



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

STUDENT SUPPORT CENTRE END OF YEAR REPORT

2008-2009

End of Year Report 2009-10

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Contacts

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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 – Dr Brian Cummins

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.

Promotion of the Student Support Centre

Before coming to Stranmillis new students received an information pack containing leaflets and documentation outlining the work of the Student Support Centre.

During Welcome and Orientation week students met with the Student Support Centre staff on their tour of the University College campus also during introductory talks. This ensured that new students were able to meet staff, were made aware of the services provided by the Student Support Centre and knew where it was located. During registration they also received USB keys containing the Student Guide 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 web pages 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.
- **QUB** 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.

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.

2. Counselling and Disability Services - Dr Brian Booth

Counselling and Disability Services aims to be a comprehensive, responsive and readily accessible service that promotes the academic, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of all students at Stranmillis University College.

The service provides emotional and practical support to students in order that their concerns are managed in a way that does not compromise attainment of their educational potential. The service aims to be the first point of call for all students at SUC and support is provided by professionally trained support, advisory and counselling staff, working within the remit of the university's confidentiality policy.

On occasions, where external specialist expertise is required, the service will arrange for students to access assistance. The service strives to promote diversity and inclusiveness and will not discriminate against individuals on the grounds of race, culture, social class, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

Use of counselling and disability Services continues to flourish and there has been an overall increase of approximately **13%** in the number of students helped by the service. There has been a healthy increase in the number of contacts with other departments of the University College, 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 **11 %** of the student population contacting the service for support. As with the previous year this figure compares favourably with the national averages.

The increasing use of the service may be accounted for by the fact that it is more embedded in the university culture as evidenced by the increase in referrals from previous users of the service. Also use has been made of active outreach activities with students who might benefit from availing of the service.

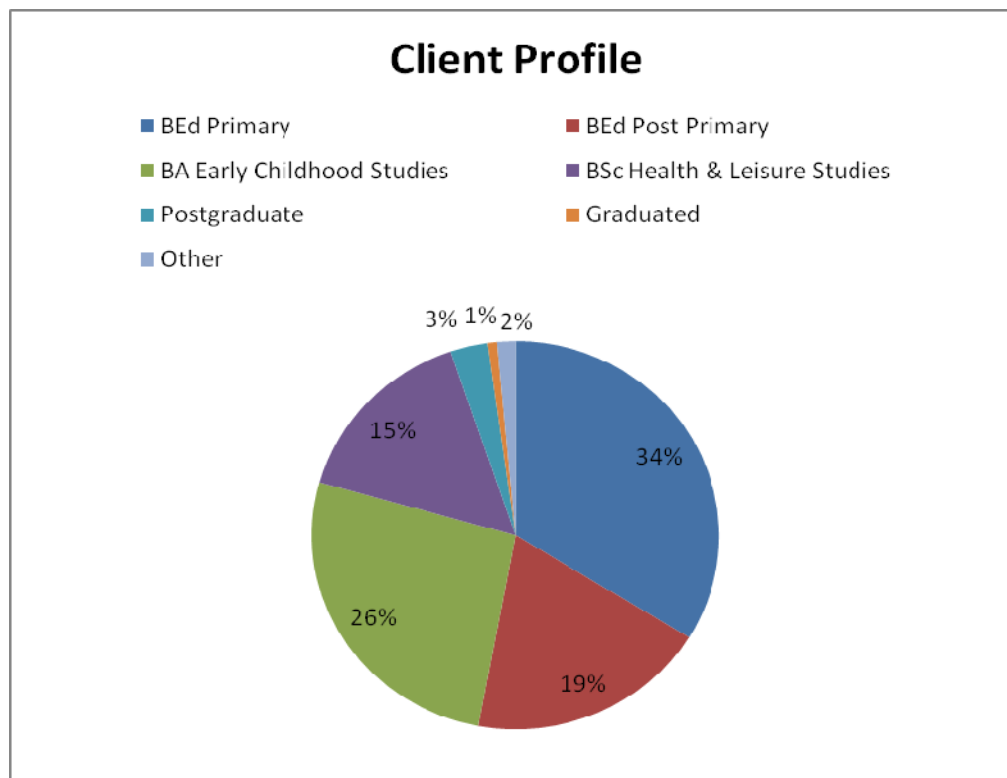
In addition there has been close collaboration with occupational health in identifying students who may require support. This was done at the pre-enrollment stage using the health declaration form.

2.1 Counselling Services

This report aims to inform colleagues about the work of the Counselling Service during the period August 2008 to August 2009. 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 and one evening per week. 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.

