



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

Student Support Centre



End of Year Report
2007-08

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**A one-stop service located near Halls of Residence
to serve all your personal support needs"**

1. General

The Student Support Centre opened in September 2006 and is staffed by 3 full-time members of staff and 3 part-time members of staff. The range of services provided by the centre includes:

- Careers Service – Ms Joan Francis & Mrs Diane Masson
- Counselling and Disability Support – Dr Brian Booth
- Occupational Health – Ms Ciara Matthews
- Widening Access and Participation – Mrs Nuala Dalton

Awareness of the Student Support Centre is promoted through the website, prospectus, posters, notice-boards and leaflets, and various University College events such as Careers Fairs, Freshers Fair and workshops.

Students can access the support services simply by dropping into the Student Support Centre or by contacting a member of staff. Alternatively students may be referred by a member of academic staff, or by self-referral.

The staff of the Student Support Centre work closely with their counterparts of Queen's University Belfast and all policies and procedures are informed by those of Queen's University Belfast.

Promotion of the Student Support Centre

New students met with the Student Support Centre staff on their tour of the University College campus during Welcome and Orientation week. This ensured that new students were able to meet the staff, were made aware of the services provided by the Student Support Centre and knew where it was located. New students also received USB keys in September 2007 outlining the range of support available. This, accompanied by publicity materials placed at various locations around the campus promoted the services of the Student Support Centre.

Website Developments

The University College website was redesigned and launched in January 2008. The Student Support Centre webpages were also redesigned to provide a user friendly source of information for both staff and students. The website is frequently updated.

Links with other Support Providers

The Student Support Centre staff continued to make links with other support providers within the University College and academic staff throughout the year.

- Students' Union
A positive relationship has been established between the two areas and mutual interests established. A number of meetings have been held between staff of the Student Support Centre and the Students' Union Executive to gain feedback on the services provided and suggestions.

- Chaplains
The Student Support Officer made contact with the University College Chaplains, some of whom visited the Student Support Centre.

Internal Audit Review of Student Support Centre

In April 2008, Deloitte & Touche carried out an Internal Audit Review of the Student Support Centre to assess the adequacy and effectiveness by which the University College advertise and make available the services of the Student Support Centre. The conclusion of the review was that there is a sound system of internal controls designed to meet the system objectives. As a result of the review, the Student Support Centre was given an **Adequate** level of assurance that the system objectives will be achieved.

Work is ongoing to enhance the provision in those areas where weaknesses of a minor nature have been identified.

(Definition of Adequate – While there is basically a sound system of control, there are weaknesses of a minor nature that can be resolved with limited time and effort and/or management have already a plan of action to deal with any weaknesses identified and/or there are areas where potential value for money efficiencies can be made.)

Note on Statistical Information

Several sections of the report provide statistical information relating to students. Due to Data Protection legislation, where there are fewer than 10 students in any group, numbers have not been quoted in order to protect confidentiality.

The End of Year Report is available in large print from the Student Support Centre. Please contact the Centre on 028 90384510 for an enlarged copy.

2. Counselling and Disability Services – Dr B Booth

The mission of the student Counselling and Disability Service is to deliver qualitative and professional counselling, assessment, consultation and support in a cost-effective way to students of the University College. The service is delivered in partnership with others through the agency of professional working relationships, and the service has excellent links with Counselling and Disability Services at Queen's University Belfast. The service is dedicated to always working in the best interests of students and to foster their learning, development, psychological health and well-being.

The statistical evidence points to an overall increase of approximately **20%** in the number of students helped by the service and there has been a healthy increase in the number of contacts with other departments of the University College and, within the constraints of confidentiality, with individual tutors.

There has continued to be a good response by students and staff to the Counselling and Disability Service with approximately 9.5% of the full-time and 5.6% of the part-time population contacting the service for support. As with the previous year this figure compares favourably with the national averages.

2.1 Counselling Service

2.1.1 Introduction

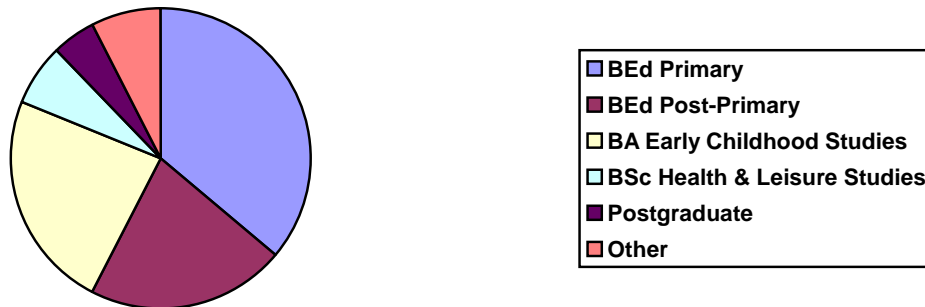
This report aims to inform colleagues about the work of the Counselling Service during the period August 2007 to August 2008. In particular it wishes to highlight an innovative project introduced in the past year as well as additional areas of development which have further extended the work of the service in the University College. The report also includes a summary of the number and profiles of students using the service.

