



# SOAR

Inter Institutional Collaboration on Access

# Traveller Mentors

An Evaluation of the  
Certificate in Mentoring  
in Education

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*All of us here within this group  
are here to make the change.  
We want to stand up!*

STUDENT RESEARCH PARTICIPANT



## Acknowledgements

The SOAR Project is an inter-institutional collaboration on Access. It brings together the South Cluster of higher education institutions (HEIs), i.e., Munster Technological University (MTU), South East Technological University (SETU Carlow and Waterford) and University College Cork (UCC). In collaboration with community partners, the project devises and implements strategies to increase access to higher education for under-represented groups. The SOAR Project is funded by the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Strand 3 and is operationalised through five work streams: Travellers in Education; Enabling Transitions; Connecting Communities, Connecting Curriculum; 1916 Bursary Fund; and Partnership for Access. The Certificate in Mentoring in Education is part of the Travellers in Education workstream.

We wish to extend particular gratitude to the students and professionals who kindly participated in this research.



## Foreword



It is my privilege and pleasure as the Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar, Munster Technological University, Kerry Campus and as a member of the SOAR Steering Group, to be tasked with writing the Foreword for this report.

The access initiatives pioneered in the SOAR Project, reflect innovative access practice, which is evidence based, underpinned by the value of inclusion and developed in partnership with communities and learners, who face barriers to accessing higher education.

The Certificate in Mentoring in Education, profiled in this report, is a Special Purpose Award at Level 6 which exemplifies good practice in learner and academic collaboration and engagement. It is unique in its conception and design, in that it was developed by Travellers, for Travellers through a consultation process that was facilitated by the Access Service and the Department of Social Sciences at MTU Kerry Campus together with our community partner, Kerry Travellers Health and Community Development Project. This report provides an evaluation of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education, which was designed to enable and empower members of the Traveller Community to become peer mentors and advocates for education in their own communities and schools and it spotlights the benefits of learner, academic and access collaboration and curricular co-design.

The achievement and success of the students who undertook this responsive and student-centred programme is a testament to their determination and their commitment to, and vision for, their community. The learning opportunity that they facilitated for MTU continues to contribute to our understanding of Traveller culture and history in education, the benefits of learner engagement at every stage of the learning cycle and the relationship between universal design and student experience and success.

This report is a beacon for other HEIs to support university-community partnerships and embrace universal design and diverse opportunities for access and participation in higher education by under-represented groups.

**Brendan O'Donnell**

Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar  
Munster Technological University Kerry Campus

A stylized, light yellow silhouette of a human figure in a dynamic, expressive pose, set against a solid yellow background. The figure's right arm is raised high, and its left arm is extended downwards and to the side. The head is represented by a simple circle.

CHAPTER 1

# **Introduction and Literature Review**



## 1.0 Introduction

The Certificate in Mentoring in Education, a one-year part-time QQI Level 6 course, was delivered during the 2021/22 academic year at MTU Kerry Campus. The course was cocreated with the local Traveller community through dedicated, long-term consultation which began in 2019. Feedback from the community was sought at every stage of course design from writing the modules and course documentation, through to the inclusion of a member of the Traveller community on the external validation committee. Transformative change is clearly needed within the relationship between the Traveller community and the Irish education system. The Certificate in Mentoring in Education was developed to address some of these needs, through focusing on educating Traveller adults to become mentors and advocates for all members of the Traveller community as they navigate the education system. The course was divided into two modules: 'The Irish Education System' and 'Mentoring for Education'. 'The Irish Education System' covered the pathways for progression for all Irish citizens from primary to third level education, including information on supports such as grants and bursaries, and legislation which protects the rights of students and families within the system. The second module, 'Mentoring for Education', focused specifically on advocacy and mentoring for Travellers in education through provision of support and positive role-modelling (see Appendices 6 and 7 for module descriptors). There were three members in the teaching team including two lecturers and an academic tutor to support students with their assignments. A considerable amount of support was provided through a person-centred, flexible and committed teaching and learning model which facilitated staged feedback from the students to inform ongoing course delivery. A continuous assessment model was used. Assignments included practical elements, namely an oral presentation and roleplays, to demonstrate mentorship skills. Written elements involved creation of portfolios and reflective writing pieces. Students were given the option to submit audio recordings in place of written pieces for one module. The course was held two mornings a week. The time commitment involved for students was three hours per week for 'The Irish Education System' and four hours per week for 'Mentoring for Education'. Initially, sixteen female mature students enrolled on the course, however one student needed to step out before the course commenced due to personal reasons and two did not complete. Thirteen students graduated with a Special Purpose Award.

This research provides an evaluation of the first iteration of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education informed by four research questions:

1. What was the identified community need for the Certificate in Mentoring in Education?
2. What worked in terms of course delivery and outcomes?
3. What were the challenges encountered on the first iteration of the course?
4. What are the identified opportunities for development of the course going forward?

This chapter contextualises the research through consideration of the history of Irish Travellers in education and an exploration of the concept of mentoring in education.



Consideration will also be given to how these topics interface and have informed the Certificate in Mentoring at MTU Kerry Campus. Chapter 2 outlines the methodology for this research. Chapter 3 presents the findings from this research. Chapter 4 discusses the significance of these findings and makes practice and policy recommendations.

## 1.1 The Irish education system and the Traveller community

In most countries, there are nomadic communities (Kenny and Danaher, 2009). These include Indigenous Australians, nomadic pastoralists in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, RGT communities in Europe, and Indigenous peoples in North America and New Zealand (Prout Quicke and Biddle, 2017, p. 58). Irish Travellers (Mincéirs/Pavees) are an ethnic group indigenous to Ireland (Central Statistics Office, 2016). Irish Travellers are an ethnic minority group with a unique culture and identity, distinct from that of the non-Traveller majority of Irish people (Murray and Urban, 2012). Travellers have long suffered discrimination and exclusion in our country (Mac Gréil, 2011).

Schooling is one space where discrimination against nomadic or formally nomadic communities is most acute. The older generation of Travellers received little education (DES, 2006), and segregation was the norm in classrooms (Forkan, 2006). Their culture, over one thousand years old, was wholly unrepresented in Irish schools, and research has documented the commonplace experiences of bullying and exclusion of Traveller children (Villani and Barry, (2021; Cavaliero, May and Dolan, 2010). Unsurprisingly, this has had a historic impact on the Traveller community's engagement with the education system.

Representing less than 1% of the population, the societal marginalisation of Travellers is very apparent in the Irish education system (O'Hanlon, 2010; Burke, 2009; Helleiner, 2007). The majority of Travellers leave school before completing the Junior Cycle. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2016) found that 8% of Travellers completed the Senior Cycle in post-primary compared with 73% of the mainstream population, and only 1% progress to third level education (Boyle, Flynn and Hanafin, 2021). Many Traveller children began post-primary school unable to read or write due to practices of segregation in primary schools.

Trauma continues to be felt within the Traveller community (Boyle, Hanafin and Flynn, 2018) resulting from the well-documented mistreatment and exclusion of Travellers in and from educational spaces (Bhopal, 2004; Derrington and Kendall, 2008; Devine and Kelly, 2006; Jordan, 2000; Knipe, Montgomery and Reynolds, 2005). The relationship between teacher and child, which is pivotal in the learning process, is commonly tainted with racism (Page, Whitting and Mclean, 2007) and low expectations for Traveller children's academic achievements (Devine, 2011). The intergenerational impact is such that Traveller parents may be reluctant to engage with schools or expose their children to the same trauma that they have felt (Bhopal, 2004; Hegarty, 2013).





In recent decades, there have been amendments to Irish legislation and policy to protect individuals in minority groups by acknowledging and valuing diversity (Boyle et al., 2018). Key milestones include the Equal Status Act (2000) which promotes equality by forbidding discrimination in employment, vocational training, advertising, collective agreements and the provision of goods and services, and the formal recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority group within the Irish state in 2017. Guidelines for acknowledging and supporting interculturalism are provided to primary and post-primary schools in Ireland (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2005). These guidelines relate to curriculum, learning environment, teaching and learning methods and demonstrated awareness of diversity embedded in every school day. However, Boyle, Hanafin and Flynn (2020) highlight the continued discontent amongst the Traveller community in terms of how their children are being treated in our schools today and query the extent to which these developments have resulted in any significant change in the lived experiences of Traveller children and parents currently navigating the education system. It is to be expected that lasting traumatising among Traveller parents is likely to act as a deterrent to Traveller family engagement with the education system (Prout Quicke and Biddle, 2017, p. 58).

Recent data indicates that primary school attendance/retention rates are poor and that only 8% of Travellers complete post-primary school (McGinley and Keane, 2022; Boyle, Hanafin and Flynn, 2020). Research has also indicated that Travellers have found the transition to post-primary education difficult due to a lack of support (Quinlan, 2021). Census data (2017) shows that Travellers finish their second-level education approximately 4.7 years earlier than the general population. In terms of higher education, the latest National Access Plan reports that participation rates are still as low as 1% of Travellers (Government of Ireland, 2022). This low rate of participation has been targeted specifically by SOAR Project-funded initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Factors contributing to the low participation and progression of Travellers within education include: low teacher expectations, bullying in school, and lack of self-efficacy in Traveller children (Connolly, 2002; Knipe, Montgomery and Reynolds, 2005).

## 1.2 Mentoring in education

Mentoring is a 'developmental partnership through which one person [a mentor] shares knowledge, skills, helpful information, and perspective to foster the personal and professional growth of someone else' (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2007, p. 1). The benefits of youth mentoring are well evidenced (e.g. Deutsch et al., 2017) and are typically achieved within the context of a supportive relationship with a dedicated mentor over time (Spencer, 2007). The National Childhood Network (NCN) defines mentorship as involving elements of coaching, modelling successful behaviours, guiding and sharing knowledge, advising as a source of specialist support, teaching through

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1. See published SOAR reports *Pavee Beoir Leaders* and *A Formative Evaluation of the Traveller Graduate Network (TGN)*.



inspiring and enthusing, reflective listening and leading (NCN website, accessed 2022). Peer relationships are particularly important for the healthy development of young people (Brown and Larson, 2009; Deater-Deckard, 2001), and peer mentorship, an increasingly popular form of mentoring (Graham and McClain, 2019), can provide a positive role-modelling relationship. Mentors have been identified in the literature (Duckworth and Maxwell, 2015) as having the potential to act as conduits for social justice, support young people at risk seeking to navigate their environment, and lead to improvements across health and social domains (Bayer, Grossman and DuBois, 2015; Caldarella et al., 2009). As such, mentors for Traveller children negotiating the transition to post-primary education would be very valuable (Quinlan, 2021).