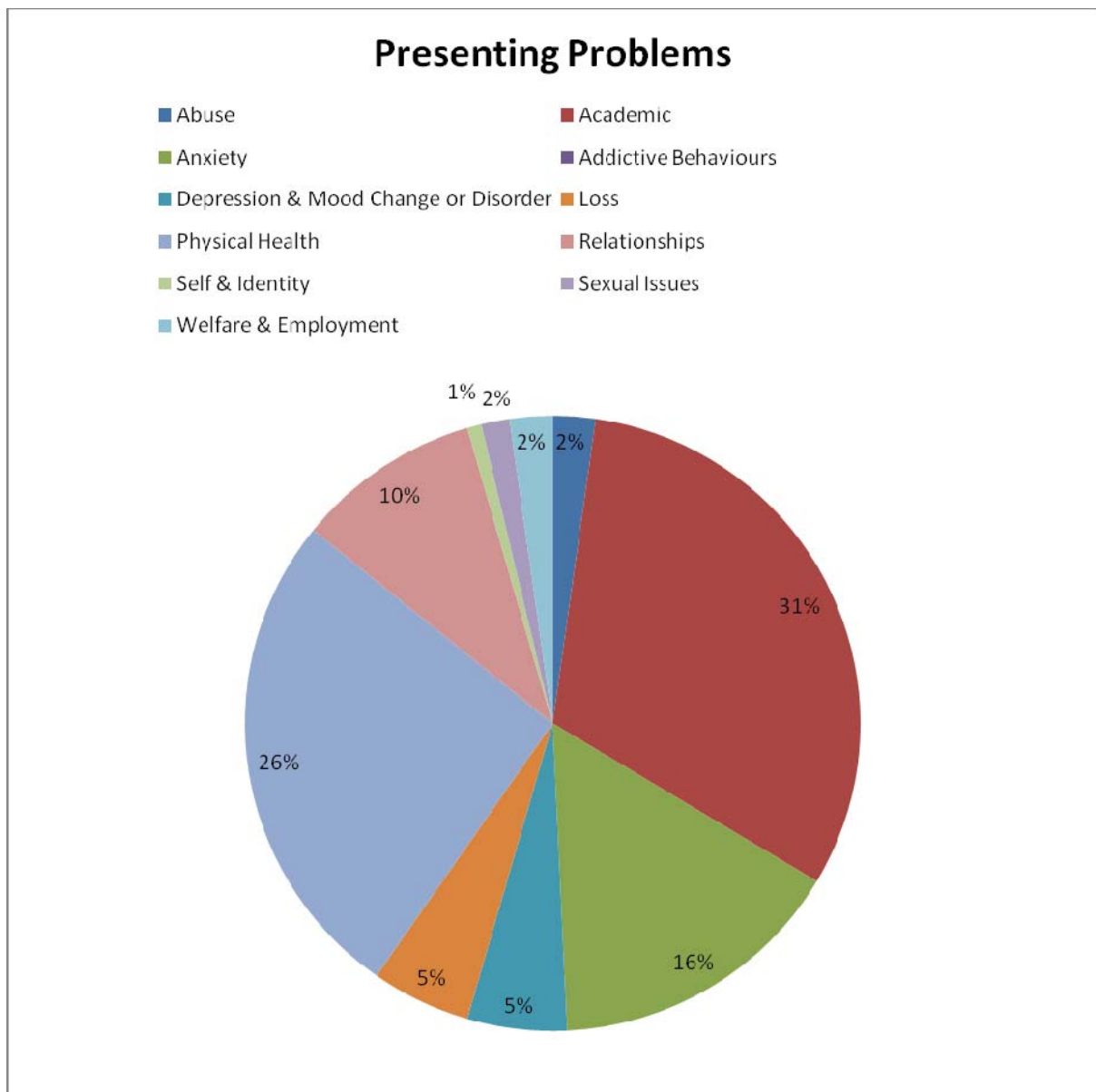
What courses our clients are taking



The chart above shows the distribution of students who access the service from the various courses. This distribution reflects the fact that most of our students are on teacher-training courses, although there has been an increase in the number of students from Health & Leisure and Early Childhood Studies.

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 being the main concern. There has however been a reduction in the number of students presenting in this category and this may be due to some academic concerns being addressed by the Communication Skills Centre. Additionally, while anxiety and relationship issues were presented at similar levels as the previous year, physical health issues have increased. There was also a rise in students presenting with anxiety.



2.2 Disability Service

2.2.1 Introduction

Stranmillis University College is committed to developing an environment that is inclusive, fair, open, and welcomes individuals from diverse groups. Equality and diversity are promoted, valued and encouraged at all levels of the university college and all its functions. The ethos is underpinned by legislation which, in particular, prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities and places a responsibility on the institution to make reasonable adjustments in order to accommodate support needs. This means that as well as actively discouraging discrimination against students with disabilities, Stranmillis University College is committed to providing equal access and academic adjustments (eg exam and assignment arrangements) for students with disabilities in order to increase their opportunities at university.

2.2.2 Support for Students with Disabilities

Students who have access needs, often arising from various disabilities and specific learning difficulties meet with the College Disability Officer in the first instance. All students are encouraged to get in touch at an early stage in order that the necessary support is in place as close to the start of their course as possible.

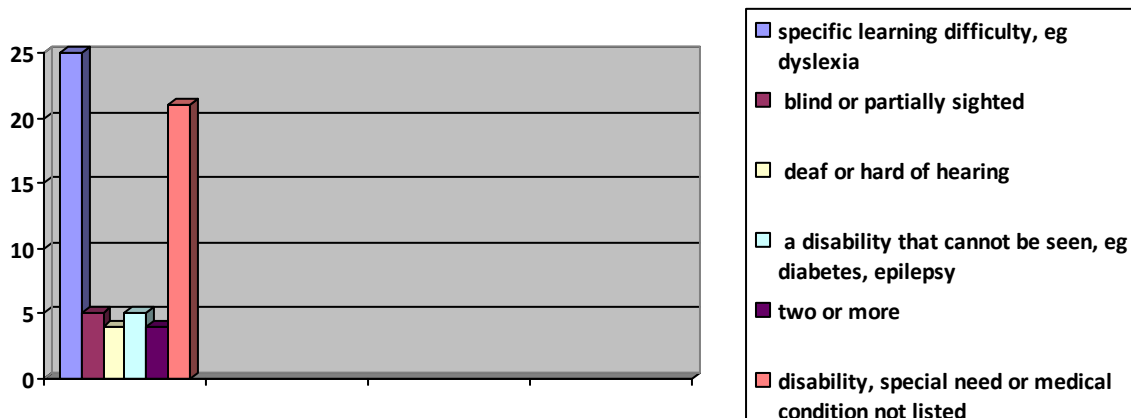
The Disability Officer has a key role in co-ordinating the following services for prospective and current students who have access needs.