The Counselling Service is available to all students who study at Stranmillis University College and is open 5 days per week. The Counselling Service provides a regular confidential and impartial space where students can talk about their concerns and be listened to. They are helped to articulate and understand their difficulties and to find their own best way of responding and coping. Students attend on a voluntary basis and the service is free. The majority of students attend for short-term counselling (up to 6 sessions) but can attend for longer if appropriate. Students may be referred on for psychiatric assessment or for help from other agencies. All students who attend for service must notify the service who their GP is and close liaison is maintained with their GP and also the University College Occupational Health Service. The Counsellor also takes part in a number of associated activities within Student Support such as providing consultation for staff, running workshops for students and participation in a number of University College activities.

2.1.2 Ease of Access to Service

An increasing number of students have made use of the Counselling Service at Stranmillis University College. The QUB Student Guidance Centre opened in September 2007 and students have been able to avail of the services offered by the Counselling Service at QUB. To date a very small number of students from Stranmillis University College have availed of the Counselling Service at the QUB Student Guidance Centre whilst the majority have continued to use the facilities provided on site by the Counsellor at the Student Support Centre. This would indicate that our most vulnerable students find it much easier to access a service that is located within the campus grounds.

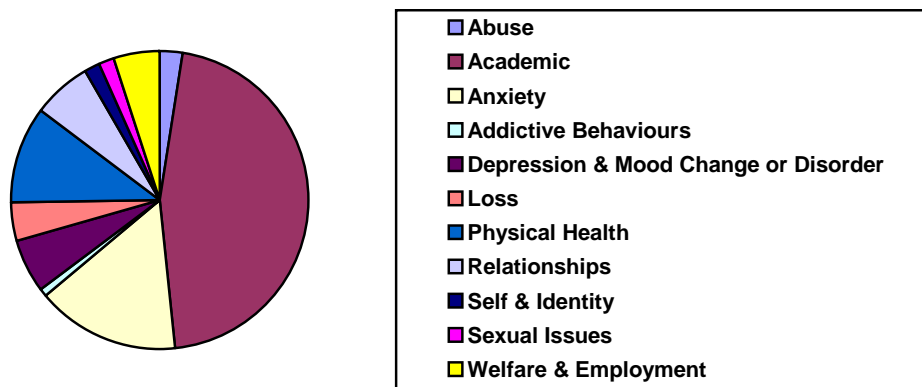
2.1.3 What courses our clients are taking



The chart above shows the distribution of students who access the service from the various courses. This distribution is mainly in line with last year and reflects the fact that most of our students are on teacher-training courses.

2.1.4 Presenting Problems

The difficulties that students talked about remained much the same as in the previous year, with as the chart below demonstrates, academic related issues (including dyslexia and other disabilities) being the main concern. There was however a rise in students presenting with anxiety.



2.2 Disability Service

2.2.1 Introduction

The Disability Service is a student service whose main focus is providing advice and support to individual students but it also works with the rest of the University College to improve awareness and accessibility in general.

Disability provision is delivered in three broad areas:

- **Personal Disability Support**
Disability Services are the initial gateway and central reference point for all students with disabilities. Students are assisted to access Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) funding for assistive technology and non-medical helper support.

- **Learning Support**
Disability Services identifies and communicates students' support needs and reasonable adjustments to the Heads of Departments. These can range from sympathetic consideration of spelling and grammar for students with dyslexia to providing enlarged exam papers for students with visual impairment. Feedback has been very positive from the academic departments and most academic staff are placing documentation on Queen's Online or providing hard copies of lectures as required.
- **Staff Consultation**
Academic staff have complex responsibilities and are teaching an increasingly diverse population of students. Teaching students with disabilities can help staff develop their professional skills through responding to the challenges of working with diversity. Disability Services continues to advise staff on matters related to disability legislation.

2.2.2 Student Profiles

Disability Services identified **67 students** over the academic year who have a disability/medical condition. Of these, **48 students** received on-going support from the Student Support Centre for the following disability/medical condition:

- Specific Learning Difficulty or Dyslexia
- Blind or partially sighted
- Deaf or hard of hearing
- Wheelchair user or mobility difficulties
- An unseen disability (eg diabetes, epilepsy, asthma)
- Two or more disabilities
- Other disability (eg ME, chronic fatigue syndrome)

Over one quarter of students who received on-going support had a Specific Learning Difficulty or Dyslexia, a trend which is broadly in line with Queen's University Belfast and University of Ulster findings. Support arrangements for these students included specialist tutor support, normally 2 hrs per week, which was accessed through the Register of Support Providers. This is a facility which is supported by all Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland and is administered at the University of Ulster.

The second largest category "Other disability" includes students with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. The number of students with mobility and mental health difficulties was small.

2.3 University College Wide Initiatives

2.3.1 Suicide Awareness and Prevention

There have been two innovative projects carried out this year by the Counselling Service. The first was aimed directly at helping suicidal people. About 200 people a year take their own lives in Northern Ireland and the Government has this year initiated new developments in the delivery of the Suicide Prevention Strategy for Northern Ireland. It has established a regional 24/7 helpline for people in crisis (Lifeline 0808 808 8000) and published a leaflet "Concerned about Suicide".