The school environment is an important and common setting for mentoring (Coller and Kuo, 2013) as recognised by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS, 2016). Youth mentoring is associated with the betterment of academic performance (Grant et al., 2014) and increased social skills and engagement with social activities (Larose et al., 2015). Elements of the school environment (e.g. social connectedness and bullying (King et al., 2018)) have the potential to negatively impact the mental health of young people at times (Arseneault, Bowes and Shakoor, 2010; Bond et al., 2007), to the extent of increased suicidal ideation and behaviour (Holt et al., 2015; Whitlock, Wyman and Moore, 2014). Connectedness to teachers, parents and other adults has been identified as a key target of youth intervention (King et al., 2018; Foster et al., 2017; Stone et al., 2015; Whitlock et al., 2014). One-to-one adult mentoring of youth is a common mentoring approach (DuBois et al., 2011) and this can take the form of natural mentoring, involving adults from the young person's extended family or their social context (DuBois and Silverthorn, 2005). School-based mentorship programmes are cost-effective ways to support young people and help schools to achieve their academic goals (Bayer, Grossman and Dubois, 2015).

Mentors have been discussed in the literature (Duckworth and Maxwell, 2015) as having the potential to act as conduits for social justice. As Urie Bronfenbrenner famously said, 'every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her' (Brendtro, 2006, p. 162). Mentorship can provide this type of support, and at-risk young people have been documented to experience improvements across health and social domains when in receipt of good mentorship (Bayer, Grossman and DuBois, 2015; Caldarella et al., 2009). The UCC PLUS mentorship programme<sup>2</sup> has successfully provided Traveller students with support and encouragement to realise their potential to complete school and progress to third level or further education or training. These targeted interventions provide support to students; advocate on behalf of Traveller students; raise educational aspirations and liaise with Traveller parents and school completion programmes to support student participation.

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2. See: UCC PLUS Traveller Mentoring Programme for Schools | University College Cork



## 1.3 Conclusion

The challenges and discrimination Travellers have experienced in educational spaces is well documented. So too is the impact which school-based youth mentoring initiatives can have in supporting access, progression and retention of students, particularly in the case of at-risk youth. This research evaluates the Certificate in Mentoring in Education, an innovative programme which is an example of true cocreation with members of the Traveller community to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to be education mentors. An overview of the methods employed for this research will be provided in the next chapter.

A large, stylized silhouette of a human figure in a dynamic, reaching pose, rendered in a light yellow color against a solid yellow background. The figure's right arm is extended upwards and to the right, while the left arm is bent at the elbow. The head is represented by a simple circle.

CHAPTER 2

# Methodology



## 2.0 Introduction

This chapter details the methodology employed in the research for this evaluation, including discussion of research approach, ethical protocol, data collection methods, study participants and data analysis.

### 2.1 Research approach

The aim of this research was to garner stakeholder feedback on the Certificate in Mentoring in Education course in MTU Kerry Campus. A qualitative approach was adopted, and two data collection methods were used. Focus groups were conducted with the Traveller women who completed the Certificate to allow their experiences to be captured and represented in a narrative fashion (McCall, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the professionals involved in the creation and delivery of the Certificate (see Appendices).

### 2.2 Ethics

Participants were made aware that the research project had received ethical approval from the Social Research Ethics Committee at UCC and was governed by ethical principles including anonymity; confidentiality; the safety of participants; informed consent; and freedom to withdraw from the study (see Appendices 1 and 2 for student and professional information sheets; Appendix 3 for sample consent form). Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

### 2.3 Data collection methods

Data was collected in two phases between October 2021 and November 2022, as outlined below:

**Phase 1:** Three focus group interviews were conducted with students of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education at MTU Kerry Campus (14 participants – 13 students and the Traveller Liaison Officer). The focus group interviews were conducted face to face at MTU Kerry Campus by Dr Rebekah Brennan and Aoife Horgan of the SOAR Project and audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data from the interviews was thematically coded using NVivo, a qualitative data management software programme. Thematic analysis was then used to analyse the data and organise the findings of the research.

**Phase 2:** Five qualitative semi-structured online interviews were conducted with five professionals involved in the Certificate in Mentoring in Education at MTU Kerry Campus. All interviews were conducted by Dr Rebekah Brennan of the SOAR Project.



Four interviews were recorded using the Microsoft Teams platform. One interview was conducted face to face on the MTU Kerry Campus and audio recorded using a dictaphone. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The data was then thematically coded using NVivo, a qualitative data management software programme. Thematic analysis was then used to analyse the data and organise the findings of the research.

**Ethics:** The research received ethical approval from the Social Research Ethics Committee at UCC and was governed by ethical principles including anonymity; confidentiality; the safety of participants; informed consent; and freedom to withdraw from the study (see Appendices for student and professional information sheets and sample consent form).

**Participant check:** Prior to the report being finalised, the students were presented with research findings, written in accessible language, that arose from their focus groups. This 'participant check' or 'respondent validation' was carried out during a face-to-face meeting with Dr Rebekah Brennan. Students were asked whether or not they felt their words were interpreted accurately and were given the opportunity to add more context or provide clarification where they felt it was necessary. Amendments were made to the findings according to this feedback.

## 2.4 Limitations

This research has some methodological limitations in terms of generalisability. It reports data relating to a single iteration of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education and collected from a small cohort of student and professional respondents. The findings are also limited by the fact that all of the participants on the Certificate in Mentoring in Education were female.



*[The course] is  
making me stronger.*

STUDENT RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

A stylized, light yellow silhouette of a human figure in a dynamic, balanced pose, set against a solid yellow background. The figure's right arm is extended upwards and slightly to the right, while the left arm is extended downwards and to the left. The head is represented by a simple circle.

CHAPTER 3

# Findings





## 3.0 Introduction

This research aimed to capture the needs and facilitators and inhibitors experienced by the Traveller women participating in the Certificate in Mentoring in Education in order to examine how higher education institutes can best meet the needs of this cohort of adult learners in the future. The approaches of the programme team in delivering this flagship course are also vital to document, so as to underscore the importance of a well-resourced support and preparation system in order to perform true codesign. A consistent long-term process of seeking feedback from the community led by the Traveller Liaison Officer resulted in a targeted research project conducted during challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic to collect data from the Traveller community. The data that arose from this indicated a need for increased knowledge within the community around progressing through the education system, educational and human rights, and mentoring and advocating for Traveller children in school. Members of the Traveller community reported traumatisation both from their own past experiences in the school system and the current experiences of their school-going children and expressed a desire for knowledge and skills which would support them in addressing these issues. The Certificate in Mentoring in Education was codesigned to address this identified need.

Four main research questions informed the evaluation of the first iteration of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education:

1. What was the identified community need for the Certificate in Mentoring in Education?
2. What worked in terms of course delivery and outcomes?
3. What were the challenges encountered on the first iteration of the course?
4. What are the identified opportunities for development of the course going forward?

This chapter will present data collected from three focus groups with 14 Traveller students, and five qualitative interviews with five professionals at MTU Kerry Campus involved in the Certificate in Mentoring in Education. Thematic analysis, where the data was closely examined to identify common themes, topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly, yielded a variety of themes which are organised under the following headings: 'Establishing a community need for the Certificate in Mentoring in Education'; 'What went well?'; 'What were the challenges?' and 'Opportunities for development'.

## 3.1 Establishing a community need for the Certificate in Mentoring in Education

### 3.1.2 Designing the course

There had been longstanding feedback from the Traveller Liaison Officer with regard to the educational and vocational needs of the Traveller community in Kerry. The Traveller Liaison Officer provides and coordinates assistance for Travellers accessing higher education in MTU including accessing funding and engaging in advocacy work on behalf



of the community within MTU Kerry. The Traveller Liaison Officer, who works very closely with the Traveller community and is a member of the Traveller community, had indicated that role-modelling and peer mentorship had been identified during consultation with members of the community as a significant support which would help Travellers to succeed in education and progress to the world of work. The recruitment of participants was a long and difficult process involving months if not years of very delicate negotiation within the Traveller community on behalf of the Traveller Liaison Officer. At the height of the pandemic, the programme team designed and distributed an online survey, organised two online focus groups and talked to a number of individuals from the Traveller community by phone. Despite the digital divide that exists within the Traveller community, the tremendous efforts of the programme team resulted in a successful research project to inform the course design. The need for information capital within the Traveller community to support navigation of the Irish Education System and the need for advocacy and mentoring for Travellers within this system arose from this co-design process. These identified needs provided the impetus for the development of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education.

### 3.1.3 Accounts of discrimination and racism

Enduring traumatising from negative experiences in school informed the ambition of students of the Mentoring in Education course in relation to supporting and advocating for Traveller children:

*It was hell – every day was hell going into secondary school. It was hell. You were stigmatised. Like, there could be 50 people within the school that you knew – that you already went to primary school with – but they turned their head from you.*

Focus Group 1 participant

*Travellers stick together within their classroom. We didn't mix very much with other settled kids. You always had your own learning compared to the other people within the classroom. You never really had the same learning ... the so-called remedial help – that is not remedial help – that was all Travellers. If you had three children in the classroom that were Travellers and three children next door or one, all the classrooms were brought together – we'll say three or four classrooms – and you were put into that remedial room. Basically, you weren't learning anything.*

Focus Group 1 participant

*Like, it is only recently – the last recent years – I mean maybe the last 7 or 8 years that my own children were growing up that I realised that there wasn't a 7<sup>th</sup> Class in primary. The school I went to ... I was put into that 7<sup>th</sup> Class where I should have been ... going on to 1<sup>st</sup> Year. (They) were to prepare me for 1<sup>st</sup> Year. They said I wasn't able for 1<sup>st</sup> Year yet. They just told my mother that I wasn't prepared yet for secondary school and that I needed an extra year. Nothing has changed within the system – it is never going to change for Travellers I think, if there is not someone backing us.*

Focus Group 1 participant



In Hyland's (2005) analysis of the teaching of children of colour, she describes hidden racism in the 'helper metaphor', where the subjects of racism are paternalised and patronised in an attempt to offer 'help', which undermines their capabilities and potential. According to the Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills (2019), many Traveller children were left to draw pictures and play, and many today as adults are unable to read or write.