- Offering one-to-one consultations to discuss detailed individual requirements.
- Making referrals for diagnostic tests, eg to an educational psychologist.
- Giving advice and assistance about contacting the Education & Library Board to apply for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)
- Arranging appointments with QUB Disability Service for DSA assessments
- Arranging appointments with Occupational Health.
- Liaising with Tutors, Advisers of Studies, Heads of Departments and other University College departments to arrange reasonable adjustments and ensuring that maximum support is made available.
- Keeping in regular contact with students to review support requirements and to obtain student feedback on the effectiveness of the support. Students can apply for a DSA which will enable them to purchase relevant equipment

such as a computer with screen magnification, and the additional support they may need. The latter could include extra time for examinations and the use of a computer in exams, extended library loans, arrangements with lectures regarding handouts and lecture notes, or permission to record lectures. The Library also has a range of equipment, eg spellcheckers and Dictaphones which students may borrow until their own DSA funded equipment arrives.

2.2.3 Student Profiles

Disability Services identified **68 students** over the academic year who have a disability/medical condition. Of these **53 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 half of students who received on-going support had a Specific Learning Difficulty or Dyslexia, although this represents a significant increase in numbers the trend remains 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 QUB Register of Support Providers.

The second largest category “Other disability” includes students with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and ME. This is another category which has continued to increase during this academic year. The number of students with physical mobility and mental health difficulties was small.

2.3 University College Wide Initiatives

2.3.1 Suicide Awareness and Prevention

THE prevention of suicide among young people in NI continues to be a priority. The SSC working in close collaboration with the SU was able to offer a 1 day "life Saves" course aimed at all students in the university . The course took place on the 11/2/09 and the event was very well received with 30 students taking part. The certificated training was provided by PIPS (Public Initiative for the Prevention of Suicide) and is particularly relevant as all our graduates will be entering occupations where they may well have a great deal of contact with vulnerable young people. The success of this valuable training was greatly dependent on the hard work that the SU put into promoting this event.

2.3.2 Responding to Student Emergencies

The Service also aims to provide help and advice for any staff who have any concerns about students and who wish to know more about how to respond appropriately to Student Emergencies. In addition to the "Helping Students in Distress" protocol all university staff received a copy of the "Cause for concern " leaflet with accompanying referral form.

2.4 Workshops , Lectures and Psychoeducation

In addition to the aforementioned course on suicide prevention the service was pleased to have been invited to make an input on bereavement and on counselling skills to undergraduates as part of their teaching input. In view of the low turnout for previous SSC workshops and seminars it is perceived that providing targeted inputs like this is a more efficient and effective way to deliver educational and training input for students.

There may also be an opportunity in the future to contribute to the university's Additionality programme in this aspect.

All students were mailed material aimed at helping them manage examination stress. This included access to a well respected multi-media presentation on relaxation training.

2.4.1. Evening Session

The service was made available for one evening during the week, and operated from the SU building. There was a modest take-up of this facility.

2.4.2 Mental Health and Students

In view of our size and in view of the impending merger with QUB the service has been collaborating with the Head of Student Welfare at QUB on this issue. It is hoped that a mental health Policy will be in place by the next academic year. Also it is anticipated that the counselling service and occupational health will be providing staff workshops on mental health issues.

In the meantime copies of "Mind your Head" a guide to student mental health, published by the Public Health Agency was distributed to students.

2.5 Consultation Service to Staff

This aspect of the service has continued to develop and there has been positive feedback about the service from the LSS committee. There continues to be a significant contact with students' parents about Student Support Issues. Parents are more involved in their children's educational activities than hitherto and it is reported that a combination of fees and mobile communications is responsible for this state of affairs. Students are asked to give written consent allowing the service to speak with their parents.

2.6 Future Activities

- Explore the embedding of suicide prevention training in the additionality program
- Set up online access for students and staff to web-based psychoeducational training on: Stress, Anxiety, Depression and Sleep problems
- Work with the Communication Skills Centre to provide capability in working with neurodiversity among students.
- Enhancing the resource for neurodiversity eg **Inspiron** software
- Collaboration with Occupational Health to develop educational materials on responsible alcohol consumption.

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) have been appointed for each department:

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

The Careers Service aims to work closely with Careers Liaison Advisers to ensure the provision of CEIG within BEd, BA and BSc programmes. Collaboration with 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

Careers provision for Initial Teacher Education programmes continues to run at Stranmillis University for its third consecutive year. The service is facilitated by 1 part time Careers Adviser providing a dedicated service. 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.

Work with Students

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

The Certificate in Career Management and Employability Skills is in its second year for Year 3s. The programme is accredited by Queen's University and is designed to enhance students' employability skills and increase their knowledge of the graduate labour market. The content of the sessions are tailored to meet the needs of the students. Student presentations, skills awareness and preparation for the job market form the basis of the content of the 2 hours sessions during semester 1. The presentation sessions allowed the students to practise and enhance their delivery style. Most students found this aspect of the Certificate a worthwhile exercise. External speakers also added value to the content, in particular a speaker formally from the General Teaching Council provided students with relevant information about the job market and the first year of teaching. The content is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it continues to adapt to developments within the Institution. For example enterprising skills ran as a session last year however it was removed from this year's schedule. This decision was taken as the current cohort of Year 3s successfully completed an enterprising programme in Year 2s. The course 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. 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 Department and all Year 3 students were encouraged to take part in the initiative. Twelve students met the accreditation criteria and attended a combined award ceremony with Health and Leisure Studies and Early Childhood Studies in February presented by Dr Heaslett. Feedback from students found the majority of aspects of the programme very helpful and relevant to their studies.