As part of its commitment to suicide prevention the Counsellor emailed a copy of the leaflet "Concerned about Suicide" to all staff and students and has included information about the Lifeline 24/7 helpline on its website.

It has also offered "suicide awareness" sessions to students and staff as well as a 2 day training course in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). Staff and students from Stranmillis University College were joined by colleagues from Queen's University Belfast for this event and 16 people successfully completed this extremely valuable course.

The success of the ASIST training has prompted proposed future developments. It is hoped that Halls of Residence staff will attend a 1 day "Life Savers" course aimed at using suicide intervention skills.

Additionally it is planned to develop suicide intervention skills training for BEd students in conjunction with St Mary's University College. It is hoped that this course will be certificated by DEL. Finally in this respect, the Counselling Service hopes to provide an input on suicide prevention into a new BEd module "Contemporary Issues in Pastoral Care" as well as into the existing Health and Leisure Studies module "Health in the Community".

2.3.2 Responding to Student Emergencies

The Service also aims to provide help and advice for staff who have any concerns about students and who wish to know more about how to respond to Student Emergencies. A protocol entitled "Helping Students in Distress" was launched and has received favourable feedback. It is hoped to run workshops/seminars on how to best use these guidelines.

2.4 Workshops for Counselling and Disability Services

A series of workshops aimed at students and staff were developed and offered as follows:

Workshop	Target Audience
Assertiveness Training 21 Nov/30 Nov/5 Dec/12 Dec 2007, 2.00pm-4.00pm	Students
Exam Stress Workshops 28 November/7 December 2007, 2.00pm-4.00pm 30 April/2 May, 2.00pm-4.00pm	Students
Suicide Awareness 12 February 2008, 2.00pm-3.00pm	Staff and students
10 ways to feel better about yourself 13 February 2008, 2.00pm-4.00pm	Students
Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training 13/14 March 2008	Representatives from academic departments, Support staff, SRC President and QUB staff

2.5 Consultation Service to Staff

The Counselling and Disability Service provides a consultancy service for staff dealing with students including Heads of Departments, Advisers of Studies and the Students' Union. We also liaise with students' parents while maintaining strict confidentiality.

This aspect of the service has developed well and it was pleasing to see how Student Support could usefully liaise with other University College staff.

Future Activities Planned 2008/09

- Develop awareness about suicide among staff and students.
- Develop short courses/keynote sessions that are embedded in existing curriculum provision.
- Foster the establishment of related committees eg Disability Services Committee.
- Offer an ongoing programme of Staff Development.
- Explore the establishment of a "Student Portal" for mental health and wellbeing.
- Work collaboratively with the Students' Union to promote issues of concern to students.
- Fire Evacuation Training in collaboration with Estates Department.
- Mental Health Training.

3. Careers Service

The Careers Service at Stranmillis University College is provided by Queen's University Belfast. The service is facilitated by 1 part time Careers Adviser providing a dedicated service for Initial Teacher Education programmes and 1 part time Careers Adviser providing a dedicated service for the BA Early Childhood Studies and BSc Health & Leisure Studies programmes. The Careers Service aims to provide career education, information and guidance to students of all disciplines and at all stages of study. All students have access to individual guidance by booked appointment and a varied programme of career education programmes scheduled throughout the academic year. The overall aim is to support students and recent graduates in their transition from study to employment. Students can also access a full range of events and activities provided by the Careers Service at Queen's University Belfast.

Careers Liaison Advisers

In line with QAA Code of Practice, a Careers Liaison Adviser (CLA) was appointed for each department. These are:

BEd Primary	Ms Denise Elliott
BEd Post-Primary	Miss Audrey Curry
BA Early Childhood Studies	Mrs Paula Wright
BSc Health & Leisure Studies	Mr Frank Kelly

A training event was held on 21st November 2007 to provide information on Careers Education, Information and Guidance Policy and the role of the CLA at Stranmillis University College. The CLA role is still developing and the link between academic and careers staff continues to be a worthwhile one to promote opportunities and events within the relevant departments. Feedback from academic departments is an important factor in the development of the Careers Service at Stranmillis University College.

3.1 Initial Teacher Education Programmes (BEd/PGCE) – Ms J Francis

Work with Students

Year 3 Post-Primary - Certificate in Career Management and Employability Skills

The Certificate in Career Management and Employability Skills ran for the first time for Year 3 students. Accredited by Queen's University, the programme is designed to enhance students' employability skills and increase their knowledge of the graduate labour market. The 2 hour sessions were delivered by the Careers Service over a 12 week period to include student presentations, skills awareness and preparation for the job market. The scheme was tailored to suit the client group and where appropriate external speakers contributed to the programme. Guest speakers included Mr David Gibson, NICENT Teaching Fellow at Queen's University who ran a session on enterprising skills and Ms Hilary Woods from Victoria College who focused on career decision making in an educational setting. This was further complimented by a lecture delivered by Mr Ronnie Gibson, a recent retired Principal who emphasised the importance of preparing for the teaching market. These sessions added substance, in particular enterprising skills brought a different dimension to encourage students to support entrepreneurial skills in the classroom. The Certificate is awarded on the basis of 80% attendance, a class presentation and completion of two written pieces. It was fully supported by the Post-Primary Department and all Year 3 students were encouraged to take part in the initiative. Of the 48 Year 3 students, 17 met the accreditation criteria and attended a combined award ceremony with Health and Leisure Studies students in April 2008 presented by Dr Heaslett.

