different backgrounds, places and speak different languages. They may follow different religions, have different sexualities, or gender expressions. This means we may be confronted with opposing feelings and beliefs to our own.



Becoming aware of our own thoughts and feelings is the first step in the process of becoming an effective Peer Supporter. It is important to tease out what prejudices exist in our society, college community, and ourselves. Unfortunately, personal prejudices can and do colour our individual ways of being and we may be unaware of how they might affect how we engage with someone.

As Irish third level institutions become more diverse, it is helpful to think about the different experience's students may have in college. While minority members of college have similar needs to those of other students, many of them may face additional hurdles.

As a peer supporter, it is important to suspend our own world view as we try to be objective and non-judgemental and to gain some understanding of the others position.

Reflect and consider the following:

- What would you find difficult to hear from a peer?
- What would prevent you from remaining impartial?
- What is different between beliefs and values versus prejudices?

Case Allocation

Requests for Peer Support come in through an online form. Once a request comes in, the S2S programme Officer will allocate the case on the following criteria (in this order):

- 1.** Suitability in terms of specific requests made by the student (gender identity, course)
- 2.** Availability of the Peer Supporter
- 3.** Workload undertaken so far by the Peer Supporter – in order to ensure equity of workload a Peer Supporter who has undertaken less cases within the relevant academic year will be asked first.

If a student asks for someone specific, that Peer Supporter will be contacted, otherwise the request will go out to the group of Peer Supporters and the Programme officer will decide who to assign the case to based on who responds. The Peer Supporter selected by the Programme Officer will be contacted by email. It is at the Peer Supporters own discretion as to whether they would like to take the case on, and it is absolutely ok to say no.

Where possible a Peer Supporter will be allocated to a case within 48 hours of a request being made, and the Peer Supporter is to make contact with the student within **48 hours** of the case being assigned. All **meetings** must be arranged between the hours of 10am-5pm Monday-Friday to allow for referral/ immediate debrief if necessary and must be held in a public place.

All Peer Supporters attend a **debrief** with the S2S Co-ordinator or Programme Officer after each meeting. As cases go on and depending on what was discussed, a debrief may not be necessary but first meet-ups with any student must be followed with a debrief.

A&E

Accompaniment

From time to time a TCD staff member may refer a student to A&E and you may be asked to accompany them with a fellow Peer Supporter. You are never expected to provide accompaniment without prior consultation with a member of S2S/SCS, and you will never be asked to do this alone.

Your support will be requested when it is helpful for the student to have calm, supportive company from a peer. They may not wish to talk about the situation and are more likely to appreciate day to day conversation or amicable silence. The student you are accompanying may be in a vulnerable state, so please remember that any sense of panic or urgency is not helpful.

A&E accompaniment should only be provided upon request from a member of **S2S/SCS staff**. Concerns that a student outside of the S2S/SCS service may need hospital consultation should be raised with S2S/SCS or the College Health Centre immediately.



Accompaniment process:

- Arrangements will already have been made with the hospital, and you will be given a **referral letter** to present at reception when you get there. Transport will also be arranged for you and the student.
- A member of S2S/SCS will be available to **discuss the situation** and to answer any questions you have before you leave.
- Exchange your **contact details** with the TCD staff member who has requested your support and keep them up to date where possible. You can also call/text them if there is anything you are unsure of, or if you need further help at any point.
- There may be a significant **waiting period** at A&E. Please don't agree to accompany a student unless you are sure that you have the time to do it. Most A&E referrals take place towards the end of the working day (between 5-7pm).

Before you accept an accompaniment check:

- Are you free for the rest of the day/evening? If not, don't go.
- Have you eaten? If not, eat something or grab food for later.
- Is your phone battery low? If it is, can you grab a charger or provide an alternative contact number?
- Are you tired? Prioritise your rest and take a nap.
- Do you have the headspace to do an accompaniment.
- Have you done an accompaniment recently? If yes, take a break.

After an accompaniment:

- Have a self-care plan ready, watch a movie, take a bath etc.
- Schedule a debrief with an S2S Staff Member.

Communication Essentials

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Boundaries

Personal boundaries are simply the lines we draw for ourselves in terms of our level of comfort around others. They are an important part of self-care and are crucial for avoiding **burnout** and minimising **vicarious trauma**.

Situations can arise that make these boundaries unclear. As a Peer Supporter, there are many boundaries that you should practice for the benefit of you and others.



Knowing your role

- You can support someone, without needing to ‘solve’ the problem.
- Know the limits of the Peer Support relationship – be clear about your role.
- You have a right to your own privacy – don’t share your phone number with a student.