Action:

- Move the speaker from GTC to the beginning of the programme to set the scene.
- Ensure students have a clear vision about the Certificate and is clearly marketing to the three subject areas.

Year 4 Post-Primary – Careers Programme

The programme for Year 4s concentrated on preparing students for the impending job market. The programme continues to run as a phased programme spanning over four weeks and supported with practice interviews delivered by principals. External speakers presented a unique insight into the recruitment process at week 7 for each of the Post-Primary areas. Students were given the opportunity to practise their interview skills in February. A small number of students availed of this opportunity and found the exercise extremely helpful. An outline of the programme is detailed below:

Week (Semester 1)	Session	Numbers Attended
Week 4	Application Forms and CVs	34
Week 5	Practical session on application forms and CVS	10
Week 6	Interview Preparation	34
Week 7	Subject Speakers	3 subgroups

Action:

- Start the programme with a principal setting the scene.
- Apply a strict deadline for submission of application forms and consider forwarding directly to the interviewers (principals).
- Run the practice interviews in the same semester as the first part of the programme.

Year 4 Primary

Planning careers activities for this cohort should be reviewed for next year.

Week (Semester 1)	Session	Numbers Attended
Week 11	CVs	14
Week 12	Application Forms	10

Action:

- Establish the career needs for Y3 and Y4 BEd Primary students with CEIG contact.

PGCE

A session on CVs and application forms ran on Wednesday, 3 June for PGCE students.

Action:

- Continue to run careers activities with this cohort of students.

Individual Careers Guidance – Initial Teacher Education Programmes

Individual careers guidance can take place in three different forms as indicated in the following table. Figures for the current year show a significant increase in all areas from the previous year.

Year	Guidance Interviews	Email Guidance	Telephone Guidance
2008/2009	35	38	29
2007/2008	19	16	10
2006/2007	14	26	Not available

Other Careers Activities:

Royal Navy

The Royal Navy event ran in Stranmillis University College for the first time. The opportunity was open to all students and priority was given to final year students. Responses were very slow from students; as a result the first years from Health and Leisure degree were targeted and given permission from class. Twenty-three students attended the one day event and found it enjoyable and informative.

Health and Leisure

- Assisted with practice interviews for Y2 Health and Leisure students as part of the CMES programme.

Work with Employers

- Attended a recruitment session hosted by Kent Council in the Wellington Hotel in April 2009 to discuss teaching opportunities in the Kent region.
- Attended the Northern Ireland Recruitment Fair in June 2009 to keep abreast of opportunities in the graduate market.

Work with Staff

- In line with QAA Code of Practice, a Careers Liaison Adviser has been appointed in each academic department. These are:

BEd Primary Ms Denise Elliot

BEd Post-Primary Miss Audrey Curry

The link between academic and careers staff continues to be a worthwhile one to promote opportunities and events within the relevant departments.

- Met with Audrey Curry (Careers Liaison Adviser) and Patricia Eaton from Post-Primary in October 2009 to finalise the content of the Certificate in Career Management and Employability Skills and the structure of the Year 4 Post-Primary programme.
- Attended the LSS committee meeting in January to market career activities.

Work to promote Careers at Stranmillis University College

- Greeted all first year students in the Student Support Centre to highlight the service as part of the induction programme.
- Highlighted relevant opportunities to students via email to include voluntary, work experience, vacancies and further study.

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/electronic careers information and resources and 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 AND HEALTH & LEISURE

MRS D MASSON

Work with Students

CEIG is embedded in the curriculum of both degree pathways through the delivery of the Certificate in Career Management & Employability Skills which is compulsory for all 2nd year students on both courses. This is very much the core of the delivery of CEIG.

Certificate in Career Management & Employability Skills				
	2008/09		2007/08	
Subject	Numbers commencing	Numbers completing	Numbers commencing	Numbers completing
BA ECS	48	35	39	26
BSc HLS	39	30	48	39

In addition to this a number of one off talks and workshops were provided to meet the needs of students from the two degree programmes. The content of these sessions was agreed in liaison with relevant Careers Liaison Advisers.

In addition to the above, a complementary range of services including one-to-one guidance, interview skills training, support with applications, CVs and applications for post-graduate study is also provided.

	BA EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES
YEAR 1	INDUCTION TOUR – WELCOME TO THE CAREERS SERVICE "Making the most of your time at University" "Developing employability skills through placement."
YEAR2	Making module choices and the impact on future career planning. Successful PGCE Applications Certificate in Career Management & Employability Skills. 12 weeks x 2 hrs
YEAR 3	Postgraduate study – the options. Practice Interview Day- facilitated by employers and ECS staff
YEAR 4 P-T	Postgraduate study – the options – video conference to students in Omagh campus.
OPEN TO ALL YEARS	Options with your BA Early Childhood Studies PGCE applications outside Northern Ireland. Eddie Ferguson ATL

	BSC HEALTH & LEISURE STUDIES
YEAR 1	Induction Tour – Welcome to the Careers Service “Making the most of your time at University” “Developing employability skills through placement.”
YEAR 2	Certificate in Career Management & Employability Skills. 12 weeks x 2 hrs Placement preparation. Assessment of placement Preparations PGCE applications outside Northern Ireland. Eddie Ferguson ATL
YEAR 3	Postgraduate study – the options Successful PGCE Applications Placement preparation. Assessment of placement Preparations
YEAR 2 P-T	Introductory talk highlighting support available from Careers Service
OPEN TO ALL YEARS	PGCE applications outside Northern Ireland. Eddie Ferguson ATL

