



## **The University of Limerick International Education Office Cycle of Support**

The cycle of support at UL operates due to the close collaboration between the international office, the Access office and academics, with strong communication. The support for under-represented groups relies on:

- Good relationships
- Adequate resources
- Managing expectations of all involved

The barriers are similar to those identified by the UK and Sweden, however Research undertaken by Trinity College Dublin on students who choose not to participate in mobility programmes also identify family income and a mother's level of education as salient factors affecting mobility. This research also concluded that the push and pull factors of mobility assume that mobility is a rational choice and is based on "a weighing up of the benefits and drawbacks"; considering all options and incorporating specific motivations.

The research for the 'Enhancing Mobility for Access Students in Ireland' project has identified pressure points in the cycle of support. The first pressure point affects all students in the planning phase which happens nearly a year in advance of the mobility activity, however further research indicates that as the phases move on, students from under-represented groups become more focused on the barriers which impedes their motivation.

In order to address this, additional supports will be drawn up between the support offices i.e. Access & Disability offices. A needs audit assessment is carried out with students on a case by case basis. It is vital for the student to ascertain in advance of travel what their needs are and how to plan accordingly and in terms of 'worst case scenario'. The student can be best supported when the support offices are fully aware of the student's situation. It is also the responsibility of the student to be aware of their own requirements and self-identify potential challenges. This needs audit identify key areas of concern for the students.

For example, a needs audit assessment, for a person with diabetes, would look at:

- Sourcing an English speaking doctor
- Sourcing an English speaking pharmacy
- The availability of the prescription in the country
- The translation of medical records
- The storage of medicines
- The availability of special bins for the safe disposal of medical equipment

After Erasmus, it is important that students engage in activity to reflect and identify indicators of achievement during their Erasmus Experience. At UL, this takes the form of a student report. When students return from their Erasmus experience, each student participating in the academic placement at UL completes a report covering their time at the host HEI. This includes academic activities, the campus, classes, cost of living, social life, recommendations for accommodation, meeting people, local travel tips. The student reports are available online for other potential Erasmus students to read and forms part of their preparatory research.



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Students may not wish to share personal information regarding their disability, socio-economic status or health in their public report so it is important that the student can share these aspects of their experience in confidence with an international office or disability office staff member. These offices can then work together to understand where challenges occur most for students and collaborate to create solutions and realistic expectations for future students. The cycle of support is a commitment to continued support and encouragement from the University of Limerick.