There was a clear conviction amongst the students that the longstanding discrimination experienced by the Traveller community in Irish schools was still in practice today and that Traveller children and parents need support. One example given was the use of reduced timetables, where a child attends school for less time than their peers, a practice that has been criticised for its use amongst vulnerable cohorts of children, including Traveller children.<sup>3</sup> Research participants welcomed the revised government guidelines which state that schools must notify social services of any reduced school day for any child:<sup>4</sup>

*Very common – here in NAME OF TOWN, they are very, very common. Like, all the child has to do is act out in school, you will be brought in and they put it to you, 'We think it would be better now if they went on reduced timetable.' Reduced timetable now could be only one hour a day.*

*... but there are no supports there, there is no counselling there for the children, there are no extra supports and a teacher there to help them with their subjects. There is nothing there. Now, every child doesn't need it but there are going to be kids that will need it and they will need the supports and the supports are not there.*

Focus Group 1 participant

Student research participants were clear that additional supports should be the response to any challenging behaviour from school children and not reduced timetables.

### 3.1.4 Increased momentum in the direction of change

Students from the Traveller community strongly underscored the need for a course which prepared Travellers to engage specifically in peer-to-peer mentoring in education. Reasons for this were centred on exclusion from conversations around key educational issues; a need for advocacy for Traveller children in the education system; and a call for transformative and restorative change in the relationship between the Irish education system and the Traveller community in Ireland:

*I want stuff to change ... I don't want my grandchildren to go through what I went through, what the previous generation went through and what my own children went through. There needs to be encouragement – and a lot of encouragement – and self-confidence. There needs to be a lot done within schools. It is not all about just reading and writing. I feel very strongly about it – that there needs to be Travellers within the education system to actually go into schools and see what is going on.*

Focus Group 1 participant

3. See 'Reduced school timetables are 'significant children's rights issue', CRA warns' – The Irish Times and 'Children on 'reduced timetables' being denied education' – The Irish Times [accessed 8 May 2023]

4. See <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/f49bd-0047-2021/> [accessed 8 May 2023]



*... [mentoring] should be taught like as in nearly a subject now – how to encourage a person to move forward even within the education system but in life in general. I don't think that is being taught within the system today, and self-confidence. They need that. I think all children within the school environment need that, but especially Traveller children.*

Focus Group 1 participant

Above all else, participants were acutely aware of the challenges faced by young Traveller children when they enter the education system. In order to ensure that Traveller children's experiences were positive, all participants stated strongly that they wished to gain employment in schools as mentors and advocates for those children, once they had completed their third level courses:

*There is no point in doing these courses and these classes if nothing is going to come out of it ... I want it to be seen to mean something.*

Focus Group 2 participant

### 3.1.5 Developing a Traveller-informed curriculum

Key to the development of the Mentoring in Education course was a Traveller-focused curriculum which was relevant to the needs of the community. A model of co-creation was at the heart of the course design and was intrinsic to the process. The Traveller community was consulted extensively prior to and during the development of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education to ensure that the course content met the needs of the community.<sup>5</sup> The idea of peer-to-peer mentoring was envisaged from the start and course content was developed following in-depth consultation with the Traveller community both within and outside of Kerry. This consultation was conducted by the programme team who put a significant amount of work into ensuring the course was co-created with the community. During development of the modules and course documentation, feedback was continuously sought from the Traveller community, and they also approved the final version of all elements of the course. This co-creation took a significant amount of time and effort on behalf of the programme team.

*... we went out with an idea ... the [Traveller community] put the meat and bones on to it.*

Participant 3, interviews (academic staff)

*So, we got on to the Traveller organisations ... we would have had different workshops. We had TVG [Cork Traveller Visibility Group] involved, North Cork came in – and Kerry Travellers – and we would have had the local Travellers around. We discussed it then and that is how we came up with the model that we came up with ... every person wanted to see something happen for the future of Travellers.*

Participant 5, interviews (access staff)

<sup>5</sup> This consultation was conducted by members of the Access and Academic staff of MTU.



After the final course documentation was submitted to the Registrar's Office, a member of the Traveller community who is a teacher was included on the external validation committee reviewing the course.

The community consultation indicated key topics for inclusion on the course, including information on: access routes to higher education outside of the Leaving Certificate, financial supports, governance and admission policies in primary and secondary schools, e.g. complaints procedure, membership and roles of board of management, etc. From these indicators, two modules were designed: 'The Irish Education System' and 'Mentoring for Education' (please see Appendices 6 and 7 for module descriptors including assessment detail). The Mentoring for Education module focused on students designing their own learning through imagining relevant role-play scenarios, where mentoring and communication skills could be practised and learned, and the role-plays formed the mechanism of assessment:

*I kind of said to NAME, 'This is what we need – we need to know that when we are walking in to a teacher what can we say to them. When we are meeting the principal, how we can advocate for our children and, as parents, be proud walking in,' and that is where the education and mentoring came in. He said, 'Right, we will do so many modules in education,' but he said, 'You want the parents to represent the children and themselves,' and that is where the mentoring came in.*

Participant 5, interviews (access staff)

The role-plays focused on mentoring activities and advocacy and drew upon the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This teaching, learning and assessment approach was designed to prepare and equip the students with effective and practical ways of communicating their needs to school staff, in situations where previously they may have felt disempowered. An example of a role-play is described in the following quote from a student:

*Each person took a real-life event and made it into their role-play. Then for the exams, we had to go in and do the role-play one to one. First of all, you had to go in as if you were meeting the student or the person that you were going to support and you were to get their information and find out what supports they needed and how you were going to approach going back in. Then, after that, you had to reverse your role.*

Focus Group 2 participant

### **3.1.6 Providing a culturally inclusive learning environment**

Course promotion and recruitment was facilitated through the Traveller Liaison Officer. Traveller women face specific and distinct challenges in accessing education which are due to entrenched gender-based norms within the Traveller community. Previous research has shown (Cummins et al., 2020) that there exists a wariness among some Traveller men of women engaging in education. Some women may have to get permission from male family members to do so. Traveller women have often left school early and become



mothers at a young age. This means the gendered barriers to their participation in education described above intersect with other significant barriers related to motherhood, limited financial resources and limited previous educational attainment:

*Like, I was 21 – nearly 22 – when I went back and did my Leaving Cert Applied. I had to do it myself and I had to get a babysitter to mind my three children at the time. I was gone every day until half four or five o'clock ... and as a Traveller we couldn't come home and sit down and relax. We had to be up, we had to cook our dinner, feed our children, we had to get them prepared for school, help them with any bit of homework that we could help them with at the time. If not, we couldn't help them. The whole cycle started again at 6 and 7 o'clock the following morning.*

Focus Group 1 participant

The Certificate in Mentoring in Education course developers actively sought to create a learning infrastructure that was cognisant of the needs of the Traveller community.

*I think that really where the emphasis was around the access to the campus in terms of when it would be run to facilitate family responsibilities so the timing of it, the commitment of it one or two mornings a week. Then also the assessment – that was a very big part – and probably a big concern for everyone that the assessment would be accessible and feasible for the community, there was quite intensive study support as well – study and IT support to assist them to convey their message and demonstrate their knowledge.*

Participant 3, interviews (academic staff)

A preparatory course for entrants, centred on IT skills, took place one morning a week over a four-week period in June 2021. This preparatory course highlighted low computer literacy among some of the participants and emphasised that there was a diversity of starting points among the cohort, and additional IT supports were subsequently included to support participants:

*We started off before any of the modules started – we had a preparation course which ... we thought was going to set up all the IT skills and writing skills for the coming modules. I suppose it was a bit of a shock to find really how very diverse the abilities were in the group ... So that was one issue because it meant that in the first sessions – I think we had 15 or 16 people in the room – it really wasn't possible to work with them as a group at all because some of them even now really don't have that independent ability to sit and use the computer ... and they need the one-to-one.*

Participant 1, interviews (academic staff)



## 3.2 What went well?

The retention rate for the course was high, with 13 students out of 16 graduating.