Breakdown of one to one/small group activities

Activity	08/09	07/08
Guidance/Booked appointments	56	45
Email Queries	58	68
Mock Interviews (hrs)	13 (hrs)	11 (hrs)
Drop in sessions (hrs) (PGCE apps)	2 (hrs)	3 (hrs)

Contact with Staff

The role of the Careers Liaison Adviser is now well established. A number of meetings with Mr Frank Kelly and Mrs Paula Wright were held throughout the year to plan and review careers provision. These have led to the following outcomes:

- A Practice Interview Day was held for year 3 ECS students on 26th February 2009. Students submitted an application form completed against a job description which reflected a potential job role and interviews were facilitated by ECS staff and employers from the early year's sector. 35 students out of a possible 40 participated in the event and feedback from students indicated that they found the event very beneficial. A formal report on the event was presented at the Early Childhood Studies Consultative Committee on 11th May 2009.

- A session open to all ECS students on "Options with your degree" was held on 10th March 2009 highlighting potential future employers and job roles outside the education sector.
- More focused work with first year HLS students through a session held on 27th November 2008 looking at "Making the most of your time at university" with input from outside speakers highlighting opportunities for voluntary work.
- An initial meeting with part time HLS students to highlight the services available was held on 14th October 2008. However to date no PT students have accessed the Careers Service.
- Sessions were held for final year ECS and HLS students aimed at encouraging students to think beyond PGCE courses and to consider other options for postgraduate study.

The Careers Service has been closely involved in a number of meetings with the HLS course team and Deirdre Deery, Careers, Employability & Skills, QUB, Karen King, Institute of Agri-Food and Land Use, QUB and Marc Forte, Institute of Lifelong Learning, QUB in relation to the development and accreditation of work placement in the Dept of Health & Leisure Studies.

Future Activities Planned for 2009/10 (BA/BSc Programmes)

- Develop and deliver the Certificate in Career Management & Employability Skills to all year 2 HLS and ECS students. This will include:
- Consolidate on yr3 ECS Practice Interview Day.
- Follow up input with part-time students as they move forward in the career planning process.
- Continue to use external speakers to cover PGCE applications, entrepreneurship, and voluntary work.
- Develop alumni contacts for potential input into programmes.
- 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.
- 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 specialized services for staff, students and visitors in 2008/09. This includes on-site emergency first aid, sickness absence management, pre-engagement screening, health promotion, counselling referrals for staff to Care Call 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 or 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.

- 8 screenings of pre–employment health declaration.
- 4 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 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 students with disabilities and health needs’.

A summary of work to date includes:

- Provision of 248 individual occupational health assessments of year 1 students to enable assessment of any existing health issues or medical history for over new first year students.
- Review appointments made for 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.
- Liaising 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.

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.

- 37 appointments including management and self referral.
- 8 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

A formal arrangement is in place with Occupational Health and Stranmillis International Office. Erasmus students attend the Student Support centre during their induction week for Occupational Health Welcome and Orientation talks. 34 students were provided with information of the support services available to them, discussed any health concerns they had and were assisted to register with the local GP and dentist.

- 21 appointments were booked by Erasmus students who attended for follow up nursing appointments and referrals to the GP.

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. Patients can have appointments to suit their working needs but are advised to attend on a weekly basis. A number of staff members had their blood pressure measurements reviewed and documentation of their recordings were provided to their GPs. Health literature and advice was also provided when examining the patient's risk factors associated with raised blood pressure.

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 run throughout the year. Carbon monoxide testing, lung function tests, lifestyle advice and fitness programmes were offered. The smoking policy is under amendment following legislative changes from the of the 2007 NI Smoking in Public Places Prohibition.

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. The list of University College first aiders updated and displayed on designated notice boards. Consultation with Stranmillis Human Resources and Queens Occupational health has resulted in the provision of additional training of first aid personnel covering Stranmillis campus.

Further Activities Planned for 2009/2010

Alcohol awareness workshops: This will be delivered with the Stranmillis Counselling service and Brian Booth. It will include a literature drop in halls and the canteen. It will also include a health promotion stall in Chatz restaurant where students will be encouraged to participate in the activities.

Erasmus Students: Specific health information leaflets will be created for Erasmus students. This will include contact details from out of hours GP, local health services and emergency contacts. These leaflets will be displayed in the kitchens and each Erasmus will be provided with a copy during their Occupational Health welcome and orientation.

Halls of Residence Policy: A meeting is scheduled with the Halls wardens, International Office, Halls, Disability Office, Security and Estates this is to create a combined Halls Policy amongst these support services. It will include arrangements for first aid cover in Halls, emergency first aid arrangements, transport for students who are unwell and roles and responsibilities.

At risk register : Collaborative working with Brian Booth is planned on this area. Following pre-enrolment assessment of each first year student, those with physical and mental health issues will be identified and registered on a confidential medical data base. With the student's informed consent, appropriate support will be provided to the student from in collaborative working between Occupational Health and counselling and disability services.