Year 4 Post-Primary – Careers Programme

The programme for Year 4 students concentrated on preparing students for the impending job market. Last year's format changed from one and a half days with interview practice to a structured and phased programme over an 8 week period during semester one. This was in agreement with the Post-Primary Department as it was felt this approach would allow students more time to reflect and apply their knowledge and skills after each of the sessions. The tailored programme ran as four two hour sessions from week 3 to week 6 followed with interview practice in week 10. External speakers presented a unique insight into the recruitment process at week 6 for each of the Post-Primary areas. Students were given the opportunity at week 10 to consolidate their learning by taking part in interview practice. Seven Principals kindly agreed to each interview a group of students and provide constructive feedback within a group scenario. Twenty-two students availed of this session and feedback from both Principals and students found the exercise extremely beneficial.

Year 4 Primary/PGCE

The format for Year 4 Primary students was similar to the Post-Primary schedule for Year 4 students. Again the focus was on preparation for the forthcoming job market. The sessions spanned from week 3 to week 10 in semester 2. A retired Principal provided an important account of the recruitment process at week 3 in semester 2. Practice interviews were offered to all Year 4 Primary students and 11 availed of the opportunity. Three Principals kindly provided their time and carried out the practice interviews in a group scenario. Students found the exercise extremely helpful.

A further session was organised by the Careers Service in April 2008 to provide additional support to students in a competitive job market. Two Principals provided a valuable insight into the application and interview process. Forty-five students from BEd Primary and PGCE attended.

Individual Careers Guidance – Initial Teacher Education Programmes

Individual careers guidance can take place in three different formats as indicated in the following table. Figures for the current year show a slight increase in guidance interviews from the previous year. There was also a decrease in email contact from the previous year.

Activity	07/08	06/07
Guidance Interviews	19	14
Email Guidance	16	26
Telephone Guidance	10	N/A

Work with Employers

- Attended a recruitment session hosted by Kent Council in the Wellington Hotel in April 2008 to discuss teaching opportunities in the Kent region. Students were notified of the event and invited to apply. On this occasion, interest in such vacancies from Stranmillis students was low.
- A meeting took place with Gaynes Language School in June 2008 at Stranmillis University College. It was an opportunity for the School to highlight current vacancies and to establish a link for future opportunities.
- Attended the Northern Ireland Recruitment Fair in June 2008 to keep abreast of opportunities in the graduate market.

Work with Staff

- Met with Audrey Curry (Careers Liaison Adviser) and Patricia Eaton from BEd Post-Primary in September 2007 to finalise the content of the Certificate in Career Management and Employability Skills and the structure of the Year 4 Post-Primary programme.
- Met with Denise Elliott (Careers Liaison Adviser) from BEd Primary in December 2007 to discuss careers plans in semester 2.

Work to promote Careers at Stranmillis University College

- Greeted first year students as part of the induction programme to highlight the role of the Career Service.
- Coordinated and participated in a Careers Liaison meeting in November 2007. The purpose of the session was to highlight the role of the Careers Liaison Adviser and discuss Careers Education, Information and Guidance (CEIG) provision within the institution.
- Highlighted relevant opportunities to students via email to include voluntary, work experience, vacancies and further study.
- Revised content for careers leaflets for first year students and graduates in collaboration with Diane Masson and distributed to relevant cohorts for information.

Future Activities Planned 2008/09 (BEd/PGCE)

BEd Primary

Year 1: An induction talk to all first year students as part of the induction programme.

Year 2: Promotion of the value of work experience and guidance interviews.

Year 3: Delivery of the Certificate in Career Management and Employability Skills (12 week programme).

Year 4: 3 (2 hour) sessions delivered from week 3 to week 6.

Completion of CV and application forms.

Week 10 will be interview practice delivered by Principals.

Schedule to be finalised with the Careers Liaison Advisor – Primary.

BEd Post-Primary

Year 1: An induction talk to all first year students as part of the induction programme.

Year 2: Promote the value of work experience and guidance interviews.

Year 3: Delivery of the Certificate in Career Management and Employability Skills (12 week programme).

Year 4: 4 (2 hour) sessions delivered from week 3 to week 6.

Completion of CV and application form.

Include input from subject specialists.

Week 10 will be interview practice delivered by Principals.

Other activities:

- Continue to offer one-to-one guidance, interview skills training, support with application forms, CVs and applications for post-graduate study.
- Develop the existing range of paper-based and electronic careers information and resources.
- Continue to have an input into the relevant course team meetings.
- Market Queen's Careers Service events to students at Stranmillis University College.
- Continue contact with CLAs to work towards CEIG.

3.2 BA Early Childhood Studies & BSc Health & Leisure Studies Mrs D Masson

Contact with Students

The Certificate in Career Management & Employability Skills continues to be the core delivery to BA and BSc students. The programme is accredited by Queen's University Belfast and a number of assessment criteria must be met. It is delivered to year 2 students over 12 x 2hr sessions in semester 1 and semester 2 of the academic year.