There is also a notable growing interest in the course locally:

*I was very happy with the uptake. I thought the numbers would be bigger, but I also know that education is a sensitive subject [for Travellers].*

Participant 5, interviews (access staff)

### 3.2.1 Personal development

Personal development for students was the most prominent positive outcome identified by the research. The participants reported that taking part in the course made them feel stronger, empowered to express fears and concerns, to question authority figures and to navigate a heretofore hostile education system. Knowledge accrued about the Irish education system, educational rights and pathways to progression enabled participants to embody the role of mentor for Traveller children and empowered them to believe that change was really possible:

*[The course] is making me stronger.*

Focus Group 3 participant

*You don't feel downgraded because you know what you are saying is right, so you have more confidence actually going in and speaking up. I suppose confidence would be a big thing of ours because, being a Traveller, people always doubted us so therefore you doubt yourself.*

*Now you won't doubt yourself because you know what you are saying is right and you will fight it.*

*Like everyone on this course now, if they had to go and approach the principal or committee members, they know exactly what to do, they wouldn't have to get upset, they wouldn't have to raise their voice – they would know because they were after learning it.*

Focus Group 3 participant

These accounts of increased confidence and strength amongst the students were echoed by staff:

*I suppose I felt I was making a difference. I felt it was really important. I felt they appreciated it and I could see them flourishing. I suppose that goes back to the whole coaching interest I have – I could see when I looked at the students what they were like on day one and then some of them ... The progress they made in that space of 12 weeks was just unbelievable.*

Participant 4, interviews (academic staff)

*The confidence and the energy that they have now around it is fantastic, yeah. They all have been absolutely fulsome in their enthusiasm in all of these reflections that they have written and I think it is genuine. They really feel that they have gained enormously from coming in and just seeing themselves as students, you know.*





*So many of them have said, 'I never thought I could do this.' It is really quite shocking that they really felt that they couldn't do it.*

Participant 1, interviews (academic staff)

### 3.2.2 Skills development

The data collected indicated that participants' knowledge and understanding of the Irish education system increased. This information and awareness of their rights equipped participants to support young Travellers to plan for their educational future:

*Now we can go into schools, we can fight for the children, we can talk to the children who do need help in their lives – to know what they want to do and where they want to go with their education. To understand that education is the key.*

Focus Group 3 participant

Participants highlighted public speaking as a new confidence-enhancing skill developed on the course:

*I found it uncomfortable – standing up in front of everyone and just talking. That was a big thing for me – standing up talking – I did it. I built myself up for a failure but I didn't fail it – I came down feeling good about myself that I did it.*

Focus Group 2 participant

Although IT skills were identified as a challenge to course delivery, some participants also felt that they had gained key skills in this regard:

*I couldn't turn on a computer – now I can do emails and do other things that I could never do before the start.*

Focus Group 2 participant

### 3.2.3 Support system and commitment of programme team

The importance of the support and preparation system that the programme team put in place cannot be overstated. Students gave very positive feedback on the supports they received from Access Practitioners and teaching staff at MTU Kerry Campus. Teaching and learning staff went above and beyond in terms of their workload, flexibility and commitment. One lecturer ran a module for a second time to accommodate students who had failed to attend much of the original course due to family and community commitments. Significant academic administration work was carried out to get modules approved and to negotiate students' portfolios through exam boards. Adaptability and flexibility were continuously demonstrated by staff when accommodating the learning needs of the students:

*I couldn't use the computer and I wanted to stay on the course and I wanted to pass the course so she allowed me to handwrite up all my assignments and even my portfolio is all handwritten.*

Focus Group 3 participant





*It is actually OK because I think the way he did it was ... he broke it up for us. He broke it up – we weren't doing everything together all at once, do you know what I mean?*

Focus Group 2 participant

*Obviously, the emphasis was not on writing skills in this module – they had to do reflections so I said I would accept anything – they could hand-write it – if they couldn't write it, they could type it. If they couldn't type it, they could dictate it – they could do whatever – so there was flexibility in how I assessed it, but they still had to produce 'the goods'.*

Participant 4, interviews (academic staff)

Person-centred teaching has been identified as a way of enhancing learning in all education settings (see Lyon et al., 2014; Sahlberg, 2010). Its central hypothesis is that 'individuals have in themselves vast resources for self-understanding and for altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes, and self-directed behavior; these resources can be tapped if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided' (Rogers, 1980, p. 115). The needs and interests of students inform the learning content, and this is coupled with a facilitative attitude that supports constructive interactions (Rogers and Lyon, 2013). The approach taken by MTU Kerry Campus staff was person-centred and focused on empathy and collaboration:

*That belief I think is really important as well and ... if a person has it, the students will feel it. When we look at consultation, we look at assessment design, curriculum design, curriculum content, I think the individuals – the person relationships – are actually probably first and foremost the most important thing really.*

Participant 3, interviews (academic staff)

*It is everything – it is people believing in you.*

*So, I think the fact that they had people that understood them, gave them time to learn, didn't put the pressure, didn't put you out because you missed a day or didn't tell you to leave the class because you spoke up when you didn't know what to say; so, it was all those little things.*

Participant 5, interviews (access staff)

One member of the academic staff observed that the experience of teaching the Certificate in Mentoring in Education had a profound impact on their own world view and on the breaking down of long-held cultural beliefs. This is illustrated by the following quote:

*... for me personally I learned just so much about Travellers. I went in with preconceived notions – not that I was racist or anything but I had a limited experience of Travellers in my life. I did have a few Travellers in my school in primary and they were settled Travellers and were lovely people but I had nothing else to go on; whereas now I have learned so much about the Traveller culture and the Traveller community, the importance of connection in that community.*

Participant 4, interviews (academic staff)



### 3.2.4 Positive role-modelling

The 'trickle-down effect', a phenomenon where educational progress is role-played by one family member and adapted by others, thus changing the narrative in families where it may have been the norm to not continue in education, is evidenced in the families of some course participants. Some students discussed how their families and children reacted to their taking part in the Certificate in Mentoring in Education:

*Last year my daughter was saying to me, 'Mummy, I am 16 and I am leaving school' – because she is not an academic – she is more hands-on – and she knew what she wanted to go and do ... now that I am after coming back here and when she went back to school in September – she changed her mind!*

Focus Group 1 participant

*I think it is great for the young people to see their mothers, their grandmothers going along graduating and doing something positive for the community ... it is never too late to get up and do something and that might encourage students to stay at school and come in to the college ...*

*Imagine – my own story – half my life I couldn't read or write – it was a struggle. Imagine what I could do if I did know how to read and write at that time. I am just saying that I don't want the girls to be focused on just beauty and hair, I want them to get on with their life and do other things.*

Focus Group 3 participant

### 3.2.5 Socialising

Another positive outcome for participants on the Certificate was the increased opportunities for socialising they experienced. Participants spoke of the weighty responsibilities placed upon Traveller women to maintain a home and raise children without much support and their limited opportunities for socialising. Some participants had experienced isolation because of COVID-19 restrictions, which limited visits to family members. Such opportunities for engagement are very significant given that there are up to two and a half times higher rates of reported poor mental health among samples of the Traveller population compared to samples of the non-Traveller majority (McGorrian et al., 2013; Parry et al., 2004). This is linked to the inequalities experienced by Travellers across health and social domains including educational attainment (Brady and Keogh, 2016). Research participants identified awareness and concerns around mental health and described the positive impact of the course in that regard:

*Some of my friends suffer from depression so I never wanted to end up like that. I wanted to actually get out and do something.*

Focus Group 2, participant

*Well, you wouldn't be let into pubs and then COVID ... so women's lives just stopped ... like the whole country and I suppose for Travellers more so because, unless you really, really knew a person, you wouldn't go and visit them, or people were afraid to*



*leave you into their home and then, I suppose, last summer once we started coming out, this course was coming on and people started looking forward to actually coming in.*

Focus Group 3 participant

The course was an opportunity for women to do something outside of their roles as mothers and wives. Many participants said that meeting with their classmates boosted their mood:

P1 *Yeah you have a laugh – you enjoy the course – I think, anyway.*

*We all come in to be with each other.*

P2 *I think it is also the fact that you have company ... like, I could be at home now and I mightn't see another sinner for another week until I come, do you know what I mean?*

P1 *It is nice to come out.*

P3 *It is nice to know what is going on in the girls' lives.*

P1 *You know what it is – it is helping our mental health as well.*

P2 *Exactly, yeah.*

Focus Group 2 participants

### 3.2.6 Raising aspirations

All students expressed a desire to go on to achieve employment as school-based Traveller mentors working with children and families:

*I would love, love, love to see any one of us after finishing this course inside in a school actually sitting down and planning with a child going forward about what they want to do and enhancing their supports in school.*

Focus Group 3 participant

Ambition and aspiration to achieve newly imagined goals was another outcome experienced by some students of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education, as illustrated by the following quote:

*I would love to go on to be a counsellor for Travellers. The reason why I would love to be one is because Traveller women find it very difficult to go to counselling. I think if they had one of their own, they would feel more comfortable because there is someone saying, 'Do you know what, I know how you feel – I have been there.'*

Focus Group 3 participant



## 3.3 What were the challenges?

### 3.3.1 Anxiety

Lived experience of mistreatment and bullying within the education system in Ireland was a challenge for the participants to overcome. So too was the fact that many years had passed since they had sat in a classroom:

*... when we first came, everyone was very, very nervous. We didn't know what to expect, we didn't know what was ahead of us.*

Focus Group 3 participant

Due to their lived experience of traumatisation within the school system, Traveller learners can be a hard-to-recruit cohort. This underscores the need for Traveller Liaison Officers who can support their re-entry into this system:

*I had to go out to the whole community to advertise it. I had to make sure that I was reaching everybody in different ways; so I had to share it through Facebook ... I had to go door to door, I had to have leaflets, I made phone calls – I did everything that you possibly could – and out of all of that, because people had such bad experience in education, the very minute you draw up it was an education programme, they were saying, 'No, I am not doing it, I am not doing it, I am not doing it,' so there were more doors closing than opening for me ... I knew that it was all to do with hurt because, through a few of our consultations with the community – they wrote down their fright from their experiences in school.*

Participant 5, interviews (access staff)

### 3.3.2 Computer issues

Use of computers, which were issued by the university to the students, was reported as being difficult for the students due to a complex, but necessary, security process with logins and passwords. There were varying levels of computer literacy in the group. Some students were often locked out of their computer, which caused delays in progression and added to stress. Students felt a lot of time was wasted due to these technical issues. Using computers and laptops to take the course was discussed by both students and staff as being a challenge.

*Laptops – I had to do it on the site. The Wi-Fi was a problem on the site and I had to do it from our house ... NAME had to get into her car and move to get Wi-Fi.*

Focus Group 3 participant

*And passwords changing all the time – getting blocked – trying to log in and log out – that is a big struggle; so personally I think that, if you were to do it again with, we'll say, the same group of people, there needs to be ... I think one for the beginners that are only learning to turn on computers and one for the ones that know that bit but need to go further in the lines of writing their assignments and stuff like that. It is all learning, but we are getting there.*

Focus Group 2 participant



*I think for some of them just the learning curve was quite steep – steeper than we had envisaged. Now there were others then obviously – there was such a range of ability – [some] who were absolutely brilliant – they could do everything on the computers better than I can, you know – really, really good.*

*The thing is, if we are serious about including people, we have to meet people along that journey; so I have no problems acknowledging what the challenges are because it helps us identify the resources for the next time and it pays off.*

Participant 2, interviews (academic staff)

*The IT skills of some were an issue. I suppose I went in naively thinking they had done one module and I would be able to put everything up on Blackboard – which is what we were using at the time – naively assumed that they had mastered it. Some of them had actually slipped through the system again and really hadn't mastered it. They had all been given laptops and got frustrated. At the time they were telling me, 'I can't get on' and I was saying, 'Put in your password' or whatever and we would go down [to Computer Services] and then realise the password had changed; so any little thing would throw them – it would knock their confidence – so then I just felt there were maybe four in the group that really were struggling with IT ... So there was a mixed ability there and I was aware I didn't want to leave anyone behind.*

Participant 4, interviews (academic staff)

### 3.3.3 Academic support needs

For a large part of the time the academic tutor was available to the students, at times to suit their needs, for up to six hours per week. Quite often only two or three students attended, and sometimes none. When a large group attended, often with a backlog of assignments and all wanting immediate attention, there was some conflict as to who should be assisted first. One-to-one tutoring was available on request. Some students availed of this and booked appointments, but this was rare.

