Welcome everyone. We will wait a few minutes until people walk through the virtual door into the session. Hopefully you are in the right session and if you are, you will be joining us for the exploring and strengthening the role of disability officers in a changing landscape with Dara Ryder and Lorraine Gallagher from AHEAD in Ireland who will wave. Thank you for joining us Dara and Lorraine. We will wait a couple of minutes to see if we have any latecomers.

Whilst we are doing that I'll introduce you also to Helen who is on our board of directors and is co-hosting and will be answering any Q&As with Lorraine and we have Jo our administrator who is kindly doing all the technical stuff, playing the video and all that jazz.

If I glitch it's on my end. Feel free to use the Q&A and chat functions at the bottom of your screen. Use the Q&A for any questions you have whilst the video is playing. I'm also aware from Dara and Lorraine that they may pose some questions to you as delegates through the session as well. So be engaged and be aware of that and do engage with each other, do feel free to introduce yourself on the chat throughout the
session. It’d be good to know who is on the line and sharing any of that would be ideal.

In terms of a start, some broad housekeeping. We have captioning facility as we have through previous sessions and this week it's being delivered very kindly through Caption.Ed. There is a short video on the webpage which introduces their system but it's a novel system used with universities. It is a good system. But we would like some feedback about the captioning and the quality of that and from speaking to Richard the CEO he would value the feedback so please do share.

The transcript of the webinar will be on the website following the session and as I mentioned please do use the Q&A and chat function. There will be time for Q&A at the end of the session. I will not hold up your time too much this afternoon. Hoping the sun is out where you are and that people weren't too adversely affected by any thunder storms that occurred during the night.

Without further ado, I will ask Jo to play the video and whilst the video is playing, I will just kind of stress that myself and the presenters will put our video on mute and our audio on mute and ask all delegates to do the same. Thank you ever so much, enjoy.

Hello everybody. My name is Dara Ryder. I am
the CEO of AHEAD. AHEAD is an Irish NGO focussed on creating inclusive environments in education and employment for people with disabilities. I'm here with my lovely colleague, Lorraine Gallagher, Lorraine Gallagher, who is our information and training officer. Hey Lorraine how is it going?

>> Hey from sunny Wicklow.

>> What we are going to do today is talk about exploring and strengthening the role of disability officers in a changing landscape. What changing landscape are we talking about? I suppose it's really all about the move towards more mainstream inclusive practice to support people with disabilities in the everyday fabric of how we go about our business in higher education.

With that I'll hand over to my colleague Lorraine to get us kicked off.

>> In this session we are going to look at a number of different areas. We are very conscious of the fact that we are in Ireland and you are in the UK and you do use a different model around how you do the supporting and funding in terms of your students with disabilities. So we are just going to talk about it from our perspective and see if you can grab a few nuggets from us in terms of how we have dealt with that sort of
changing landscape where there is now, you know, more than ever the number of students is rising, definitely within an Irish context, so I presume it's no different in the UK. I think at the moment as far as our new stats are concerned is it 6.2 Dara?

>> That's right 6.2 per cent of the population who engage with disability support services so in here we have another figure that's more of a self declared figure based on enrolment surface which are 10 per cent. But those are our two key figures.

>> Yes, so we know every year our numbers go up, but of course our numbers are going up but the money isn't going up. So we are still working off a funding stream from maybe a few years that hasn't actually gone up. In terms of how do we cope with that, and it is about that move into how do we support students, not only within the disability landscape, the disability office, but also how can we move some of those things out into the mainstream college environment.

So within this session we'll look at that first through the models of disability which I know you are all familiar with but we can go swiftly over those and then making the case for the whole college approach, why
would we disability officers et cetera academics want to have a whole college approach to support if they are being adequately supported by you as in the disability officer in your college. So what is the case for moving to UDL and UDL for anyone who is not familiar with it, is the concept of universal design for learning.

We are going to look at the back story of it, what are the drivers. As I mentioned funding, that's one of the big drivers in terms of wanting to move to inclusive practice, and also just kind of like the idea that why can't we get all of our services or some of our services just within the mainstream as opposed to been an add on or seen as an add on.