Subject	2007/08			2006/07		
	Numbers commencing (actual)	Numbers completing (actual)	% success rate	Numbers commencing (actual)	Numbers completing (actual)	% success rate
BA ECS	39	26	67%	46	31	67%
BSc HLS	48	39	81%	31	21	68%

In addition to this a number of one-off talks and workshops were provided to meet the needs of students from these two degree programmes. The content of these sessions was largely determined by student demand.

Breakdown of talks/workshops delivered

Semester 1	
Year/Subject	Talk/Workshop
1 st yr ECS	"Making the Most of your time at University - developing employability skills." "Developing employability skills through placement."
2 nd yr ECS	"Making module choices and the impact on future career planning."
2 nd yr HLS	Certificate in Career Management & Employability Skills. 12 weeks x 2 hrs Placement preparation workshop. Ongoing assistance organising placements.
3 rd yr ECS	"Postgraduate study - the options." "Successful PGCE applications." "Social Work Training." Drop in session – personal statements for PGCE applications.
3 rd yr HLS	"Successful PGCE applications." Drop in session – personal statements for PGCE applications. Placement preparation workshop. Assessed Placement presentations.
BA ECS P/T	"Successful PGCE applications" – video-conferenced to students in Omagh campus.

Semester 2	
Year/Subject	Talk/Workshop
2 nd yr ECS	Certificate in Career Management & Employability Skills. 12 weeks x 2 hrs Postgraduate Study – the options "Successful PGCE applications"
2 nd yr HLS	8 Placement visits. Placement Debrief. Assessed Placement presentations. Postgraduate Study and PGCE applications
3 rd yr HLS	Postgraduate Study – the options "Successful PGCE applications"

In addition to the above, a complementary range of one to one and small group activities was provided throughout the year. This included one-to-one guidance, interview skills training, support with applications, CVs and support with applications and interviews for post-graduate study. These were available through booked appointments and also via email.

Breakdown of one to one/small group activities

Activity	07/08	06/07
Guidance/Booked appointments	45	42
Email Queries	68	85
Mock Interviews (hrs)	11 (hrs)	19 (hrs)

Contact with Staff

- A meeting with Mr Frank Kelly was held on 15 May 2008 to review careers provision for 2007/08 and plan for the next academic year. A number of action points were agreed.
- A meeting with Mrs Paula Wright was held on 17 June 2008 to review careers provision for 2007/08 and plan for the next academic year. A number of action points were agreed.
- Attended Early Childhood Studies Course Consultative Committee meeting on 17 November 2007 where the new degree structure was tabled.

General

- Developed information for Student Support Centre website and noticeboards in liaison with Joanne Bell. This included:
 - Information for part time students.
 - PGCE information.
 - Programme of events & activities (SUC & QUB).
 - Links to relevant articles and other websites.
- Wrote an "Options with your degree in ..." series for ECS and HLS.
- Researched and produced 4 graduate profiles for ECS and HLS.
- Promoted graduate email system to final year students.
- Developed content for leaflets for 1st yr students and general information leaflets in liaison with Joan Francis.
- Met with 1st year students during Welcome and Orientation week.
- Contributed to Student Support Centre stand at Fresher's Fair.

Future Activities Planned for 2008/09 (BA/BSc Programmes)

- Develop and deliver the Certificate in Career Management & Employability Skills to all year 2 HLS and ECS students. This will include:
 - Input from guest speakers such as graduates, potential employers, and voluntary work providers.
 - Input on Entrepreneurship from Mr David Gibson, School of Management & Economics, QUB. (HLS)
- Develop input for part-time HLS students.
- Extend graduate profiles (ECS & HLS).
- Continue to offer one-to-one guidance, interview skills training, support with applications, CVs and applications for post-graduate study.
- Continued placement support for BSc HLS students including placement visits and developmental work.
- Develop the existing range of paper-based and electronic careers information and resources in particular information on opportunities for postgraduate study (HLS & ECS).
- Continue to have an input into the relevant course team meetings.
- Market events at Careers, Employability & Skills at QUB to students.

4. Occupational Health – Miss C Matthews

The QUB Occupational Health Service is a core and valuable component of the Student Support Centre. The service comprises of one Occupational Health Senior Medical Officer based at Queen's University Belfast and one Occupational Health Nurse who is available at the Stranmillis Campus from 9.00am–12.30pm (Monday–Friday).

The QUB Occupational Health Service has continued to provide a range of specialised services for staff, students and visitors in 2007/08 which includes on-site emergency first aid, sickness absence management, pre-engagement screening, health promotion, counselling referrals for staff to CareCall and an advisory service to Human Resources, Heads of Departments and staff with line management duties.

A number of policies and procedures have been created and implemented to support the Occupational Health Service Level Agreement which is in place between QUB and Stranmillis University College. These policies are available for staff and students to view/download from the Student Support Centre website and include:

- Emergency First Aid guidelines
- First aid arrangements for examinations
- Sickness Absence Management
- Management Referral of staff and students
- Self Referral
- Health and Safety Information for Elective Attachments
- Emergency Appointments

4.1 Pre-engagement Health Declaration Screening for Staff

The Occupational Health Service offers medical screening of pre-employment forms which enables any medical or psychological health needs to be identified and addressed by the University College. The provision of this service is in accordance with statutory requirements to make 'reasonable provision and adjustments for staff with disabilities and health needs'. The Human Resources Manager is updated on any recommendations following the pre-employment screening.