For many of the students, particularly in terms of IT and literacy, there were challenges associated with the early stages of learning that they were at. The impact of trauma from previous educational experiences was also highly relevant and was one (of many) factors underlying the poor attendance of some students. Although all students and staff who participated in research agreed that the academic tutor on the Certificate in Mentoring in Education was excellent, a deeper exploration of how best to support this cohort of students is required:

*[Academic tutor] was fantastic but she needed help.*

Focus Group 3 participant

*[There was] a support class once a week for three hours where they could come and work on their assignments. I think, again, the times when a lot of people turned up they found it frustrating because everybody wanted one-to-one.*

Participant 1, interviews (academic staff)



Although there were diverse levels of ability in the group, students felt it was important to be kept together as a group as they felt that they learned from each other as well as from the tutors.

### 3.3.4 The hidden curriculum

Most of the students had limited experience of formal education and in consequence were unfamiliar with protocols and practices in formal learning settings. Schools operate on policies and procedures centred on expectations around what it means to be a learner (Koursouris, Mountford-Zimdars and Dingwall, 2021; Semper and Blasco, 2018). The 'hidden curriculum' in educational spaces is about the norms, messages and assumptions that become part of the learning, including attendance, punctuality and other 'soft skills'. At times, students from diverse backgrounds experience conflicting messages from their home culture and the institution's culture (Jin and Ball, 2019; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009). Within the Traveller community, there can exist a cultural challenge for the students in a formal learning context:

*I can remember the first morning [the students] were coming in – in dribs and drabs – and then it was coffee time and I let them off but sure I didn't get them back, you know, so I had to go to the canteen to bring them back. So anyway I changed it then so ... I would give them half an hour break in the middle of the morning so they knew OK they had half an hour to get over to the other building, get a cup of tea, have a chat and come back but, again, that was something I have never had to do for any other group but I saw the importance for them of just connecting, you know.*

Participant 4, interviews (academic staff)

*Well, we had loads of barriers and challenges because, number one, time-keeping – none of us are used to it. Just to appear on time when the class started, to learn that when they are entering the room that, if you are coming in at half past ten because of an appointment, just sit down – you don't have to interrupt all of us to tell us about your appointment and then we all lose concentration again.*

Participant 5, interviews (access staff)

### 3.3.5 Traveller community traditions

Traveller families are a close-knit group, extending across the country. It is common for Traveller families to travel long distances to attend and pay respects to members of their community for reasons of illness and death vigils, funerals and anniversaries (Brack and Monaghan, 2007). These cultural traditions may create challenges in relation to engagement with education programmes.

*So, as you know, in the Traveller community so many of them are related to each other. If there is a serious illness, a bereavement, half the class – if not three quarters of the class – would be directly affected by that – and then they may be absent as a result, do you know. Often it would be illness, caring responsibilities or funerals that would impact on attendance.*

Participant 3, interviews (academic staff)



Culturally specific challenges around non-attendance by several students at class due to funerals, weddings, Christenings and other family-orientated events where attendance is crucial for the Traveller community were taken into account through the addition of extra time to the module duration in order to facilitate students to complete the module content.

## 3.4 Opportunities for development

### 3.4.1 Additional academic support

Research participants were asked how the course could be improved in future iterations. Although the academic tutor provided a huge amount of support (many hours and many opportunities for one-to-one support with both assignments and computer issues), it was felt that an academic tutor from the Traveller community would have worked well with the academic tutor to make the workload easier, in addition to another tutor specific to computer skills. The preparatory course in computers which was delivered in early summer was thought to be insufficient for the student needs. Those with high levels of need in terms of digital literacy had forgotten much of the content by the time the Certificate in Mentoring in Education course began in September. It was suggested that a preparatory computer skills course should be longer in duration, staggered according to beginner, intermediate and advanced level of skill and take place immediately prior to the Certificate in Mentoring in Education. A model of peer-to-peer support organically arose within the classroom where students with higher ability in computer skills or in relation to assignments helped those who were struggling. This should be supported to continue.

*I think just building in a huge amount of small group and one-to-one [support] is really important. I suppose a better kind of ratio of support staff to students. We did also add another person to the support classes in the second semester for a few weeks anyway and that did help to some degree but really the level of support required is huge.*

Participant 1, interviews (academic staff)

Although there was an alternative provided for one of the modules in terms of written assessments (audio recordings), a wider provision of alternative assessments to the written assignments was also suggested by participants as a way of accommodating the diverse abilities in the group:

*I know the external examiner for the second module has made the recommendation that there are a smaller number of assessments and that some of them could be done orally because there is no reason why the same information couldn't have been recorded on a voice recording or a video or an interview – something like that – because it has been a massive barrier.*

Participant 1, interviews (academic staff)

The four-week preparatory course provided before the Certificate in Mentoring in Education took place was deemed insufficient time to develop the IT skills required by the students. A full module dedicated to IT skills was deemed more appropriate:





*I just think they need that kind of higher-level facilitated exposure [to IT skills] to build their confidence.*

Participant 3, interviews (academic staff)

### 3.4.2 Additional financial support

The participation allowance that Traveller students received in the absence of a maintenance grant to attend the course was identified as an important ‘*tool of engagement*’ (Interview 5, access staff). The allowance, in addition to removing some of the financial barriers to accessing the course, also recognised the added freedom from the caregiving expectations that a training allowance provides to Traveller women (Helleiner, 2000, p. 224). A training allowance provides a justifiable reason, particularly for men and other family members, for Traveller women to spend time pursuing higher education outside of the home.

*I think that needs to go another step now and that they look at providing nationally a grant out of respect to the [Traveller] community. But I think it is not just a Traveller programme, I think with all the Access and Foundation programmes – I think it is time to start looking at whether there could be a more mainstream approach to affording them a grant even though grants don’t normally deal with part-time courses.*

Participant 3, interviews (access staff)

A part-time grant would increase engagement for Traveller students who are likely to find it too difficult to attend a full-time course due to caregiving responsibilities.

### 3.4.3 Additional opportunities to practise self-care

The students who took the Certificate in Mentoring in Education were all caregivers with extensive family responsibilities. Student participants in research explained that it was not common for Traveller women to put themselves first, or to construct their identity around who they are as individuals rather than as mothers and homemakers. Thus, they did not avail of the sports and leisure facilities offered at MTU while doing their course. It was recognised both by the students and those delivering the course that engagement with sports and leisure facilities would be beneficial to the students and should be more actively facilitated in future iterations of the course. Through engaging in education, student participants spoke about beginning to become more aware of their own needs outside of the family home:

P1 *All Traveller women – we have so much going on in our lives and we don’t switch off. We genuinely don’t switch off.*

P2 *We don’t.*

P1 *We don’t know how to. Even the ones that would know what would benefit our head and also benefit our work going forward because we would be thinking more clearly.*





- P3 *Like, we were in a great position here this year – we had the facilities of the sports academy here actually in the building – and they weren't utilised – and I would like to see an hour of our week going forward where we go in, we do a bit of [unclear phrase].*
- P1 *Unwind – just unwind.*
- P2 *We didn't get to do that part of it.*

Focus Group 3 participants

*So they are already maybe coming in two [days] – it would be wonderful if they could come in for three [days] and really build up their familiarity and reduce the gaps between when they were last in, you know ... just to experience more of student life. I would like more time – that kind of space in the time they are on campus – to build on some of the skills ... a bit of space and wriggle room for other areas of development ... I think room for a little bit more fun, room to use the sports academy, maybe how about getting used to a bit of the gym or the hydrotherapy pool or how about a bit of yoga, Pilates ... they are always taking care of everybody else. They may not be good – or give themselves permission – at actually taking care of themselves better on an ongoing basis. There is a lot of caring for other family members or for everybody else but themselves.*

Participant 3, interviews (access staff)

The potential of engagement in sports and leisure facilities for raising the visibility of the students in the university was highlighted by a member of the staff team who believed that increasing the number of days students were on campus and including leisure activities in the timetable would be helpful:

*People might not have noticed it. I just noticed it because we are such a small college and I expected us to stand out – I did, like. I expected us to stand out. Well, I would have liked it for the women. To feel that people know we are students ... there is so much negative energy around us that I think the positive side got overlooked. Now, it is early days – I am hoping to change all that.*

Participant 5, interviews (access staff)

The identification of self-care needs within the female Traveller community has led to a new Life Skills module beginning from January 2024 which will include self-care principles and strategies.

### 3.4.4 Progression pathways

The programme team would like to see an educational progression pathway so that once the course had been completed, students could work towards another goal:

*There is no point just giving them this little module or this course and that is it for another five or ten years, you know. So there definitely was a need and there is still a need for a lot more. There is definitely a huge need for it and I want, as I said now,*



*fairness and equality for everybody so I am really pushing to develop this. They have told me they want to continue. They don't want that to be the end of it.*

Participant 4, interviews (access staff)

Provision of career guidance support in terms of concretising progression paths after completion of the Mentors in Education course was also identified by one of the programme team as desirable:

*Some of them have particular ideas, especially some of the younger women – other career ideas – that they are interested in. One of them was interested in nursing or care work, so to help them and give them maybe a bit more support than your average student would get to move towards those kind of individual career goals.*

Participant 1, interviews (academic staff)

In response to this need, one-to-one career guidance was offered from April onwards (at the end of the course).