We did some research and work in Ireland and developed a roadmap with the disability officers in Ireland. So we are going to touch on that. Then we are going to look at the I suppose the very important topic for all of us and for yourselves is this notion of how can we reposition the role of a disability officer if we move some of the supports into that mainstream arena what's left for me, what's important. Then looking at the structures in terms of the micro, meso and macro, those responsibilities, what does that mean.

Then we are going to look at where we are in
DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

terms of the Irish context, how far along that route are we. At the end we'll have some reflective questions for you the audience. We'll try and make it as interactive as possible. If you can bear with us in terms of our wifi and child crying or dog barking.

>>> Lorraine, if you do not mind throwing your ear piece down we are getting a slight bit of wind into your microphone. We all know the models, but I think it's nice to check back on these regularly in my own work to refresh my memory and make sure we are going in the right direction.

>>> Yes. So we all know and myself, you know, particularly would remember very much the medical model where we see barriers located with an individual, like let's face it I went to Lourdes twice but I was never cured, you know. So that idea that it was kind of like, the individual, if only you could cure yourself the world would be better, won't have to accommodate you. So that very much, that medical model of looking at a person. You'd be kind of the charity, you would be looking for support and lucky if you could get it. There was no entitlement to support.

Really, the medical model within the Irish context it started to shift in the 90s and I remember being part
of those conversations around just wanting to have basic supports. I know in the UK you are much further ahead in terms of your reasonable accommodation legislation, it came a lot quicker than ours in Ireland. That came about in 90s, in 96 we released the report, the status of people with disabilities and outlined how we wanted society to be structured. That idea that it was the way society was structured it was creating barriers for people with disabilities in the country.

Since then, we are now in the 21st century and we are moving more into the human rights model, it stemmed from a social model and it is part of the social model but this notion that we don't necessarily want to be an add on part of society; we want to be fully engaged and fully included in society. So from that then we can look at it in terms of what we do as a society and how we think about disability and that it isn't part of the margins, that it is fully in the centre. I suppose that is particularly for me and for AHEAD that's where UDL really comes into it, that notion of bringing people completely into the centre of society as opposed to the social model recognising that there are barriers and the human rights model recognising those barriers need to be removed and people can be fully
included but not forgetting the fact that people still need specialist supports. That's a rights model. That people are still entitled to have --

    >> That's it. I suppose the difference for me is that it's placing the real -- the difference between the social and human rights model is that from an educational point of view is that we're placing an onus on both the educational institutions and public bodies to say yes, we need to do everything we can to make the mainstream as inclusive as possible through design and recognise the need for high quality individual supports where that design still provides barriers, because they always will, because we have to recognise the individual experience of humans.

    >> Yes, and there are so many different facets to the human. People will as you say, always need different things. But it recognises the fact that people are entitled to have those supports as well as whatever else is in the mainstream. So it's like a continuum. It's not trying to compare or contrast the two models between the social and the human rights model. It's just that recognition that people will always need individual supports that perhaps are not that widely available in the mainstream. So recognising that the
person is an individual and they will still need individual supports depending on the disability.

I'll move over to yourself, Dara.

>> Myself and Judy. What you are seeing on your screen here is Judge Judy and the reason Judge Judy is we are going to put you in the position of Judge Judy today and we are going to make the case that the whole college approach to inclusion Which is underpinned by the principles of universal design and the universal design for learning is in effect the embodiment of the human rights model of disability in action within our higher education system. So this is a model with devolved responsibility for inclusion. So it's not just a remit of the disability office, but a model where inclusion is everyone's business on campus.

What that means is a commitment to both the provision as I mentioned of the high quality individual and group supports and the state and the institutional commitment to reducing barriers within the mainstream environment and the curriculum.

By doing both of these things, what we do is aim to reduce the need for individual accommodations because we are providing more -- essentially what we are doing is removing those accommodations in the first
place. We are doing that for all students directly in the mainstream, but at the same time recognising that fundamental high quality supports will always be required for some students with disabilities at some level.