5. Widening Access and Participation - Dr Brian Cummins

During 2008/09, through its 'Widening Access' provision and associated activity, the University College continued to successfully, *'recruit, sustain and support students from the widest possible range of educational, social and cultural backgrounds...'* (Stranmillis University College, Strategic Objective 5). The revised College Access Agreement (2007) set out two central projects for Widening Access within Stranmillis:

- Project 1 – *Attracting more students from under-represented groups*
- Project 2 – *Males into Teaching: Role Modelling Scheme*

In Projects 1 and 2 of the Access Agreement Stranmillis University College has worked with a number of schools and FE Colleges at pre-application stage through to acceptance and progression on its courses. This has been achieved through a variety of approaches and there continues to be a significant level of interest in application to the University College from these institutions. The University College is now making significant strides in relation to Project 2 to recruit more males into Primary School teaching.

Commitment and success within Widening Access in Stranmillis University College is set in the context of an HE institution which has been held in very high esteem throughout its academic history, particularly in the field of teacher education. Each year the number of applicants for each degree programme is considerably more than places available and it is clearly evident that this situation has a considerable impact on Widening Participation within the context of Stranmillis. Widening Access activity in the University College essentially includes:

- Establishing and Maintaining Formal School Partnerships
- The Student Ambassador Scheme
- Campus Visits and Open Days
- The Communications Skills Centre
- Summer School Provision
- Mentoring by Stranmillis Students
- The GCSE Easter Revision School
- Information Presentations
- Males into Teaching Initiatives
- N.I. Housing Executive Education Forum
- Bursary Support for Students.

Full details of Stranmillis commitment to Widening Access in relation to the above areas and also how Widening Participation is incorporated within the College mission and teaching and learning provision, can be found in the College's *2009 DEL Strategic Return*. The following report provides an outline summary of Widening Access activity in Stranmillis University College during 2008-09.

5.1 Bursaries and other Financial Support for Students

Stranmillis University College does not differentiate between any of its courses and offers bursaries to all students enrolled who receive a *Higher Education Maintenance Grant* through a scheme which operates on an incremental scale. Students are assessed on the basis of income as determined by their Education & Library Board and receive a bursary according to the following banded scale using the amount of residual household income as the determining factor:

Income Level	Bursary
£17,910 or less	£1,050
£17,911 - £22,910	£525
Over £22,910	No bursary

Details of the uptake of bursaries within Stranmillis University College are highlighted below:

Expenditure on bursaries and scholarships	2008-09 (£)
For students with household incomes up to £18,360	£152,775
For students with household incomes between £18,360 and £39,305 (monitoring threshold to be confirmed)	£18,638
For students from other under-represented groups where no income detail is known	N/A
Non-OFFA-countable support, for students where no income detail is known and no WP categorisation is applicable (optional)	N/A

Bursaries awarded – 2008/09 and 2007/08

Actual 2008/09				Actual 2007/08			
% of population	Number	Rate £	Total £	% of population	Number	Rate £	Total £
21%	146	1050	152,775	20%	96	1,025	97,887.50
5 %	37	525	18,638	4%	17	515	8,755.00
26%	183		171,413	24%	113		106,642.50
No. of eligible students – actual			692	No. of eligible students – actual			489

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 September 5th 2008 and considered applications against agreed criteria, and it was decided that a bursary would be offered to 3 applicants.

Halls of Residence Bursary – applications 2008/09

No. of applications	7
Eligibility for Project 1 (recruit students from a low social economic background)	3
Eligibility for Project 2 (recruit males into primary teaching)	0
No. of Bursaries offered	3

5.2 Outreach and Interventions to realise Projects 1&2

To achieve the goals of the College Widening Access projects, the College Access Agreement recognised the need to, 'develop further, and enhance partnerships for all degree pathways with external institutions, organisations and professional groups'. With this in mind, throughout 2008/09, numerous small and large group presentations were delivered from the large-scale keynote 'Teaching' presentation at 2009 NI UCAS convention, to various seminars/ workshops/ mock interviews in a variety of individual post-primary schools.

With regard to percentage of students from NS-SEC 4-7 (Project 1 Under-represented socio-economic groups) it can be seen that there has been a slight improvement during 2007-08 (most recent figures available) and the figure is closer to the benchmark.

STRANMILLIS	Total full-time undergraduate entrants	Number from NS-SEC classes 4,5,6 & 7	Percent from NS-SEC classes 4,5,6 & 7	Bench-mark (%)	Number/percent with known data
2007/2008	240	65	34.9	35.2	220/99.5
2006/2007	260	70	33.5	35.2	235/98.7
2005/2006	275	70	32.9	34.6	165/68.9

Students with Alternative Qualifications

The majority of students on all degree programmes offered within the College enter with 'A' Levels, this is particularly true of the BEd:

	Men		Women		Total	
	Pr.	Pp.	Pr.	Pp.	Pr.	Pp.
4 A-Levels	0	0	4	1	4	1
3 A-Levels + 1 AS-Level	10	4	42	14	52	18
3 A-Levels	5	11	17	13	22	24
Alternatives	2	6	10	1	12	7
Total	17	21	73	29	90	50

Nonetheless the College fully recognises that equivalent qualifications (demonstrated in the College Selection Report 2009 above) may be more frequent amongst the target Project 1 groupings. Overall, during 2008-09 large presentations and small group seminars were therefore undertaken with 'A' Level, Diploma and ACCESS mature students at SERC and BMC in relation to attaining an Initial Teacher Education place. A very successful *Access Open Evening* took place in December 2008 with the result that a number of the audience who attended that night are now enrolled in the College.

GCSE Mathematics Revision School

To provide additional practical support to pupils in Project 1 a very successful 2-day *GCSE Mathematics Revision School* for 40 pupils from a number of non-selective post-primary schools was held during Easter 2009. Evaluations of the course were most encouraging. In addition, 6th form boys with an interest in following a teaching career participated as peer tutors during the Easter School. This enabled these volunteers to enhance their experience of working in an education environment.