Student dynamics

- Establish clear boundaries for meet-ups, e.g., restrict to an hour between hours of 9am to 5pm.
- Be responsible about choosing meeting locations. If you can’t use the **1:1 room**, choose a public place – never go to a pub or someone’s apartment.
- It is not acceptable to start a romantic relationship with someone who you met through peer support – the relationship is a different dynamic to a normal friendship.

Knowing your limits

- Expect the same level of respect that you show to someone else.
- It’s ok to say no to a case.
- Involve others so you don’t become burdened by a situation – use your **supervision and debriefs** to their full extent.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to hold off on assuming that we know how someone else feels, and to engage with what they are saying in a way that helps us to understand their experience of something. It's not about knowing how you would feel in someone else's shoes, but what it's really like for them.

To understand empathy better, Dr Brené Brown has some great insights:

- Perspective Taking, or putting yourself in someone else's shoes.
- Staying out of judgement and listening.
- Recognizing emotion in another person that you have maybe felt before.
- Communicating that you can recognize that emotion.

'Empathy fuels connection. Sympathy drives disconnection'

'Rarely can a response make something better. What makes something better is connection'

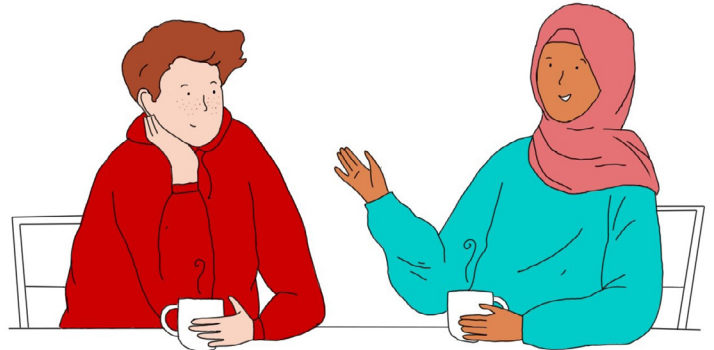
'Empathy is a choice, and it's a vulnerable one'

To learn more, watch this really helpful video from Brené Brown:



Active Listening

Listening is probably the most important skill required when helping another person. Active listening is the practice of listening that reflects understanding back to the speaker. It is a fantastic way to demonstrate empathy and understanding and ultimately creates a more enriching conversation.



Being truly listened to can have a powerful impact on someone; it can help them to feel that what they say matters, and that they are not alone. It can often be more valuable to listen to a problem than to find a solution for it. But how do we make sure we are listening and that a person feels heard?

How to listen well:

- Ask questions and summarise what was said.
- Make appropriate and encouraging remarks.
- Allow long silences.
- Use appropriate eye contact.
- Use encouraging facial expressions.
- Be relaxed.
- Avoid being distracted or daydreaming.
- Be aware of your responses.
- Listen and concentrate, rather than think about how to respond.
- Be careful not to assume and guess at details to fill in parts of the conversation.

Signs of not listening:

- Lack of eye contact or looking elsewhere.
- Negative body language
- Fidgeting or otherwise preoccupied.
- Checking a watch/clock/phone.
- Facial expression, showing boredom.
- Tone of voice is poor/disinterested.
- Making jokes.
- Offering solutions too soon.
- Changing the subject of conversation.
- Rushing a conversation.

Active Listening

Responses

When using active listening we can provide engaging responses that evoke further discussion. Some key types of responses you will use include reflecting, paraphrasing, and summarising. It is important to understand these and apply them when appropriate so students feel heard.

Feeling Unheard:

Not feeling heard can lead to anger, frustration, a sense that no one understands you and sometimes a feeling that you don't matter or don't count.

Body Language:

Non-verbal communication is extremely important for listening. It is estimated that facial expressions and body language account for 80% of the communication that occurs in a conversation.

Reflection:

Reflecting is a very important tool used to mirror the meaning and feelings of what someone has said. This communicates an understanding of a speaker's point of view.

Example: A peer is very anxious about doing an oral presentation in front of everyone in the class. She says to you, "I won't be able to do it. I'll just get up there and freeze!"

Reflection: "...You'll get up and freeze?"

Paraphrasing:

Paraphrasing is the skill of restating what someone just said in your own words. It combines thoughts, feelings, or actions to provide a clearer picture. It also helps the person feel more comfortable that what they said was heard and encourages them to explore further.

Accuracy is important when paraphrasing, but if you are unsure of what was just said, attempting to paraphrase gives an opportunity for the other person to correct you and elaborate more. You can start paraphrasing using:

- “I hear you saying that...”
- “If I understand correctly, you...”
- “It sounds like you...”
- Note: “You’re not making yourself clear. Did you mean...” “You’ve not expressed that very well...”

Example: A student describes a heated argument between himself and his father over the father’s refusal to lend him money. As he talks of his anger, his eyes fill with tears.

Paraphrase: “So you are cross with your father for not giving you the loan, and at the same time you are feeling upset.”