- 17 screenings of pre-employment health declaration.
- 7 staff attended for fitness medicals prior to taking up post

4.2 Pre-engagement Health Declaration Screening for Students

The Occupational Health Service offers medical screening of pre-engagement forms. The Occupational Health Nurses liaises with the student's GP/specialist consultant, Student Support Officer and Heads of Departments to update them on any adjustments or requirements for the student.

A summary of work to date includes:

- Provision of individual occupational health appointments to assess any existing health issues or medical history for over 250 new first year students.
- Review appointments made for 25 students with identified health needs and appropriate referrals to the Senior Medical Officer and Disability Services.
- Specialist medical reports requested for a number of students for further information to enable appropriate provision to be made at Stranmillis University College.

4.3 Sickness Absence Management

This service is offered to staff who have been absent from work due to illness and provides the necessary support and adjustments to help them return to work. Patients are referred to Occupational Health by Human Resources.

- 48 appointments including management and self referral.
- 11 patients attended for ongoing review appointments.
- A number of staff were referred to Dr Todd at QUB Occupational Health for ongoing medical review.
- A number of staff were referred to Carecall confidential counselling service.

4.4 Advice and Interventions for Erasmus/International Students

36 incoming Erasmus students attended for Occupational Health Welcome and Orientation talks. The students were provided with an opportunity to discuss any health concerns, were advised on support services available and assisted to register with a local GP and dentist.

- 11 incoming Erasmus students attended for follow up nursing appointments.

4.5 Blood Pressure Review Appointments

The Occupational Health Nurse provides blood pressure review appointments to staff and students to promote well-being and to offer a convenient service on-site. A number of staff members had their blood pressure measurements reviewed bi-monthly and documentation of their recordings were provided to their GPs every 6 months.

4.6 Smoking Cessation Programme

In response to the April 2007 legislation prohibiting smoking in public places, a smoking cessation programme was available for all staff and students throughout the year. Carbon monoxide testing, lung function tests, lifestyle advice and fitness programmes were provided.

- Two staff members have successfully completed the programme and have successfully ceased smoking.

4.7 First Aid Administration

The Occupational Health Nurse provided on-site first aid, attended incidents and referred patients to the Accident & Emergency Department or their GP as appropriate. Consultation took place with the Vice Principal (Corporate Services) and Estates Department to plan the Emergency First Aid room in the newly refurbished Orchard Building. Furnishing and stocking of this new facility will be completed by September 2008. The list of University College first aiders updated and displayed on designated notice boards.

4.8 Examinations

The Occupational Health Nurse is responsible for providing on-site medical assistance during the examination periods, including providing first-aid assistance and ensuring follow-up communication to Heads of Departments for students with mitigating circumstances.

- Guidance Policy provided for invigilators, Examinations office and Education Services.
- Follow up communication with Heads of Departments for 11 students with illness or mitigating circumstances.
- Nursing presence at commencement of each morning examination at College Hall. Provision of on-call support for afternoon examinations.

Activities Planned 2008/09

- Continue to offer the range of specialised services for staff and students in 2008/09.
- Healthy Lifestyle Initiatives. A calendar of events will be available from QUB Occupational Health in September 2008 and updated throughout the year. These initiatives will include:
 - Wellbeing screening for all staff
 - Ulster Cancer Foundation smoking cessation clinic
 - Working with the Sports Development Officer to promote events to staff and students
 - Liaising with Students' Representative Council to provide first-aid training to support their role
- Tailor a programme of workshops/events for staff and students following planned consultation with each group.

5. Widening Access and Participation – Ms N Dalton

In Projects 1 and 2 of the Access Agreement Stranmillis University College has identified a number of schools with whom it has worked closely at pre-application stage through to acceptance and progression on its courses. This has been achieved through a variety of approaches and there has been a significant level of interest in application to the University College from these institutions. DEL has commended the University College for its particular effort in Project 2 to recruit more males into Primary School teaching.

5.1 Bursaries and other Financial Support for Students

Financial Support

Bursaries awarded – 2007/08 and 2006/07

Actual 2007/08				Actual 2006/07			
% of population	Number	Rate £	Total £	% of population	Number	Rate £	Total £
18%	90	1,025	92,250	20%	54	1,000	54,000
4%	22	515	11,330	7%	19	500	9,500
22%	112		£103,580	27%	73		£63,500
No. of eligible students – actual			493	No. of eligible students – actual			265

Estimates for the uptake of the bursary were based on the actual uptake of the existing student support grant for the student population in 2005-06. The financial parameters for eligibility broadly represented the parameters for the new arrangements.

The uptake of the bursary was lower than the previous year. It is difficult to establish the reasons for the variance in uptake; however the University College took the following actions to ensure that students were aware of the availability of support:

- a student finance pack was sent at the start of the academic year to all students clearly outlining the support, the criteria for eligibility and how to apply;
- The HEBSS system was reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the year to ensure that students applications were processed within a timely basis;
- Students who had not given consent to share were identified through the HEBSS system and emailed directly to inform them of the availability of the bursary and instructions for completing the process.