Partnering with QUB Widening Participation

Throughout 2008/09 the College also liaised closely with the Widening Participation (WP) team at QUB to contribute to the Summer School and various QUB WP Events. An open morning for NI Careers Service Advisers was held in June 2009 highlighting the opportunities that exist in the College for mature students on our part-time HLS course.

Males into Teaching

Project 2 under the Stranmillis Widening Access Strategy is derived from the clear recognition that there is an under representation of males applying for degrees in teacher education, most critically in the primary sector. The NIHEC Expert Group Report (2004) indicated that working class Protestant males have a lower entry rate to HE in Northern Ireland. There is a problem generally in attracting males to teaching, particularly primary teaching and for several years this has been identified as an issue which must be addressed. During December 2008, the College WA Coordinator was invited to speak on BBC Radio Ulster on the issue of the decline in Male teachers in NI. On Open Day (2009) a survey of Males and their perceptions of Stranmillis and teaching was completed. This information has been used to inform the College on what it could be doing to encourage more males into teaching. In addition to various insight presentations etc., the central target during 2008/09 was to begin the development of an innovative website resource 'Y Not Teach' (www.maleteachers.co.uk) exclusively targeting males into teaching and early years environments. The construction of this site has now commenced with a target launch date of May 2010.

The table below shows the very encouraging figures have been returned for male entrants to the BEd programmes.

(Table 1 (b) *Entrants, College Selection Report 2009*)

	2009			2008			% Change
	Pr.	Pp.	Total	Pr.	Pp.	Total	
Men	17	21	38	10	18	28	+10 (+36%)
Women	73	29	102	68	33	101	+1 (+1%)
	90	50	140	78	51	129	+11 (+9%)

Raising Aspirations in the Wider Community

In addition to insight events the College is an active founding member of the *NI Housing Executive Education Forum* and through this forum is supporting the raising of educational aspirations of individuals and groups within Housing Executive estates, including children in care. To develop further and enhance the University College's community based links and activities, during 2008/09 a number of contacts were made with community groups to explore how the College might best extend the support that it can give to raising aspirations. Not only is this type of outreach an essential element of the College's social responsibility, with regard to the College intake it is also important; the most recent available figures below which demonstrate a steady decline in the numbers of students from low participation neighbourhoods.

STRANMILLIS	Total full-time undergraduate entrants	Number/percent with known data	Number from low participation neighbourhoods	Percent from low participation neighbourhoods	Benchmark (%)
2007/2008	240	220/99.5	10	5.5	11.2
2006/2007	260	235/98.7	20	7.6	9.9
2005/2006	275	165/68.9	15	7.9	17.7
2004/2005	285	185/71.8	20	11.8	17

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 (defined as students 21 years of age and over) 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.

As noted previously, targeted intervention with mature students has led to Stranmillis being seen as an attractive and realistic HE option. A number of the current mature students have remarked that their decision to apply to Stranmillis was confirmed following the Access open night, when they realised that they would be able to get onto the course in the first place and would be able to cope with the course demands. Those Access students that applied were also grateful of the additional guidance they received on the Stranmillis interview process which they felt gave them a much needed confidence boost. Various college reports indicate that the retention and completion rates of this group is also consistently very high.

Considerable progress has been made in relation to the recruitment of mature students. Mature students now represent 14% of student intake to the BEd which is an increase of 6% from 2008. The mature students qualified for entry on the basis of 'A' levels and Access (Foundation) courses. Also of interest is the percentage growth of mature male entrants, in particular for the primary BEd.

(Table 1 (b) – Mature Entrants, Selection Report 2009)

	2009			2008			% Change
	Pr.	Pp.	Total	Pr.	Pp.	Total	
Men	17	21	38	10	18	28	+10 (+36%)
Women	73	29	102	68	33	101	+1 (+1%)
	90	50	140	78	51	129	+11 (+9%)

5.4 Communication Skills Centre

Widening Access provision in the University College extends beyond pre-entry insight/support initiatives to include support for successful Stranmillis entrants who are representative of the targeted project groups. A Student Entry Survey completed by the 2008 year 1 intake across all three degree programmes identified areas in which students would welcome support eg written and oral communication; how to structure assignments and referencing. Taking on board student concerns, the Student Support Centre continues to offer a range of services to students to assist them to successfully complete their degrees. One of the central academic support mechanisms offered to students is the availability of the Communication Skills Centre.

The Widening Access budget provided funding for the Communication Skills Centre which was set up to provide support for the learning and teaching requirements of all students in the area of communication skills. 11 students are currently recruited as Peer Tutors and received training in written communication skills. The Peer Tutors provide one-to-one support to students in a newly refurbished room in the Central Building. The Centre facilitates requests for appointments from students from all undergraduate programmes and students on International and Erasmus programmes. The growth in use of the Communication Skills Centre during 2008-09 is very encouraging. Since opening in November 2007 the Communication Skills Centre has grown from strength to strength as seen in the figures below.