Things to keep in mind:

- Be tentative and offer your impression of what someone else has said.
- Avoid telling, informing, or defining the other person.
- Be respectful: don’t judge, dismiss, or use sarcasm.
- Use your own words. Repeating what was said is not paraphrasing.
- Try to tune into the other person’s language and use exact words when characterising an event or situation.
- Listen to the depth of feeling expressed in the person’s voice and reflect accordingly in your response.
- Do not add to what the person has said, avoid interpretations and evaluations.
- Be genuine and don’t pretend.

Summarising:

Summarising pulls together the main points of a discussion and organises them so that they can be reviewed, confirmed, or corrected. Summaries can serve a variety of purposes, including to:

- Prioritise and focus scattered thoughts and feelings.
- Close the discussion of a particular theme.
- Begin a further discussion.
- Check understanding of the conversation.
- Prompt exploration of an idea more.
- Focus a conversation that seems to be going nowhere.
- Begin to consider ways forward.

Example: In the following response, the listener summarises what a peer has said and adds a question to help the peer move forward.

Summary: “May I just check that I have understood this correctly? You’ve told me of a few choices open to you. You could try to deal with procrastination yourself and make an appointment to meet with your tutor or enrol in a study skills group and none of the options feel like a perfect solution. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of each of these possibilities?”

Guidelines:

- Put together the key ideas and feelings into broad statements, capturing the main details.
- Attend to the student’s various themes and emotional overtones.
- Be brief and direct.
- Do not add to what the person has said, and avoid interpretations and evaluations.

Active Listening

Asking Questions

Questions are an important part of a conversation. They need to be used appropriately to benefit a discussion.

Guidelines for asking questions:

- Ask questions that serve a purpose.
- Ask questions that have substance to them - to help the person get somewhere, to gather information that is useful for the person.
- Take questioning very slowly. Many people need to develop trust with a person to feel comfortable.
- Do not ask too many questions, so that a person feels “grilled”.

Pitfalls of Questioning:

Why Questions

- ‘Why’ questions can put people on the defensive as they can imply that they should know the answers already.
- “Why isn’t this working for you?”
“Why do you not understand this?”

Intimate Questions

- Some questions are not appropriate to ask because they may be too personal or not relevant. Always be respectful and avoid being voyeuristic.
- “And then what did you do in bed?”
“Are you gay?”

Leading Questions

- Leading questions assume we already know the answer before a person has answered.
- “That’s hard for you, isn’t it?”
“When will you tell your parents?”

Poorly Timed Questions

- Such questions interrupt the flow of a person sharing their story. They can be inconsiderate and can abruptly end a conversation.
- “How long has this been going on for?” (asked in the midst of someone divulging that he smokes too much marijuana).

Active Listening

Question Types

Open questions cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no” response, or with a static response

This type of question encourages exploration.

“How are you?”

“What happened next?”

Closed questions are questions to which an answer must be selected from a limited set such as “yes” or “no” or to which the answer is finite.

This type of question is useful to check-in or clarify.

“Do you want to take a break?”

“What month did you move to Dublin?”

Hypothetical questions ask someone to imagine how a possible plan of action could work out.

This type of question is a great way to introduce suggestions/ideas.

“What do you think would happen if you told your dad about the debt?”

Leading questions assume that the questioner knows the answer, and puts it in the other person’s mouth.

This type of question these tells someone what you want them to think/say.

“That’s hard for you, isn’t it?”

“When will you tell your parents?”

Judgmental questions are coloured by your personal opinion on the situation. This type of question tells someone how you feel.

To maintain a non-judgemental, non-directive space:

- Ask to explore – not to persuade.
- Be mindful of context, and tone of voice.
- Don’t put pressure on them to answer.

“You would never do something like that, would you?”

Avoiding Advice Giving

Peer support is not about solving someone's problems. It is about providing a space where a person can feel heard and listened to.

Try not to be solution led in your responses. Instead ask questions that will help lead a person to deciding what action they would like to take. If you think some kind of support might be helpful for them, phrase it as a question and allow them to decide whether to act on it.

Examples:

- “Would you say..?”
- “Does it feel as though..?”
- “What do you think would happen if..?”
- “How do you think you would feel about..?”

What if they ask me what would I do?

Sometimes your student may ask you directly “What do you think I should do?” In this case, the same as above applies. Frame it as a question and guide them towards what they would like to do.

If in doubt, you can use this framework of questions.

- What is the real challenge here for you?
- What have you tried already?
- If you could try anything to solve this, what would you try?
- And what else? (Repeat two or three times, as needed)
- Which of these options interests you most?
- What might stand in the way of this idea, and what could be done about that?
- What is one step you could take to start this, right away?