The proportion of financial support provided from additional income is 13%, which still exceeds the original OFFA guidelines of 10%.

Halls of Residence Bursary

As part of the Access agreement a Halls of Residence Bursary scheme has been introduced which offers a free halls of residence place for one year. The bursary is available to students who are identified through Project 1 (recruit students from a low social economic background) or Project 2 (recruit males into primary teaching) of the Access agreement. The University College Support Fund committee met on 2nd September 2007 to consider applications against agreed criteria, and it was decided that a bursary would be offered to one applicant.

Halls of Residence Bursary – applications 2007/08

No. of applications	7
Eligibility for Project 1 (recruit students from a low social economic background)	7
Eligibility for Project 2 (recruit males into primary teaching)	0
No. of Bursaries offered	1

5.2 Outreach and Interventions

In 2006 and 2007 a greater number of applications and conditional offers were made to students from schools identified through the TSN initiative and with whom Stranmillis University College has established partnerships. An examination of the academic quality of BEd entrants in particular indicates that academic quality remains very high however further analysis shows the admissions process is appropriately tuned to attract students with alternative qualifications on a full and part-time basis.

The table below records the number of entrants to Stranmillis University College with alternative qualifications to GCE A Levels, eg BTEC, Vocational Qualifications, etc.

Year	Total Entrants	No. with Alternative Qualifications	% of intake
2002	275	86	31%
2003	285	94	33%
2004	295	99	34%
2005	279	76	27%
2006	269	89	33%
2007	244	59	24%

Source: Stranmillis University College Selection Reports 2002 – 2007

5.3 Mature Students

There is a continued monitoring of the age and gender of successful applicants to Stranmillis University College and an effort to recruit mature students through representation at outreach events and in particular through the Institutes of Further Education and the Careers Service of the Department of Employment and Learning. The majority of mature students entering undergraduate programmes gain entry through Foundation (Access) Courses taken at Further Education Colleges. Reports indicate that the retention and completion rates of this group is consistently very high.

The table below records the number of Mature Entrants to Stranmillis University College

Year	Total Entrants	No. of Mature Entrants	% of intake
2002	275	26	9%
2003	285	37	13%
2004	295	33	11%
2005	279	36	13%
2006	269	25	9%
2007	244	18	7%

Source: Stranmillis University College Selection Reports 2002 - 2007

5.4 Communication Skills Centre

The Widening Access budget provided funding for the Communication Skills Centre which is a new initiative set up to provide support for the learning and teaching requirements of all students in the area of communication skills. 12 students were recruited as Peer Tutors and received 10 hours of training in written communication skills, delivered by Dr Matthew Martin and Mr Jonathan Worley of St Mary's University College. The Peer Tutors provide one-to-one support to students in a newly refurbished room in the Central Building.

The Communication Skills Centre opened on 12th November 2007 and was open for five weeks in Semester 1 and eleven weeks in Semester 2. The Centre facilitated requests for 48 appointments from students from all undergraduate programmes and students on international/Erasmus programmes. The use of the Communication Skills Centre by 48 students during its first year is very encouraging. The centre has a clear vision of where it hopes to go during the next academic year and it looks forward to delivering this service with the Peer Tutors.

5.5 Access Agreement Milestones 2006 onwards

A full report on milestones achieved and activities can be found in Appendix 1. This report is summarised below.

Phase 1 - Aspiration Raising

- 8 schools identified and partnerships established.
- Higher education awareness events delivered to post-primary schools and Further Education Colleges.
- Communication Skills Centre opened and study skills offered to current students.
- Easter Revision classes offered on GCSE English and Maths in March 08.
- Males into Teaching scheme launched in December 2007.
- User-friendly financial information made available to prospective students.

Phase 2 - Pre-entry/Admissions

- Open Days organised for prospective students.
- Contributed to QUB taster experiences/open days.
- Admissions Policy revised and approved November 2007.
- Males into Teaching project offered visits to primary schools and shadowing students.

Phase 3 - First semester experience

- Study Skills workshops delivered to current students.
- Relationship established with Northern Bank and presentation provided to current students by Northern Bank/Corporate Services/Students' Union in November 2007.
- Student Ambassadors recruited and male undergraduates volunteered to participate in the Males into Teaching project.

Future Activities Planned 2008/09

- Continue to build relationships with post-primary schools and Further Education Colleges and deliver higher education awareness events.
- Develop the Males into Teaching project and produce a resource for schools to promote the project.
- Work with the Communication Skills Centre to develop online resources for existing students and support the Peer Tutors.
- Build on the success of the Easter Revision school and research expanding the subjects offered for students.

Acknowledgements:

The work of the Student Support Centre has grown in its second year of operation and the services which it provides are increasingly valued by students and staff.

The achievements of the Student Support Centre in its second year of operation must be attributed to a group of professional, dedicated and enthusiastic staff who have developed together as a team to provide a coherent and integrated service to students. The University College also values the significant contribution made by Peer Tutors who were appointed to provide individual tuition to students in the Communication Skills Centre.