So our aim when we look at that is to push support into the mainstream where possible so that all can benefit from it and remove them from a more transactional model of support, which is that kind of one-to-one, it's a transaction you are providing support to an individual, to a much more transformational one in which students can participate far more in the mainstream experience.

I suppose we mentioned UD, UDL, I'll take a step back and give an overview of what they are. There might be quite a knowledge in the virtual room of this already. But I want to give this sort of crash course for those less familiar with it. What universal design is, firstly it stems from concepts in the build environment, in architecture, product design, design of services and it originates from the 1970s. What it essentially means, this is the definition on your screen here from the UNCRPD, that's the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and it says the
Universal design means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

So when we talk about that adaptation of specialised design, that's the reasonable combinations bit. What we are saying in the human rights model is they are vitally important but we need to do as much as possible by design to get the best experience for everybody in the first place.

What UD does in terms of product design, the built environment, it recognises that nobody is individual, that there is no such thing as an average individual really. So that if you design for average, what you are doing is essentially designing for nobody.

So it's trying to recognise the huge diversity in every facet of human life, disability and neurodiversity just being one aspect of that continuum diversity and its placing -- I suppose, it's removing, sometimes we get caught in the idea of thinking about disability in its own little specialised box rather than thinking of the intersectionality of diversity across all individuals. Everybody is different in all sorts of different ways and universal design aims to address as much of that as
possible through design or to make products as usable as possible through design.

Some examples on your screen now that you will be very familiar with, automatic doors. Again, these are products designed for people with disabilities and they are designed to the edges of our society in general rather than to the average and if we do that, everybody benefits.

So with automatic doors, for example, originally designed for people with mobility difficulties, but many, many others reap the benefits of the flexibility that's built right into this product. So we think about things like a delivery man carrying boxes, parents with buggies out there in our virtue room will know all about the value of that product. things like people with hands full of shopping bags, every things that would be different in every single day of everybody's life could make these things very usable and flexible.

So what happened then really when we talk about UD in education is that people began to take the kind of values of universal design and apply it into the teaching and learning contexts and an organisation called Cast were one of the main drivers of this. They are a Harvard based US organisation and in the 1990s they
transposed the ideas from universal design into pedagogy and into the teaching and learning environment.

So the universal design for learning framework, which is the framework that they developed, is based on research in both neuroscience and the learning science. So with the neuroscience I'm not going to go too deep into the neuroscience because I can feel your eyes glaze over at the mention of it. But basically what the neuroscientists at Harvard discovered was that if you give any two brains in the world the same stimuli, the reactions in their neural pathways will actually be different in one brain from the other.

So in practice Lorraine if you think about me and you if I was to give a written recipe for a Victoria sponge in front of the pair of us, maybe I'd maybe a fantastic sponge and Lorraine might make -- you might not be able to make head nor tail of it. But you put a video of exactly the same process with someone talking through it, then the reverse might actually happen.

We might have you making a really delicious Victoria sponge and me saying this is not working for me, I need everything written down in that very precise way for me.
Yes. So what it is really is that every single brain is unique and everyone's learning process and pathway is unique. Did you want to come in on something there?

No, it's just I totally agree. Even I know when I was studying art in college all those years ago and we'd have the same outline of a project that you'd have to do and yet everybody's work would come back and all look different because everyone's way of interpreting what we were asked to do was taken up differently and that was being creative in terms of art. So it's that notion of when you are giving people something to do in college, if you are a tutor or whatever, how do you know they are getting totally what you want them to do from it.

Absolutely.

Their interpretation of the material and stuff which is so interesting.

So learning is -- this is what Cast say -- what they push out here is that learning is as unique to an individual as their fingerprints. Basically in order to reach and teach everyone, we need flexibility, to build in choice and student voice into the fabric of how we deliver our programmes in order to effectively reach
So framework itself is centred on three core principles. The first principle addresses the why of learning. So that's calling on educators to provide multiple means of engagement. In other words, providing options for students to get them bought into learning, whatever you are trying to teach them. Why is it important? How does it relate to their lives? Making them feel like they belong in the classroom and they have some kind of agency in their own learning, helping them to set appropriate goals and measure their own progress and providing say, for example, valuable timely feedback on their process in order for them to feel they are making a connection with what they are doing.