Being Comfortable with Silence

Silence in a conversation can be a rich experience. The absence of noise allows time to think and reflect, space to sit with another person and to feel an emotion.

Unfortunately, most people fear silence in a conversation, and it can feel uncomfortable if you are not used to it. Sitting with a person in silence often shows deep, empathic understanding. Through practice, we learn to recognise the difference between “stuck” silence and “reflective” silence. If you are unsure about the silence, it is ok to ask the person to clarify.

Otherwise, lean into the silence and stay with it. Try to avoid filling a silence when it starts to feel uncomfortable. A tip is to stay with the silence for as long as you are comfortable, then slowly count to 20.

“True silence is the rest of the mind;
it is to the spirit what sleep is to the
body, nourishment and refreshment.”

- William Penn



Owning your Statements

As a way to help, we can over-identify with another person and assume that both their problems and our problems are similar, when in fact they are not.

'I' statements seek to maintain distinct boundaries between people in a conversation and help clarify personal experience and opinions.

One important aspect of listening is for a person to 'own' personal statements about feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Consider possible ways that you might use 'I' statements when chatting with a peer. Owning statements is often most effective when combined with reflecting, paraphrasing, and summarising.

Example:

- “You wanted to talk to him about it, but you were nervous as to how he would respond? As I listen to you, I find myself getting very angry with him and feeling tense. Is this how you felt?”
- “I hear what you are saying about having to share a room with your cousin. I would feel claustrophobic with such an arrangement; how do you find it?”

Avoid:

- “You felt angry and tense!” (assuming the other person’s response and putting words into their mouth)
- “That happened to me once and I... (focusing on yourself and assuming that the situations are similar)

Navigating the 1:1

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Planning the Meet-Up

After you have been **assigned a case**, it's time to plan the meet-up!

When:

Make sure to plan meetups during standard working hours (10am-5pm Monday to Friday), in case you need to make a referral.

Where:

Where you meet with your student is entirely up to you. Some people prefer to go for a walk, others enjoy a more private space. One thing to keep in mind, all meet ups should be in person, no online meetups no matter how many times they ask!

S2S have a **private space** for you to use that you can book. You can book it to meet your student, or if you just need a quiet space.

What Next:

- Let the S2S Programme Officer know the details of the scheduled meet-up.
- After the meet-up, schedule a **debrief** (after meeting a new student for the first time).

Disclosures

Sometimes students may share private details of a traumatic experience with you. It is a privilege to have such information shared, and it should be handled with the utmost respect and delicacy.

Handling disclosures:

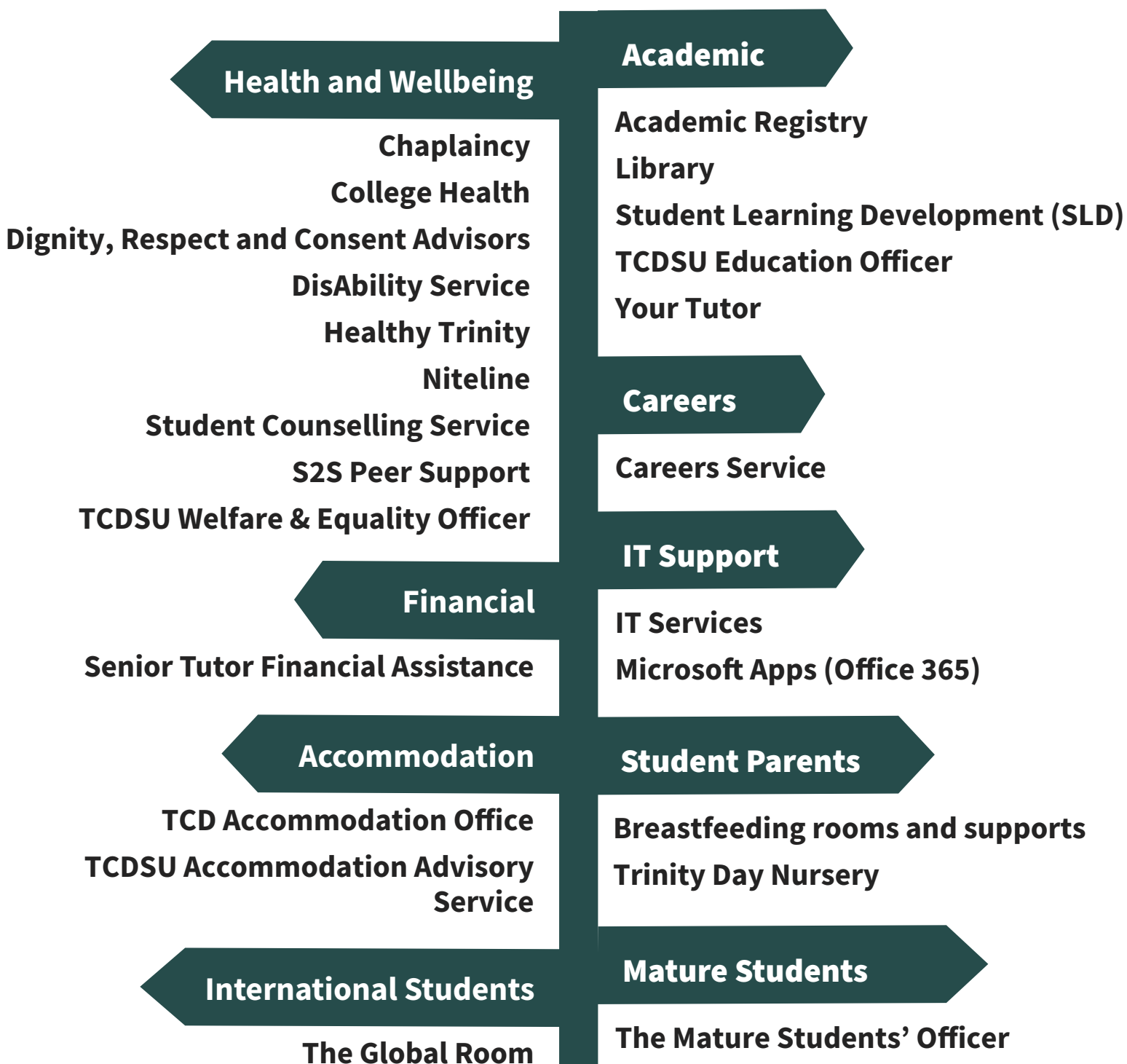
- Listen carefully. Your support and encouragement are important.
- Know your limits and boundaries. There are some situations you cannot (and should not) handle on your own. When in doubt, refer peers to more qualified supports.
- Seek consultation. Let the student know that you would like to talk to a more knowledgeable source before giving any direct advice. Talk to that person, and then get back to the student as soon as possible.
- Reassure the peer that you will maintain **confidentiality** unless you feel they are a harm to themselves or another individual.
- Continue to follow up with the student, if appropriate. Make sure they know that you are available for them, and you will support them as they work through what is going on.