### 3.4.5 Conclusion

The Certificate in Mentoring in Education was co-created with the Traveller community in Kerry through a long process of relationship-building, consultation and research conducted by the programme team. Through this process, two areas of need were identified during consultation with Travellers. These made up the content of two modules: The Irish Education System and Mentoring in Education. Although the course was designed for women and men of the Traveller community, the student cohort was entirely female. The programme team sought to create a culturally inclusive environment through consideration of the barriers to access that Traveller women experience specifically – entrenched gender roles and the busy schedules of motherhood and homemaking – and the wider barriers such as literacy issues through early school rejection. Although all students had experienced discrimination and racism in the school system, they were extremely motivated to become changemakers within their community. They wanted to be directly involved in supporting Traveller children to remain in the school system and progress their community's relationship with education in the direction of change. Through engaging in the Certificate in Mentoring in Education, students who took part in research reported feelings of enhanced self-worth and wellbeing, skills development such as public speaking and digital skills. Practical methods of assessment were offered by the programme team in support of the students' needs, and a flexible approach with staged feedback was implemented to support the ethos of true co-creation, where Traveller students were involved in every element of the course design on an iterative continuum. There were some issues that arose. Digital literacy needs were significant amongst the group and the need for further supports here was identified. In response to same, an IT and Communications module is due to commence in September 2024. A huge amount of academic support was required of the programme team in order to best assist the students, as traditional models of education were not designed with this cohort of students in mind. Knowledge of the 'hidden curriculum' within HEIs of time management



and appropriate communication in a classroom setting was denied to Traveller students through early school rejection. This caused some issues at the beginning of course delivery, however it improved as time went on and students became more familiar with third level education conventions and norms. Traveller women have little opportunity to explore their identities as women outside of their roles as homemakers and mothers. Engaging in the Certificate in Mentoring in Education was seen to awaken a new interest in exploring their own needs as individuals, and an interest in accessing the recreational and fitness resources available to them as MTU Kerry Campus students was reported. This would also increase the visibility of Traveller students on campus and encourage Traveller women to practise self-care in support of maintaining good mental health. In response to this, a new Life Skills module due to begin in January 2024 includes self-care and wellbeing for Traveller students.

A stylized, light yellow silhouette of a human figure in a dynamic, balanced pose, set against a solid yellow background. The figure's right arm is raised and curved, while the left arm is extended downwards. The head is represented by a simple circle.

CHAPTER 4

# Discussion and Recommendations



## 4.1 Discussion

Irish Travellers are an ethnic minority group with a unique culture and identity, distinct from that of the non-Traveller majority of Irish people (Murray and Urban, 2012). Travellers have always experienced significant discrimination and exclusion in Ireland (Mac Gréil, 2011), very clearly seen in educational spaces. The Certificate in Mentoring in Education is one of a series of SOAR Project-funded initiatives under the work stream Travellers in Education, which seeks to widen participation of Travellers in third level education in the South Cluster. There was a clear understanding amongst participants that the longstanding discrimination experienced by the Traveller community in Irish schools was still a concern, and that Traveller children and parents need support.

The QQI Level 6 Certificate in Mentoring in Education was a success, with 13 of 16 students registered completing their Certificate. All students were women, which is significant given that research shows that while Traveller women are more likely to enjoy school than Traveller males (Jordan, 2001), they are also less likely to complete school and to gain employment (Watson et al., 2017). Education initiatives which engage Traveller women are therefore very important. Traveller women are also the primary caregivers of the family and as such are more likely to experience discrimination through interactions with service providers and with the wider community (Hamilton, 2018). Furthermore, women have a primary role in their children's education, even in the Traveller community where the power dynamic is weighted towards males (Levinson and Sparkes, 2003). As such, providing educational opportunities for Traveller women enhances their abilities to act as advocates both for themselves and their families.

Travellers experience higher rates of reported poor mental health compared to the non-Traveller majority (McGorrian et al., 2013; Parry et al., 2004). This is linked to the inequalities experienced by Travellers across health and social domains including educational attainment (Brady and Keogh, 2016). The women on the Certificate in Mentoring in Education spoke about how their extensive care responsibilities can lead to isolation from other women in their community and noted that participation on the Certificate provided them with opportunities to meet with their peers and to reimagine their identities outside of the role of homemaker. Some identified an increased sense of confidence and motivation to continue with education and to seek employment as mentors and advocates for other Travellers. This is consistent with other research which has found that education empowers Traveller women (Levinson, 2015) to aim for roles other than those of wife, mother and homemaker (Levinson, 2008). The programme team at the MTU Kerry Campus identified the need for concrete supports which would provide advice and assistance for Traveller students seeking to pursue further education and/or employment. This led to the creation of a Life Skills module incorporating self-care and wellbeing for Traveller women which is due to begin in January 2024.

The legacy of previous negative educational experiences, and current demands as homemakers and carers, can create challenges for Traveller women seeking to return to education. The inclusive and participatory methods employed to design and deliver the Certificate in Mentoring in Education sought to address these challenges. The programme



team sought, in as far as possible, to design and deliver the course in a way which met the needs of the learner, even when this required adaptations on behalf of the institution. Key enabling characteristics of the course included consultative curriculum design, delivery of classes at a time that acknowledged the caring responsibilities of the students, provision of pre-course IT training and ongoing academic tutorial support and payment of a training allowance. Students gave very positive feedback on the supports given by the programme team during course delivery. The approach taken by staff was person-centred and collaborative and they demonstrated flexibility and adaptability in responding to learning needs which arose as the course progressed.

Travellers are not a homogenous group and there were diverse abilities in the group in terms of computer literacy and needs for academic support. There are, however, some prevailing challenges for students from Traveller backgrounds: low literacy skills are significant in the Traveller community (Department of Education and Science, 2006) and are a key factor in early school rejection (Morgan, 1998) and in engaging with education over the course of a lifetime (Parikh et al., 1996). It is imperative that institutions acknowledge that as a cohort, Traveller learners are likely to need more intensive levels of support in education contexts. Addressing the digital divide is essential in order to empower Travellers to engage in higher education. To this end, MTU Kerry Campus are providing an IT and Communication Skills module as part of the next iteration of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education which is due to run in September 2023.

This research also highlighted that the students had limited access to 'academic capital' which is normally gained through engagement with the 'hidden curriculum' at educational institutions. According to Bourdieu (1986), academic capital includes rules and norms of an institute, such as time management; attendance; communication skills and other elements of 'knowing the ropes' (Whitty et al., 2015, p. 41). For first-generation students, awareness of and compliance with such roles and norms can be a hurdle. Moreover, students from diverse backgrounds experience conflicting messages from their home culture and the education institution's culture (Jin and Ball, 2019; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009). It is imperative that the institution also accepts responsibility for cultural adaptation rather than expecting all adaptation to be undertaken by the learner. Adaptive initiatives exemplified by MTU Kerry Campus such as the provision of training allowances, the timing of classes, requirements around assessment format and additional time given for students to complete the module where family and community commitments resulted in non-attendance etc. are all important considerations in this regard.

Given the students' observations about their lack of engagement with the social and leisure facilities on the MTU campus, consideration may also need to be given to ways of supporting Traveller participation in the wider life of the campus. It has been recognised by both students and the programme team that such engagement may require scaffolding through active timetabling of leisure or other campus-based activities. The potential of such engagement for raising the visibility of the students on campus was also recognised in the data.



During this research, it emerged that literacy issues and diversity of learning needs among the students presented a challenge for teaching and learning. Traditional methods of assessment or delivery may not be appropriate for some student groups, particularly those that have limited experience of the education system and may become overwhelmed by the demands of academia. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a model of service or practice that doesn't exclude any particular groups of learners or their learning styles (Home Office, 2016). It supports models of practice where teaching and learning is dynamic, flexible, and accessible to all. The Certificate in Mentoring in Education was informed by UDL principles, and a co-creation approach where Traveller students were involved in every element of the course design and provided iterative feedback throughout the delivery of the course. A huge amount of academic support was required of the programme team in order to best assist the students, as traditional models of education were not designed with this cohort of students in mind. It is imperative that the impact of a supportive and prepared programme team is not underestimated.

To be consistent with UDL principles, a complete UDL university environment that meets the needs of all students is warranted (Tinto and Pusser, 2006; McGuire et al., 2006; Roberts et al., 2011). The launch in June 2022 of the PATH Strand 4 'Universal Design Fund – Supporting inclusive universally designed higher education environments for all' is a welcome initiative in this regard as it supports the embedding of Universal Design (UD) approaches and inclusive practices in HEIs.<sup>6</sup>

## Key Recommendations for MTU Kerry Campus and the Higher Education Sector

- The Certificate in Mentoring in Education is a valuable and successful initiative, welcomed by the Traveller community in Kerry. It should continue to be resourced and built upon to accommodate a larger number of Traveller students.
- The MTU programme design approach, based on sustained consultation with the Traveller community, co-creation of programme content, student-centred learning and assessment approaches and ongoing iterative student feedback at each stage of course delivery, provides a student-centred approach which merits consideration by other institutions seeking to recruit and engage students from under-represented groups.
- Future iterations of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education and other courses which prioritise Travellers should be resourced to provide substantial digital skills training as part of course delivery. Consideration should be given to expanding the programme team given the very significant workload involved. Including a dedicated computer skills tutor and an academic tutor from the Traveller community should be considered.

