



PROJECT TITLE

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICE ORIENTATION

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAMME

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICE

PROJECT TEAM

FIONA DOWNEY LEARNING SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR AND LAURA COLEMAN – DISABILITY SUPPORT OFFICER. WE OUTSOURCED THE MAKING OF THE VIDEOS TO A FORMER CIT STUDENT.

PROFILE

SHORT DESCRIPTION

The Disability Support Service (DSS) provides an early orientation for incoming students in late August each year to welcome them to CIT and inform them of the DSS supports available to them and how to register with the DSS to access these. Not all of the new students that register with the DSS each year are able to attend the day for various reasons (duration of time and cost of travelling to CIT, some are doing online courses and sometimes owing to the nature of their disability etc.) and the DSS wished to develop more online resources to allow students who didn't attend to access this information.

OBJECTIVE OF PROJECT

To provide alternative means for DSS students to access information on DSS orientation, supports and registration. Providing accessible videos to students on different topics such as registering with the DSS in an audiovisual manner complements the existing Student Guide. The online resources hosted on the DSS webpages would allow all DSS students to access this information at any time and allow the DSS to reach all of its potential students.

We are also conscious that many of the students who are registering with the DSS state that they are very visual learners so we knew that having short, bite sized informative videos would be a welcome resource.

We originally had applied for funding for 6 videos (at a cost of €1,000 each bringing our total requested amount to €6,000). These six videos would cover the following –

- DSS Welcome Video
- Video on DSS Supports and the DSS Student Guide
- Guide to Registering with the DSS
- 3 DSS Learning Support videos to provide ongoing support around the following;
 - study skills – notetaking
 - starting assignments
 - time management/organisational skills

We were grateful to receive funding for 2 videos (€2,000) and it was decided to focus on creating two learning support videos that would be accessible by all DSS students throughout the year and would give them best approaches /strategies to notetaking and starting assignments. We were also mindful that some students with disabilities choose to do online courses as it can sometimes be a more suitable option for various reasons, so having online resources like these would be most valuable.



BENEFITS

- To supplement/build up the student independent learning skills through the year
- From our experience these are skills that students need to develop especially in first year on their transition from secondary school.
- The videos that were developed are accessible in terms of appealing to students who have various different learning styles. Having less “text heavy” materials is a positive change and seems to resonate with students better – short, informative and to the point videos are more appealing to students than reading a lot of text. We have found that the videos that were developed by the DSS AT Service on the AT YouTube channel worked well and reinforced the training that the students had received also.
- And can complement the other supports they may be accessing through the DSS such as assistive technology.
- Staff can see the work that the DSS Learning Support Service is doing and this makes the service more transparent, which is a positive thing. Staff do not have a lot of time to attend workshops etc. during the semester. This was a good way of demonstrating the support and information that the DSS Learning Support Service can give to students.
- Some students are accessing courses remotely and therefore may not be in a position to travel to CIT. It is also worth noting that travel can sometimes be expensive depending on the disability that a student may have, so we needed to provide a resource that can be accessible off campus also.
- While students can access DSS Learning Support on Monday to Friday on main campus, CCAD, CSM and NMCI, many students who are registered with the DSS tend to complete their work at weekends at home with the support of parents and family. As a result, this online resource can prove valuable in that they can access it at any time, not just during academic college hours, as it were.

RESULTS

LINKS TO VIDEOS CIT DSS WEBPAGES

http://www.mycit.ie/access_disability/disability-support-service/learning-support

DSS GUIDE TO STARTING ASSIGNMENTS



DSS GUIDE TO TAKING GOOD NOTES



DSS 2017 ORIENTATION PHOTOS





IMPACT & OUTCOMES

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

- Videos were shown as part of the Learning Support session in the DSS Orientation to almost 100 students.
- Videos shown as part of the outline of supports during DSS needs assessment process for **80 registering students with dyslexia and dyspraxia**
- Learning Support Co-ordinator used them during one-to-one learning support sessions with new DSS students – **20-30 first year students approximately.**

FEEDBACK FROM STAFF

FIONA DOWNEY, LEARNING SUPPORT COORDINATOR

A noticeable trend amongst first-year students showed challenges and struggles in the areas of notetaking and tackling an essay. In particular, students lacked some of the basics associated with writing an essay in terms of understanding the question and the type of essay they were being asked to do. In addition, students noted that in second level they wrote in the first person making the change to writing in the third person difficult. Students also mentioned that in second level their essays were entirely around their own opinions and thoughts. Therefore, taking into consideration information from lectures and additional reading or theory to back up their points, a daunting experience.

In relation to notetaking, a high number of students reported difficulties with taking down good and effective notes and the lack of awareness of some of the techniques mentioned in the video. Students in second level are told by teachers to highlight or underline large amounts of text or are asked to copy down information from the board. In comparison, students are now exposed to a variety of material presented in different ways and in some cases having to decipher and note the most important points for themselves. In fact, those students who are now using some of the methods mentioned in the video, find themselves in a much better position to carry out this task and the benefits associated with keeping good notes when it comes to revision, study and using their notes to tackle assignments.

Furthermore, both videos have helped students who have poor organisational skills to work at and improve on the methods around notetaking and starting an assignment. Practice is a term that is used in both videos to highlight the fact that trying out different strategies and finding one or two that best suit, will be beneficial as they progress through their academic journey.

LAURA COLEMAN, CIT DISABILITY SUPPORT OFFICER

As Disability Officer, developing and providing resources online has been something that I have been an advocate of for a long time. From listening to the students who are registering with the DSS, they thrive most when presented with a more blended approach to learning – and I believe this to be true for all students. In reality – anything that benefits a student with a disability/specific learning difference etc. will also benefit all students. Many students are visual learners, so presenting information to them in a way that they can process it and digest the information, is a very positive development for the DSS. We are very aware that students can be saturated with advice, emails, information and support and we wanted to take some measures to introduce some of the most sought after information in a small, informative and impactful way. I am very pleased with the DSS Learning Support Videos and grateful to the Transitions to CIT Programme for enabling us to develop these valuable resources. I am also most appreciative to Fiona Downey, Learning Support Coordinator CIT DSS, for the effort and time that she has put into developing these wonderfully informative videos.

FUTURE PLANS

In terms of plans for the future, we are currently in discussions with IT and Media with regards to finding a place on the CIT DSS Website that we would like these videos and any future videos we may develop to be situated. These videos should be available on the CIT YouTube channel also. We also plan to show these videos at Pre Entry events, such as the Linked Schools Study Skills Day, which had 218 students attending this year.