Signposting

Signposting involves sharing information about a relevant service, that you think is beneficial for a student. As a Peer Supporter you may realise that there is a relevant service that could benefit a student and their situation.

By using active listening skills, you can make sure a student feels heard, and help figure out what service might be best suited to their needs in addition to peer support.

If the time is right to signpost, here are some useful resources:



Referrals

You may occasionally come across situations when it is inappropriate for you to get involved, when the case is too close to your own experience, or when the issues require professional involvement and support.

Referrals can often be confused with signposts, but here's the key difference:

A **signpost** involves informing a student about a service or services, and making sure they know how to get there.

A **referral** means making sure a service is aware that a student may need their help and asking the service to offer support.

The best support a Peer Supporter can provide is often a combination of genuine concern, attentive listening, and appropriate referrals to specialist help. It's crucial to recognise situations that require external involvement and to confidently guide peers toward professional assistance. A key aspect of effective peer support is identifying problems and referring them when they exceed your expertise—when in doubt, always refer.

If you encounter a student in distress or expressing suicidal thoughts, remember that you don't have to handle this alone.

Offer a listening ear while promptly referring the student to the S2S Coordinator. If you are concerned about the safety of the student or others, take the student directly to S2S, the Student Counselling Service, or the College Health Centre. If the student refuses to go, report your concerns to the service directly and let them know who you are concerned about and why, so they can take necessary action to ensure everyone's wellbeing.



Referrals

When to Refer

It is important to know what a referral is and what situation warrants a referral. A referral is not needed if someone just starts crying. This can be uncomfortable, but it is not a reason to refer someone. However, if a person is crying because they've just expressed they want to harm themselves, that is a time to refer. A referral is when you believe that what a person is experiencing requires help beyond what you can provide.

Someone may need to be referred if:

- The problem requires specialist help.
- You are unable to be genuine, honest, and impartial.
- You are worried that the person might come to harm or get into deeper problems.
- You are concerned about your own circumstances (e.g. you have exams, had a recent bereavement, etc.).

Situations that always call for specialist help:

- Depression and/or suicidal thoughts.
- Extreme stress, anxiety, or panic.
- Unresolved grief.
- Alcoholism/drug abuse.
- Serious medical problems.
- A child may be at risk of harm.

Referrals

Where to Refer

Where a student is referred depends on the situation at hand. Here are some resources and services you may use for referrals.