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6. <https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/path/>



- A model of peer-to-peer support organically arose within the classroom where students with greater skills in certain areas helped their classmates. Consideration could be given to structuring this support in a systematic way.
- The assessment approaches utilised in the first iteration of the Certificate in Mentoring in Education were innovative and flexible in terms of meeting student needs for multiple means of assessment. Ongoing consideration should be given to how UDL principles in addition to ongoing community consultation might be utilised to address the literacy and digital literacy challenges experienced by the Traveller student cohort.
- The programme team at MTU Kerry Campus recognised the self-care and wellbeing needs of female Traveller students. In response to this need, a Life Skills module incorporating self-care and wellbeing for this group of students was designed and is due to run from January 2024. Traveller students should be consulted around what would facilitate their use of wellbeing facilities, and consultation with Kerry Travellers Health and Community Development Project would also be useful in this regard. Consideration could usefully be given across all HEIs as to how self-care principles and strategies could be integrated into curriculums to promote good mental health and wellbeing amongst Traveller students.
- Practicalities such as facilitation of access to campus that fits with the students' lifestyles also needs to be considered. Students' feedback that they would rather use wellbeing and sporting facilities as a group to support the bonding experience and sense of safety and belonging that they benefited from through their engagement in the Certificate in Mentoring in Education should be considered in planning.
- In recognition of the trauma that Traveller students frequently need to manage in the educational sphere, options for counselling through Traveller Counselling Services and Kerry Travellers Health and Community Development Project should be promoted, and further engagement encouraged through raising awareness of this resource.
- The increased cultural awareness described by some of the programme team as a result of delivering the Certificate in Mentoring in Education is noteworthy. Consolidation of this learning and its dissemination across the wider academic community has the potential to enhance cultural awareness of the Traveller community in teaching and learning scholarship. Consistent with the Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill (2018)<sup>7</sup>, the inclusion of Traveller-led cultural awareness in Certificates in Teaching and Learning in higher education for educators is recommended.

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7. This bill is currently before Dáil Éireann, third stage.





## Key Recommendations – Policy

- Addressing the financial cost of participating in education is essential to ensure Traveller women can access higher education. Funding to cover the cost of registration and tuition fees and provision of a maintenance grant for part-time learners from the Traveller community is recommended as allocation of scarce resources to educational costs may not be widely supported within Traveller families.
- The findings, from this study and previous research conducted by the SOAR Project,<sup>8</sup> highlight the traumatic experiences of Traveller children within the Irish education system. It is recommended that the development of Traveller-led advocacy and mentoring supports for Traveller children and families in schools, with an emphasis on building trust between the Traveller community and the education system and on raising awareness of the available supports and opportunities to reach third level, be resourced and supported as an initiative.

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8. See published SOAR reports *Pavee Beoir Leaders* and *A Formative Evaluation of the Traveller Graduate Network (TGN)*.



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## Appendix 1

### Information Sheet – Students

This information sheet is for people who are taking part in the Special Purpose Award in Mentoring in Education.

Our names are Rebekah Brennan and Aoife Horgan and we work for the SOAR Project in University College Cork. We are researchers.

We are conducting research on the Special Purpose Award in Mentoring in Education, so that we can learn from you and your experiences.

The purpose of the research is to give a voice to the Traveller community so that we can make recommendations to improve Travellers' experience of education in Ireland.

We feel it is very important that your voice gets heard.

It is totally up to you whether you take part in this research or not. You do not have to take part.

Your name will not be used in any reports.

If you are interested in taking part, this is how and when the research will happen:

Firstly, we would like to meet you and introduce ourselves. Hopefully we can do this over a cup of tea!

If you feel comfortable, we can then talk about your hopes and fears about the course you have just started. You don't have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with. You can do this as a group.

This conversation will be recorded, but that is only so that we can take down what was said later. The recording will then be destroyed.

Again, your name will never be in any reports that come out of this research. We will use some quotes so that your voice gets heard but no names will be put to these. If you mention a name of a school or a name of a place or a person, we will take that part out to protect you.

If you become upset at any stage during our conversations, support will be arranged for you through the Traveller Liaison Officer, and you don't have to continue with the research.

You can withdraw at any time.

If you have any questions, please talk to the Traveller Liaison Officer and she will pass on to us any questions.

## Appendix 2

### Information Sheet – Professionals



This information sheet is for professionals who are taking part in the Special Purpose Award in Mentoring in Education.

My name is Rebekah Brennan and I work for the SOAR Project and I am based in University College Cork.

We are conducting research on the Special Purpose Award in Mentoring in Education so that we can learn from you and your experiences. Your views are very important to us.

It is totally up to you whether you take part in this research or not. You do not have to take part. Your identity will be protected and your name will not be used in any reports. Only the research team will have access to any information you give. It will be kept entirely confidential.

If you are interested in taking part, an online interview will be scheduled at your convenience.

All information collected during the course of the study will be kept strictly confidential, with the exception of child protection issues or issues of harm to self or others. Results will only be published as group data so you will not be individually identifiable. This means that while your words may be used in a report, they will be mixed in with the words of other people in a way that does not identify you.

All information collected from you will be stored electronically and will be kept locked by password access, only accessible to the research team. Information will be destroyed after ten years, in accordance with UCC policy. Once the study is completed the information will be written up to be published in a report available to the public and may also be published in academic journals. We may also present the work at academic seminars and conferences.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [rebekah.brennan@ucc.ie](mailto:rebekah.brennan@ucc.ie) or talk to NAME and she will contact me with your queries.



## Appendix 3

### Consent Form for Focus Groups/Interviews

- I ..... agree to participate in a focus group/interview for the SOAR Project.
- The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification.
- I understand that participation is voluntary.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted. This is in line with General Data Protection §Regulations (GDPR) introduced in 2018.
- I give permission for my interview with the UCC Access and Participation Services research team to be audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I agree to maintain and uphold the complete confidentiality of all participants within the focus group.
- I will keep all information shared by participants during the focus group private and will not repeat or discuss outside of the focus group.
- I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in progress reports, academic journals and/or the project website.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for ten years, in line with UCC policy.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.
- I am over the age of 18.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

PRINT [NAME]: .....



## Appendix 4

### Interview Guide – Professionals

#### **Consent and information check**

Check participant received information sheet – briefly explain purpose of interview.

Check participant has completed consent form – explain the nature of voluntarism, i.e. rights, withdraw without redress, etc.

Permission to record interview via MS Teams.

Any questions?

#### **Noted and potential benefits of programme**

#### **Any challenges/barriers in delivery of the Cert.?**

#### **Needs analysis and improvements – looking ahead**

Do you think that the Special Purpose Award reflected the needs of the students?

Do you think that the delivery model will work going forward?

What other information would you like included in the Cert.?

#### **Recommendations to improve programme**

Would you recommend the Special Purpose Award to others?

Is this Special Purpose Award something you would like to continue to be involved in / to continue to participate in?

Summarise – How would you improve this Special Purpose Award as it currently operates?

#### **Close**

Any other comment you would like to add?

Was there anything I should have asked you that I didn't?

Any questions for me?

Thanks and appreciations.



## Appendix 5

### Focus Group Interview Guide – Students

#### **Introduction**

Thank participants for agreeing to the interview.

#### **Informed Consent**

Check participant received information sheet – briefly explain purpose of interview.

Check participant has completed consent form – explain the nature of voluntarism, i.e. rights, withdraw without redress, etc.

Any questions?

#### **What worked?**

#### **Any challenges/barriers to taking part in the Cert.?**

#### **Needs analysis and improvements – looking ahead**

Do you think that the Special Purpose Award reflected your needs?

Do you think that the delivery model will work going forward?

What other information would you like included in the Cert.?

#### **Recommendations to improve programme**

Would you recommend the Special Purpose Award to others?

Summarise – How would you improve this Special Purpose Award as it currently operates?

#### **Close**

Any other comment you would like to add?

Was there anything I should have asked you that I didn't?

Any questions for me?

Thanks and appreciations.



## Appendix 6

### Module Descriptor “The Irish Education System”

#### Module Descriptor

Run Date: 27 OCT 2022

<b>Effective From:</b>	2021/2022
<b>Module Code/Title:</b>	EDUC61022 <i>The Irish Education System</i>
<b>Credits:</b>	5
<b>Level:</b>	Level 6
<b>Total Contact Hours:</b>	36
<b>Directed Study Hours:</b>	36
<b>Independent Study Hours:</b>	28
<b>Total Hours:</b>	100
<b>Prerequisite Knowledge:</b>	None

**Module Description/Aims:** This module aims to provide the students with a well-developed understanding of the various elements of the Irish education system in terms of structure, governance and procedures. s.

#### Contact Hours

No.	Contact Type	Hours	Frequency	Additional Information
1	Practical/Workshop	1	Per Week (One Sem)	Computer Lab
2	Lecture	2	Per Week (One Sem)	

**Learning Outcomes** - On successful completion of the module the learner will be able to:

#### **No. Learning Outcomes**

- 1 Identify and classify the different elements of education provision: Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, FET & Community
- 2 Recognise and understand the NFQ framework
- 3 Recognise and understand the access routes into Higher Education and be aware of the various types of support in higher education
- 4 Identify the range of financial supports available and the respective application processes across primary, post -primary, further and higher education sectors.
- 5 Distinguish between the various roles and functions of school governance systems.

#### Teaching & Learning Strategies

#### **No. Teaching & Learning Strategies**

- 1 It is intended that the module should be as interactive as possible, with a focus on student participation in activities designed to facilitate development of skills and practical strategies with a strong emphasis on the application to ‘real-life’ scenarios.
- 2 Blended learning approach incorporating a mixture of face-to-face and online lectures.