The second principle is all about the what of learning and that's about providing multiple means of representation. So in other words, it's ensuring the information you are presenting is clear and accessible to all and there's a recognition that all learners will consume knowledge in different types of ways and therefore there is a need to provide options on how students take in information and how they comprehend information. So that's talking about leveraging
multimedia, using group interactions, using experiential learning, like field trips, to deliver your content.

The final principle is all about the how of learning. So it's how students actually express what they know and communicate what they have already internalised through that second principle. That's ensuring that we allow students to express their knowledge in all sorts of different ways. So negotiating that it's not going to be for example fair representation of someone's knowledge to ask them to sit a three-hour exam if they have dyslexia if they have is a common example, in the disability world. That's not going to result in them having a fair representation of what they know. So unless you are actually assessing literacy in some way, then ensuring that there's other options for people to express what they know. And also to communicate with you as a lecturer and with their fellow students as well.

Anything you want to add.

>> It's that notion of multiple means of engagement and ways of representation. Sometimes people get caught up in that language around that and it's kind of like not to get too worried about that, I always think the way we have it here as in the why of
learning to me it's often the student voice, how do you keep them engaged when you know its a tough subject or maybe not everybody in the room wants to do the subject but it's mandatory. How do you keep them engage, why are you here, you are all here listening to this today. When you think of the what of learning, that's to me the learning space, the tutor, it's about what they are delivering, how they are delivering it, that multimedia. So what are we trying to teach, what are they learning and then of course the how is really about the assessment piece. So that's like how do you want that material to come back, what's important, have they reached their learning outcomes and all those kinds of things. So not to get too caught up in the language, but just be cognisant of why are they here, what are we doing, how do we know they've learnt it.

>> With UDL all the principles start with providing options for us. We think about it from an accessibility point of view, a lot of the work we do as disability officers is providing an alternative for someone. It's providing an alternative format, an alternative way into a subject that the current design doesn't.

So I suppose what UDL is doing is asking us to try and build that flexibility actually into the delivery in the
first place, removing the need for the disability support services to actually make that alternative. What we can do is provide more detail in UDL in the links. What we'll do today is probably focus a little bit more on UDL's relationship with disabilities because of the people we have in our virtual room today.

Just to finish the piece on UDL and what we're looking at from an institutional point of view, it's a big mindset shift. Because what we have is currently we have disability support services largely being seen as responsible for the support of students with disabilities. But what we need to do is get that shift going where suddenly it's going from they are not my students they are your students, pushing them to the disability support services, to saying okay, how can I play my part in terms of the institution.

Lorraine, so we have talked a little bit about the mindset shift and I think you are going to start talking about what it looks like from the different levels or perspectives.

>>> Yes, I'm just going to touch on this again because it's one of those things you can look at and go wow it's a lot of work. But it is about kind of as we said earlier as well about starting small, right. So like even
in AHEAD, we started very small and I don't know what year it was but I remember many, many years ago at one of our conferences we launched the AHEAD inclusive education charter which basically took the principles of teaching and learning and actually aligned them to UDL but we didn't call it UDL at the time.

So we did really start really small. So it was that notion of starting at the college level, like the video, introducing it to some people and then seeing where they go with it that sort of like small, small little bits and over time then it kind of gathers its own pace and then you could say, well, you know, that moves into teaching and learning policy within the college. It begins to get implemented over time. Then, of course, it becomes -- the meso level where it's across the institution. Was it De Montfort, I cannot remember the lady's name.

>> I remember speaking to her in this case and --

>> And they rolled, tried to roll out, went about rolling out UDL across the whole campus and that was one way of doing it. For us it was a much smaller move. Then when it starts to take hold in an institution, it becomes that meso level where it's bigger, curriculum
design, you start looking at how am I designing my curriculum, am I taking into consideration my learners and we see in terms of our own work and then you have the national level where the big guns start to take notice. So it's that sort of shift over time and that's kind of happening here. Dara is going to talk about that later.