Resources in Trinity

College Tutor:	Student has email (check mytcd.ie)
Students' Union	welfare@tcdsu.org / education@tcdsu.org
Senior Tutor's Office:	stosec@tcd.ie
Student Counselling Service:	student-counselling@tcd.ie
Student Learning Development:	student.learning@tcd.ie
College Health Service:	01 896 1556 / 1591 / 8555
College Chaplains:	01 896 1260 / 1402
TCD Global Room:	international@tcd.ie
Disability Office:	askds@tcd.ie
Equality Office:	equality@tcd.ie

External Resources

DUBDOC:	01 45 45 607
Samaritans (24 hours):	116 123
Niteline:	1800 793 793
Text About It:	Text TCD to 50808
AWARE:	1800 80 48 48

Emergency contacts:

TCD **out of hours support information.**

College Security: 01 896 1999

S2S Coordinator Ralph Armstrong-Astley: 085 7833 548

Student Counselling Service: 01 896 1407

Trinity College Health Services: 01 896 1556 / 1591 / 8555

Referrals

How to Refer

Referrals need to be handled sensitively. If someone has shared their worries with you, it means that they trust you and are hoping that you can help and support them. It's important to remember how a poor referral scenario could negatively affect a student who confided in a peer.

Possible Student Reactions:

Knowing the possible reactions or feelings someone may have to a referral, it is best to give the student time and be as sensitive as possible.

- Abandoned, rejected, unheard
- They aren't able to help me
- I'm a hopeless case
- My problems aren't serious enough
- They're too busy to help me
- They aren't interested in helping
- I'm a burden to them

Choose your words carefully, use phrases like:

Knowing the possible reactions or feelings someone may have to a referral, it is best to give the student time and be as sensitive as possible.

- You might find it helpful to...
- You might like to talk with...
- Would you consider talking with...
- I think it might be useful for you to...
- How would you feel about talking to...
- What do you think might happen if you spoke to...

Be honest. Tell the person why you are not the best person or why someone else might be better help at that moment. You can always stay in touch and offer listening support and a check in if they need it.

Referrals

Reluctant Peers

When you believe that a peer might benefit from professional help, it is best to be honest about your reasons and express your concern about their wellbeing. Sometimes people may be reluctant or shy in accepting a referral, so here are some suggestions for that discussion.

They deserve support

Dispel myths that surround seeking help. Encourage your peer to schedule 'just one' appointment with a professional, and often one appointment is all that is needed.

Explore their reluctance

If your peer is reluctant to seek help, ask why they are not keen on seeing a professional. If you explore their reluctance, you may be able to help encourage them.

Give them the details

If they are unsure about seeking help, it may be useful to provide the person with names and contact numbers that can be used at a later date.

Second opinion needed

Explain that the problem is outside of your area of expertise, and you'd like to connect them in with someone who may know more.

Suggest all options

A peer may not want to see a counsellor but will agree to visit a GP or may choose to talk with a chaplain. Present all of the person's options when discussing support services.

Help make an appointment

Ask if they would like you to arrange an appointment with a professional. If you arrange the appointment, inform the professional of your specific concerns regarding the person.

Honesty about involvement

If you feel the situation is an emergency and the person will not see a professional, you may need to speak to someone on their behalf. If possible, gently explain that you will need to speak with a professional. Sometimes it can be useful to give the person the choice about who you will contact.

Referrals

Questions

What is a crisis and what do you do?

A crisis is when you are concerned about a person's immediate wellbeing. In a crisis, you should seek urgent professional attention from any of the supports listed on page 36. If appropriate, you may want to accompany the person to a professional. A crisis is not when a person cries or if they are managing an ongoing difficulty (unless it has become an immediate crisis, and their wellbeing is endangered).

What if I need support?

If you have any concerns about what is best to do, please talk to the S2S Coordinator. They will support you and help you to clarify the best course of action. Please remember that if you have serious worries about a peer, it is important that you yourself have adequate support. You need to feel confident that you have done all that you can do to make sure that the student is safe.



What if the person refuses?

Unless it is an emergency (potential harm to self or others), everyone has the right to refuse support. They may just need time to think about a referral. Offer an open invitation to the person to come back to you. When you see the person again, ask how they are and reiterate that support is available if they want it. Refusal to seek professional help does not mean that you must provide help that is outside your area of expertise.

In case of emergency

Phone campus security on 01 896 1999 in case of an emergency. They can contact an ambulance for you and will then know where to direct an ambulance when it arrives.

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Self-Care

When you become a Peer Supporter, self-care is a vital part of your role. Self-care is all about looking after yourself. It can look like relaxing, spending time with friends, getting a coffee and more. It can also include placing boundaries, knowing when to say no and recognising burnout. Having a toolbox of self-care strategies will allow you to engage as a peer supporter and prioritise your mental health.

Think about the things you like to do that you enjoy or that allows you get a case off your mind. Make a list and make sure you engage in one of them before or after a case.