#### Indicative Syllabus Content

No.	Content	% Alloc	Detail
1	The Irish Education System	20	The history, structure and funding regimes of the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Childhood</li> <li>• Primary sector;</li> <li>• Second-level sector;</li> <li>• Further education sector; Adult &amp; Community Education and Higher education sector</li> <li>• Traveller Training &amp; Education</li> </ul>
2	National Framework of Qualifications	15	Levels 1 to 10, the meaning and the implications for each level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location and understandings of various qualifications on the framework</li> <li>• Particular emphasis on LC types (LCA, LCVP and Standard LC) and choices</li> <li>• Subject choices in JC and LC and implications for further and higher education.</li> </ul>
3	Access routes and supports in Education	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HEAR &amp; DARE Scheme</li> <li>• STAR Pupil programmes</li> <li>• Institutional Access Routes e.g. TAP</li> <li>• Access Office</li> <li>• Disability Support Services</li> <li>• Learning Support</li> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Travellers Access Service</li> <li>• Assistive Technology</li> <li>• The CAO Application Process</li> <li>• QQI-FET Route</li> </ul>





No.	Content	% Alloc	Detail
4	Financial Supports Options	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SUSI Grants System – Eligibility; Types of Grants; Application &amp; Appeals Processes</li> <li>• National Bursary Schemes and Scholarships</li> <li>• Individual college support funds</li> </ul>
5	Primary and Second Level School Governance and Admissions	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior staff roles in schools</li> <li>• Primary Schools: Boards of Management – role &amp; constituency</li> <li>• Admissions Policies</li> <li>• Second -Level Schools: Boards of Management – role &amp; constituency</li> <li>• Student Councils</li> <li>• Parents' Councils – role &amp; constituency</li> </ul>

### Assessment Strategies

#### No. Assessment Strategies

- 1 Ongoing portfolio that demonstrates ability to source and present relevant course material accompanied by a reflection on each section of the course. By having a staged process for submission, the portfolio facilitates formative as well as summative assessment. Additionally, the portfolio is intended to act as a resource for the student after course completion

### Assessments

No.	Category	Method	Additional Information	% Alloc	Learning Outcomes
1	Continuous Assessment	Portfolio	This module is graded on a pass/fail basis. Identification, selection and collation of information or artefact relevant to sections 1-5 accompanied by a 200-word reflection for each section (1,000) plus a final overall reflection (250 words) on the course learning. Thus, in total there will be six distinct section to the portfolio. Should they so wish, students can provide an audio version instead of a written section to accompany any two of the first five sections of the portfolio.	100	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

### Autumn Assessments

No.	Category	Method	Additional Information	% Alloc
1	Final Exam (Other)	REPEAT: Project/Viva Submission	Re-submit all or any necessary outstanding sections. However, in order to pass the module, the student is only required to submit any four sections as long as one of those sections includes the final reflection.	100

### Reading List

No.	Type	Book Title	ISBN	Author(s)	Publisher	Year	Edition
1	Recommended Presentations	with PowerPoint	1138164860	Stephen Moira	Taylor & Francis	2017	

### Journals and Websites

No.	Type	Description
1	Website	A Brief Guide for ETB School / College Board of Management Members - <a href="https://msletb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ETBI_BOM_Booklet.pdf">https://msletb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ETBI_BOM_Booklet.pdf</a>
2	Website	Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 - 2023 - <a href="https://www.cpsma.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/governance-manual-for-primary-schools-2019-2023.pdf">https://www.cpsma.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/governance-manual-for-primary-schools-2019-2023.pdf</a>
3	Website	Website National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) - <a href="https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/NationalFramework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx">https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/NationalFramework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx</a>
4	Website	Website Irish Statute Book – Equal Status Act 2000 - <a href="http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/section/7/enacted/en/html#partii-sec7">http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/section/7/enacted/en/html#partii-sec7</a>
5	Website	Website Irish Statute Book – Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 - <a href="http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en">http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en</a>
6	Website	Website Citizens Information - Admissions policies in primary and secondary schools - <a href="https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the_irish_education_system/admissions_policies_in_primary_and_secondary_schools.html">https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the_irish_education_system/admissions_policies_in_primary_and_secondary_schools.html</a>
7	Website	Department of Education - Education in Ireland - <a href="https://www.education.ie/en/the-educationsystem/">https://www.education.ie/en/the-educationsystem/</a>
8	Website	SUSI - <a href="https://susi.ie/site-map/">https://susi.ie/site-map/</a>
9	Website	SPUNOUT.ie - <a href="https://spunout.ie/category/education">https://spunout.ie/category/education</a>
10	Website	Tusla, Child and Family Agency - <a href="https://www.tusla.ie/">https://www.tusla.ie/</a>
11	Website	HEAR and DARE - <a href="http://www.accesscollege.ie">www.accesscollege.ie</a>
12	Website	Student Finance - <a href="http://www.studentfinance.ie">www.studentfinance.ie</a>
13	Website	Central Applications Office - <a href="http://www.cao.ie/">http://www.cao.ie/</a>
14	Website	National Parents Council - <a href="https://www.npc.ie/">https://www.npc.ie/</a>
15	Website	National Parents Council Post Primary Ireland - <a href="https://www.npcpp.ie/">https://www.npcpp.ie/</a>
16	Website	National Council for Curriculum & Assessment (NCCA) - <a href="https://ncca.ie/en">https://ncca.ie/en</a>



## Appendix 7

### Module Descriptor “Mentoring for Education”

#### Module Descriptor

Run Date: 27 OCT 2022

**Effective From:** 2021/2022

**Module Code/Title:** EDUC61025 *Mentoring for Education*

**Credits:** 10

**Level:** Level 6

**Total Contact Hours:** 48

**Directed Study Hours:** 0

**Independent Study Hours:** 152

**Total Hours:** 200

**Prerequisite Knowledge:** The Irish Education System

**Module Description/Aims:** This mentoring programme will focus on developing teaching and learning strategies and the transfer of information and knowledge using a mentoring model perspective.

#### Contact Hours

No.	Contact Type	Hours	Frequency	Additional Information
1	Practical/Workshop	1	Per Week (One Sem)	Computer Lab
2	Practical/Workshop	1	Per Week (One Sem)	Groupwork room
3	Lecture	2	Per Week (One Sem)	

**Learning Outcomes** - On successful completion of the module the learner will be able to:

#### **No. Learning Outcomes**

- 1 Understand and articulate the role of mentor
- 2 Understand and articulate the role of advocate
- 3 Research a topic and make a PowerPoint presentation with accompanying support material
- 4 Act as a peer and self-advocate and mentor with respect to education issues
- 5 Act as an effective communicator across a number of settings

#### **Teaching & Learning Strategies**

##### **No. Teaching & Learning Strategies**

- 1 Lecture and open-room format. It is intended that the module should be as interactive as possible, with a focus on student participation in activities designed to facilitate development of skills and practical strategies with a strong emphasis on the application to 'real-life' scenarios.
- 2 Computer labs for Microsoft PowerPoint skills

#### **Indicative Syllabus Content**

No.	Content	% Alloc	Detail
1	The role of the mentor	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying the role – responsibilities and boundaries</li> <li>The mentor-mentee relationship</li> <li>Core mentoring skills: Active listening; Building trust; Clarifying goals; Developing mentee capabilities; Providing feedback</li> </ul>
2	Communication – Presentation Skills	30	Formal PowerPoint Presentation Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a blank presentation, working with text</li> <li>Formatting slides</li> <li>Inserting objects and hyperlinks</li> <li>Using graphics</li> <li>Making recordings</li> <li>Oral Presentation Skills</li> <li>Formal &amp; informal presentations</li> <li>Knowing your audience</li> <li>Dealing with 'stage fright'</li> <li>Establishing presence</li> </ul>
3	Advocacy	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is advocacy? – Types of advocacy</li> <li>Building an advocacy strategy: Problem analysis: Information gathering; solution analysis and proposal</li> <li>Presenting your case – advocacy and negotiation skills</li> </ul>





### Assessment Strategies

#### No. Assessment Strategies

- 1 PowerPoint Presentation - Assessment Graded on a Pass/Fail Only Basis
- 2 Role-Play Scenarios - Assessment Graded on a Pass/Fail Only Basis
- 3 Portfolio - Assessment Graded on a Pass/Fail Only Basis

### Assessments

No.	Category	Method	Additional Information	% Alloc	Learning Outcomes
1	Continuous Assessment	Presentation	Students will be required to do a 10-minute formal PowerPoint presentation on an aspect of Irish education. Assessment Graded on a Pass/Fail Only Basis	20	2, 4
2	Continuous Assessment	Role Play	Students will act out two scenarios - one where they act in a mentoring role and one where they act as an advocate. Assessment Graded on a Pass/Fail Only Basis	30	1, 2, 4, 5
3	Continuous Assessment	Portfolio	Portfolio will comprise of the following elements: 1. A 150-word introduction piece to the portfolio 2. Supporting material for PowerPoint Presentation accompanied by a 100-word reflection on the process 3. Outline and explanation of the two role play scenarios (Approximately 200 words each) 4. Two x 150-word reflections on the two role-play scenario activities 5. A 400 word reflection on the module indicating extent of skills and knowledge developed over the course. This should include an element where the student considers possible future education progression routes for themselves. Assessment Graded on a Pass/Fail Only Basis	50	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

### Autumn Assessments

No.	Category	Method	Additional Information	% Alloc
1	Final Exam (Other)	REPEAT: Project/Viva Submission	Presentation	20
2	Final Exam (Other)	REPEAT: Project/Viva Submission	Portfolio - Re-submit all or any outstanding section/s	80

### Reading List

No.	Type	Book Title	ISBN	Author(s)	Publisher	Year	Edition
1	Recommended	The Mentoring Manual: Your step by step guide to being a better mentor	9781292017891	Julie Starr	Pearson Business	2014	
2	Recommended	Advocacy: A Practical Guide	085490266X	Peter Lyons	Wildy, Simmonds and Hill Publishing	2019	
3	Recommended	Mentoring Mindset, Skills	9780980356458	Ann Rolfe	Synergetic People Development Pty Ltd	2020	4th

### Journals and Websites

No.	Type	Description
1	Journal	International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education: <a href="https://www.emerald.com/">https://www.emerald.com/</a>
2	Website	Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning: <a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cmet20/current">https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cmet20/current</a>
3	Website	Mapping a Mentoring Roadmap and Developing a Supportive Network for Strategic Career Advancement: <a href="https://journals.sagepub.com/">https://journals.sagepub.com/</a>
4	Website	Collaborative Mentoring : Webinar Series: <a href="https://www.mentoring.org/resource/collaborativementoring-webinar-series/">https://www.mentoring.org/resource/collaborativementoring-webinar-series/</a>
5	Website	The Global Code of Ethics: <a href="https://www.emccglobal.org/quality/ethics/">https://www.emccglobal.org/quality/ethics/</a>
6	Website	National Advocacy Service <a href="https://advocacy.ie/">https://advocacy.ie/</a>
7	Website	Introducing Augusto Boal - <a href="https://dramaresource.com/tag/augusto-boal/">https://dramaresource.com/tag/augusto-boal/</a>

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