We were very sorry to lose Nuala Dalton, our Widening Access Officer at the end of August 2008. Nuala has taken up a post as a lecturer in a school in London. Nuala made a remarkable and unique contribution and initiated a wide range of outreach intervention activities in the implementation of our Access Agreement.

The University College has been fortunate in filling the Widening Access post with a member of academic staff. Dr Brian Cummins, a Post-primary Lecturer has relocated to the Student Support Centre and will spend up to 50% of his time on Widening Access activities.

Mae Watson
Vice Principal (Registrar)
September 2008

Appendix 1 Access Agreement Milestones 2006 onwards

Phase 1 - Aspiration Raising

Activity	Period	Milestones
Identification of schools/building Stranmillis University College/school partnerships	2006/07	8 schools identified
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project 1 (Low Socio-economic groups). Partnerships extended to 45 schools who achieved less than 40% A-C GCSE. A number of conditional offers made. Project 2 (Males into Teaching) schools identified. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Manage and deliver Higher Education awareness events to pupils and parents	2006 onwards	Attendance at events (30 per event)
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 HE events delivered off-campus in 2007/08 to 250 pupils in low achieving schools. Ethnic minority groups/NI Housing Executive community groups invited to make partnerships with Stranmillis University College. Mature students targeted through visits to FE/HE Colleges. 7 HE events delivered to Further Education Colleges in 2007/08. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Provide classes on study skills and key skills to current students	2006 onwards	Measurements of improvement in study/key skills
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Skills Centre opened 12th Nov 07. 12 Peer Tutors trained. 48 individual sessions delivered to students by Peer Tutors in Semester 1 and 2. 4 group workshops provided in Nov/Dec 2007. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Provide activities which will raise self confidence and self esteem	2006 onwards	Activities identified and attendance measured
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widening Access Open Day in March 2007 specifically targeting low achieving schools. Extremely good feedback. Easter revision 2 day course (March 08). 14 low achieving Post-Primary schools invited. 47 students attended. Feedback indicated 100% of students would recommend the course to a friend. Males into Teaching project was launched in Dec 07 on campus. 40 male post-primary students attended. Students met male BEd undergraduate students and male teachers. Feedback indicated that 97% of students thought the event was useful/very useful. Workshops delivered by Student Support Officer to current students on raising self-esteem. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Prepare Stranmillis University College information packs for parents and pupils (including funding info.)	2006 onwards	Specially developed info packs
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> User-friendly financial information made available in a variety of formats including CD and online. Bursary information provided and students are encouraged to avail of the Bursaries. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Web-site reviewed, content management system, compliant with disability legislation	2006 onwards	Content management system, DDA compliant
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new user-friendly website has been launched in Feb 2008 which is compliant with DDA regulations. A new Content Management System is in place to update the new website. 		

Phase 2 - Pre-entry/Admissions

Activity	Period	Milestones
Arrange special Open Days and taster experiences	2007 onwards	Attendance at events (100 students)
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project 1 (low socio-economic groups) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widening Access Open Day in March 2007 for students from low socio-economic groups Maths/English Easter Revision course in March 2008. Project 2 Males into Teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project launched Dec 2007. 40 males attended. 97% thought event was useful/very useful. 59% would like to participate in future events. Contributor to QUB taster experiences/Open Days. Feedback from Widening Participation Unit at QUB extremely positive. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Set admissions targets for each project	2007	Senior Management in consultation with DE
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions Policy revised and approved November 2007. Emphasis is placed on recommendations of Schwartz Report. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
For Project 2 (Males into Teaching) Visits to Primary Schools/working as classroom assistant/shadowing male teachers	April 08	16 students
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 08. 6 students shadowed male BEd undergraduates on teaching practice in Belfast primary schools. 		

Phase 3 - First semester experience

Activity	Period	Milestones
Enhance study skills support programme throughout the year for all students who have identified needs.	2007	Study Skills programme in place
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Study Skills workshops delivered to Yr 1 Post-Primary, Yr 1 HLS and Yr 4 in 07/08. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Develop Personal Development Plans Introduced	2008 onwards	
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing University College wide initiative 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Funding and Debt Management Seminars	2008 onwards	Number of students attending seminars (100 each seminar)
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with Northern Bank established for 2007/08. USB key issued to all new students at Welcome & Orientation in Sept 2007 which included information on Northern Bank services. Northern Bank offered financial advice to students at Registration and Enrolment in Sept 2007. Northern Bank/Corporate Services/Students' Union presentation in Nov 2007 – all students invited. Information provided on financial advice, bursaries and support. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Offer buddying and Early Warning Systems for identifying students at risk	January 2008	Systems in place
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Skills Centre opened in Nov 2007. Promotional literature and a website produced. Staff and students made aware of Referral system. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Establish Student Ambassador Scheme	2006	System in place
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Student Ambassadors recruited in Feb 2007. Student Ambassadors met with pupils from low-achieving schools at Widening Access Open Day in March 2007. All Student Ambassadors received Child Protection training. 7 BEd Primary males are participating in the Males into Teaching project. 		

Activity	Period	Milestones
Extension of Professional Careers Provision to include BEd students. Careers Workshops.	2006	Number of BEd students supported in seeking employment
Summary Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of workshops delivered and support provided. 		