Remember that you can't pour from an empty cup – it is so important to look after yourself if you want to be an effective peer supporter.

Supervision and Debriefs

Group Supervision

Once a month you will attend mandatory group supervision with one of the counsellors from the Student Counselling Service. This group will be with your fellow peer supporters and will be a confidential space for you to discuss your cases, explore different approaches for your student or share any difficulties you are having. Not only do you have the support of a counsellor in this session, but also the support of your peers.

These sessions are mandatory and can't be rescheduled. Make sure to prioritise these group sessions.

Debriefing

Debriefs are private 1:1 chats with the S2S Coordinator or the S2S Programme Officer. You are required to have a debrief after the first session with new students. After that you can decide how often you would like to debrief. Debriefs are a chance for you to get your feelings off your chest, find some validation and reflect on the case you just had and to consider:

- What do you feel went well?
- What would you like to work on?
- Was anything particularly difficult?

You can book a debrief via the **booking link** on the S2S website.

Am I helping?

Something you might find yourself asking as a Peer Supporter is “how do I know that I am helping?” The short answer is, you may never know. Even if a student says, “Thank you, that really helped”, you may not believe it.

Instead of seeking external indicators, believing you are helping starts with self-acceptance and throwing away the idea of perfectionism.

You simply being there for your student, sitting with them and listening to them is helping. A person may be seeking advice and not be ready for Peer Support, that does not mean you are doing it wrong.



“Perfectionism is not about achievement and growth. Perfectionism is the belief that if we live perfectly, look perfectly and act perfectly, we can avoid the pain of blame, judgment, and shame.

Perfectionism is a 20- ton shield that we lug around thinking it will protect us when, in fact, it’s the thing that’s really preventing us from taking flight.”

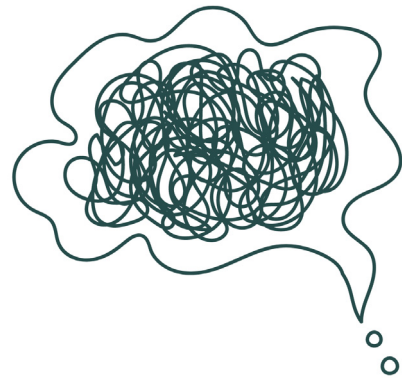
Brené Brown, 2010

Burnout

Becoming a Peer Supporter is something that takes a lot of energy, passion, and involvement. You may have been driven to the role out of a want to help people, and because of this you may at times experience burnout. Burnout can make tasks more difficult, and you may find yourself struggling to do something you once enjoyed doing. But what is that exactly?

Burnout is a reduction in motivation and enthusiasm for something that you were once passionate about and can sometimes leave you feeling resentment for it. Burnout can lead you to feel:

- Exhausted
- Disinterested
- Stressed
- Frustrated
- Difficulty doing everyday tasks



Taking a step back

Burnout is our body's way of telling us it's time for a break. It is important not to power through it, but to prioritise rest, take a step back and look after yourself so that you can step back in. Burnout doesn't appear overnight; it continues to get worse if we continue to neglect ourselves.

Stepping back does not mean stepping out. It can be a difficult decision, especially when you are passionate about Peer Support, but sometimes it can be the best decision for you. Stepping back gives you a chance to recharge and recover and then come back to Peer Support with a renewed passion.

When you would like to step back for a time, reach out to the S2S office and we will support you through this. Any active cases can be reassigned.

Once you feel ready to step back in, get in touch with S2S and you will be welcomed back. Taking a break and stepping back will not affect your role as a Peer Supporter and is always encouraged if you are ever feeling burnt out.

Minding Yourself, Minding Others

When you take on a caring role and help others, you may find yourself in distressing situations, where someone shares something traumatic and/or displays intense emotion. Following a distressing event, it's very common to experience strong emotional or physical reactions yourself, even if you were indirectly involved.

Common reactions:

There is no right or wrong way to feel, and it's vital to be aware of your own needs while you care for others. Even if you don't feel immediately affected, some reactions can appear days or even months afterwards.

- Shock and disbelief
- Feelings of helplessness and vulnerability
- Sadness
- Guilt - believing you could have done more to help
- Anger at those responsible
- Relief that it's over
- Nightmares
- Intrusive images/flashbacks
- Poor concentration
- Racing thoughts
- Shaking
- Lump in throat
- Nausea

Dealing with these feelings

It's important to take care of yourself and show yourself the same kindness you show others, especially after a distressing event. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

Acknowledge your feelings:

The way you feel matters because you matter. Ignoring your feelings can slow down recovery, and even though it may be uncomfortable, it's important to allow yourself to experience your emotions. Try not invalidate your own feelings by telling yourself you "shouldn't" feel upset - this is a common response from people, but often something they would never say to anyone but themselves.