Year	Semester 1 Students	Semester 2 Students	Total Students
2007/2008	23	25	48
2008/2009	59	41	100

In the recent ETI (2009) College inspection report the Communication Skills Centre was specifically mentioned as one of the strengths of the quality of provision for learning of the students (Section 10.6 point 3)

'the support provided by the Communication Centre, including the opportunity for students to learn how to provide peer-tutoring' (page 6)

To date Stranmillis has not received any negative feedback on the tutee sessions. All of the tutee comments are extremely positive and included the following:

- *I found this session very helpful. It made me focus better on what I still had to do.*
- *I found this very useful. My understanding of essay writing was made clearer and references were easier to understand. Very good.*
- *Great service - really friendly and gave good constructive points about my work. Will definitely be visiting again!*
- *Very helpful, positive about work and gave clear instructions and ideas of how to improve work, for example sentence structure.*

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 the College's 2009 *DEL Strategic Return* (Also - Appendix 1 at the end of this report outlines progress against milestones). The 2008-09 Widening Participation Activity- *Volume Measure* is set out below:

Activity	Number/reach of activities
School Presentations/Workshops WA Coordinator and other Staff	<i>20 events attended</i>
Peer Mentors Appointed	<i>39 Registered Peer Mentors</i>
GCSE Easter Revision School	<i>One Easter School 2 days, 40 pupil attendees, 2 Student Ambassador Tutors, 4 Peer Tutors</i>
Access Evening	<i>25 Attendees, 6 Student Ambassadors</i>
NI Careers Service Briefing for Part-Time HLS Course – Mature Entry	<i>30 Attendees</i>
Student Support Fund Bursaries	<i>183</i>
Halls Bursaries	<i>3</i>
Communication Skills Centre	<i>100 Student appointments undertaken and facilitated by Student Peer Tutors</i>
Open Day	<i>37 Mentors in attendance Male Survey Undertaken 55 returns</i>

The 2009 College Selection Report demonstrates that we have been largely successful with our Widening Access Targets that are specifically concerned with entry to the College. While the College will continue with insight initiatives a central focus for future planning is on increasing community engagement to raise aspirations at primary school level and to offer a more comprehensive menu of support activity to underrepresented groups. Given the nature of the core business of Stranmillis University College, and our success to date, we are confident that we can make a unique contribution to raising the educational aspirations of the community groups that we target.

Future Activities Planned

- 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 WEB resource for schools to promote the project.
- Work with the Communication Skills Centre to develop 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.
- Investigate and establish links with community groups to both directly and indirectly raise educational aspirations.

Appendix 1 Progress against outcome-based targets and associated milestones

Target (milestone)	Access agreement only – yes/no	WP strategy only – yes/no	Shared – yes/no	Actual position eg milestone met; milestone delayed; milestone not met	Evidence/commentary for stated position
Arrange special Open Days and taster experiences			Yes	Met	<i>A variety both these have been provided both for project 1&2 and also wider outreach beyond initial Access Agreement</i>
Easter Revision School		Yes			<i>Forty pupil participants, excellent course evaluations.</i>
Provide Summer School (Residential)			Yes	Not Met	<i>See Comments in 2.1</i>
Set admissions targets for each project	Yes			Both	<i>Exceeded targets for mature, male and students with a disability. No marked change to ethnic minority participation.</i> <i>Improvement in percentage of students from SEC 4-7 groups. Decline in students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods.</i>
For Project 2: Visits to Primary Schools/working as classroom assistant/shadowing male teachers			Yes	Met	<i>Visits have taken place but this could be extended to involve more pupils and schools and also opportunities for mature male students. Some of this insight will also soon be available virtually on www.maleteachers.co.uk.</i>
Phase 3 – First Semester Experience					

Review induction programme	Yes			Met	<i>A new, more extensive induction programme is now in place.</i>
Introduce 'buddy system' for new students, as an extension of the University College's existing mentoring scheme	Yes			Met	<i>This is also in place and introductions are included in the revised induction programme.</i>
Ensure that Student Services support and advice is maximised through chaplains, nurse, careers and student support service and is fully articulated and easily available	Yes			Met	<i>The Student Support Centre and its related functions are now well established within the college both a separate student services and in conjunction with academic programmes.</i>
Free Halls of Residence places or assistance with living costs for students admitted from Project 1 and 2 Groupings	Yes			Met	<i>There is now a steady up take in this bursary. We are currently in the process of reviewing the application documentation to help students to present their evidence. This follows student appeal cases when students had to submit additional evidence.</i>
Enhance study skills support programme throughout the year for all students who have identified needs.	Yes			Met	<i>This is now formally established within dedicated Professional and Study skills modules across all degree pathways.</i>
Establishment of Widening Access Advisory Group	Yes			Met	<i>This is now in place as a sub-group of the College Student Support Committee.</i>

Funding and Debt Management Seminars	Yes			Not met directly within College	<i>Rather than provide this service Stranmillis students are put in contact with QUB students Union who have dedicated support available.</i>
Offer Buddying and Early Warning Systems for identifying students at risk	Yes			Met	<i>System in place.</i>
Establish Student Ambassador Scheme	Yes			Met, but currently on hold.	<i>A formal paid Ambassador scheme was established but this was put on hold during 2008-09. The reason being that the majority of the Ambassadors had graduated and a new cohort needed to be selected. Uncertainty over the future of the College slowed this process.</i>
Widening Access Advisory Group set up to develop strategies and work with WA Co-ordinator	Yes			Met	<i>The WA coordinator has worked closely with academic and support staff to embed the WA policy.</i>
Careers Workshops	Yes			Met	<i>These are formally in place across all degree programmes and are coordinated by the dedicated careers staff from the Student Support Centre.</i>
Extension of Professional Careers Provision to include BEd students	Yes			Met	<i>In place for both Primary and Post-Primary Students.</i>

<p>Embedding Widening Access activities in academic planning process. Review strategies for:</p> <p>Learning and Teaching</p> <p>Admissions</p> <p>Staff Development</p> <p>Human Resources</p> <p>Information Management</p>	<p>Yes</p>			<p>Met</p>	<p><i>The WA Coordinator reports directly to various college committees. This has ensured that student needs are met at every level of provision.</i></p>
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