Reach out for support:

Friends, family, S2S staff, and student support services can help you process your feelings. Try not to isolate yourself from others. Remember that you deserve support just as much as anyone else, you're never a "burden," and people are here to help.

Get plenty of rest:

Friends, family, S2S staff, and student support services can help you process your feelings. Try not to isolate yourself from others. Remember that you deserve support just as much as anyone else, you're never a "burden," and people are here to help.

Do thing for yourself:

Whether it's writing in a journal, watching a comfort show, spending time in nature, going to the cinema...try to engage in activities that bring you joy and comfort.

Reflection Exercises

Here are some prompts to help you understand how you may be feeling, and identify some areas where you need more support. You can use these prompts to write journal entries, or just think about your experience.

- 1.** If you had to recount the experience to a friend or therapist, where would you start? How would you describe it?
- 2.** When you think about the event, how does your body feel? Is there any tension or discomfort?
- 3.** Picture a close friend or loved one. If what you experienced had happened to them, how would you react? Is there a difference in the way you would talk to them compared to how you talk to yourself?
- 4.** What brings you joy lately? Is there anything completely unrelated to work/college? Is there anything you do that's just for yourself, and no one else? What would that look like?

S2S
Community

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Award Ceremony

Every year there is a dedicated award ceremony for all our fantastic volunteers. This is a time to reflect on the incredible work done, and to give each other a well-earned pat on the back! Keep up with your de-briefs and sharing meeting details, make sure we know the work you are doing so we can congratulate you when it comes to award ceremony season!



Trinity Graduate Attributes

Trinity Graduate Attributes

To Act Responsibly

A Trinity Graduate

- Acts on the basis of knowledge and understanding
- Is self-motivated and able to take responsibility
- Knows how to deal with ambiguity
- Is an effective participant in teams
- Has a global perspective
- Is ethically aware

To Develop Continuously

A Trinity Graduate

- Has a passion to continue learning
- Builds and maintains career readiness
- Commits to personal development through reflection
- Has the confidence to take measured risks
- Is capable of adapting to change



To Think Independently

A Trinity Graduate

- Has a deep knowledge of an academic discipline
- Can do independent research
- Thinks creatively
- Thinks critically
- Appreciates knowledge beyond their chosen field
- Analyses and synthesises evidence

To Communicate Effectively

A Trinity Graduate

- Can present work through all media
- Is expert in the communication tools of a discipline
- Connects with people
- Listens, persuades and collaborates
- Has digital skills
- Has language skills

Trinity College Dublin has identified specific Graduate Attributes that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation. They are important because they will:

- Enhance your learning. Working on them will help you become a better and more successful student.
- Help to prepare you for your future and lifelong learning given the changing nature of society.
- Enhance your employability as they are highly desired skills by employers.

During your time as an undergraduate in Trinity you will have the opportunity through your coursework and assessments as well as cocurricular and extra-curricular activities to develop and improve these attributes - being an S2S Peer Supporter allows you to develop these attributes.

Employability

Your learning and involvement during your time as a Trinity student gives you the opportunity to develop key attributes and skills that will allow you to succeed in your future as an individual and as a member of society.

The Trinity Careers Service offers current students and graduates advice and resources to help prepare you for your future.

- **Trinity Employability and Employment Guide**
- **MyCareer portal**
- **Applications and interviews**
- **More Career Service resources**



Trinity students can avail of the Trinity Careers Service for advice and resources relating to interviewing, searching for jobs, career planning and more.



James Carey
2023/24 Mentor

‘It has gave me a great sense of accomplishment and pride over the past year. I never thought I would have the confidence to take up a role like a mentor but the feeling you get from knowing you are making a difference is unmatched.’

Good interview preparation can improve your performance on the day and help to reduce interview nerves. When the day of the interview comes you should feel that you have a good understanding of the role and the company from your research and have prepared evidence to demonstrate how you meet the role requirements. Anticipating and preparing for the types of questions they are likely to ask will help you to make a strong impression.

Interview Questions

In advance of an interview, it's advisable to review the job description, highlight the key requirements, and come up with a list of questions that you think they could ask, alongside a list of your evidence to support the reasons why you are a suitable candidate. You can then practice answering these before the interview itself.

STAR

When asked to give examples, structure your answers using the STAR framework, which can help you to communicate your competencies clearly and simply. When you outline your example, make sure to tell describe each of the following elements:

S ituation:	Describe the context of the example
T ask:	Explain what you had to do
A ction:	Describe the actions you took, give details about what you did.
R esult:	What was the outcome? What made it successful or unsuccessful? What would you do differently another time?

**Thank you for being a Peer
Supporter - S2S couldn't do
it without you!**



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and Student 2 Student Services
2024



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

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