But it's just to look at that, how we make that shift to more inclusive practice. But that it doesn't happen overnight. It takes time. In terms of what are we looking at. If we think about in the old days, back at the medical model we had that notion of being excluded, segregated special schools and then we move into that integrated environment where we have the add on model. People are not fully integrated. They get their supports elsewhere and they are there with the specialist support. So with the inclusion it's more that it's a mainstream service and experience for people.

Then you are thinking, ah but if you make it mainstream what about my role? You know, am I suddenly going to be redundant? Well, the answer to that is absolutely not. As we said earlier, change is never easy. But it is recognising that as a culture there is that move towards more of an inclusive education. So in terms of what we did, we did a roadmap with the
disability support services in higher education in Ireland. We are talking about AHEAD and DAWN, which is the Disability Advisors Working Network, and I suppose they are the Irish version of yourselves, the NADP.

What we did was looked at and explored the developing role of the disability officer and where they see themselves within this picture of UDL. So first of all we did a position paper which sort of like set out what our vision was going to be in higher education.

>> I think important there to say that's a shared vision, that is a vision that AHEAD and DAWN developed together.

>> Sorry, yes, together with DAWN that we came -- that we have this shared vision. So we came together and we looked at that. So ourselves, AHEAD and DAWN, we looked at that, we did this position paper collectively to say where do we see ourselves. Then we explored the role of the disability officer, where do they sit in this new landscape of UDL. Then we looked at reasonable accommodations through that inclusive lens. So reasonable accommodation still sits within it. So we are not throwing out the baby with the bathwater. It's still all part of this continuum, a continuum that fits into the UDL lens.
I think for me those last two publications will be of particular interest to this group today and that last one in particular what it does is takes a look at individuals reasonable accommodations literally goes through the types of reasonable accommodations and how we might reframe some of them through an inclusive practice lens. I think that's a really interesting point in terms of getting that mindset from the disability officers' perspective of beginning to think about pushing those supports into the mainstream where we can.

Into the mainstream. When you think about your role as a disability officer, you have so much to do anyway. You are providing supports. You are running a service. You are liaising with different departments. There's so many different facets to your job. This, in actual fact, makes your job easier because it frees up some of your time to actually spend more time developing services within an institution. That's what we would hope.

So, basically, we look at this idea of the add on model where access is achieved through a combination and retrofitting existing stuff. That it's like that notion of specialist treatment. As we said some people will always be entitled to have that add on specialist
equipment. But the thing about it is that access has to be considered every single time. It is consumable. It is not put in place. It comes in, it's used, and it's gone again. Somebody new comes in again and we start the whole process again.

Whereas if you look at the idea of good practice, it becomes part of the environment so it's designed in, so that if you think about universal design for a minute and back to the automatic doors, what can we build into the system that will remain there and as many people as possible can use it?

If you think about what example of that might be is say if you have -- lots -- very, very common support that we would recommend for people would be access to notes online. So a very large proportion of the students that are accessing your service would get that as an accommodation. But why can't loads of students get that? When you think about your own population in college and how diverse it is, you have students from all sorts of backgrounds, some people have English as a second language, some people are parents so their time is -- they are under pressure. Getting the notes online would be really helpful. So where can we push those things into the mainstream so they are there, they
are not having to be done each time for every individual.

  >>  Exactly, what you are talking about there, that support is sitting at the top of this pyramid, we call this the inclusive practice pyramid, when you do that at the top you are making accommodation for one time for one individual. But by doing what you are talking about there, Lorraine, you are pushing that support further down the pyramid, you are making it available to everybody through, for example, it could be a college policy that will say all lecturers have to provide notes in advance of class and suddenly everybody is getting the benefit of this thing and it becomes part of the culture of the institution.

  >>  Yes, absolutely.

  >>  I think that culture is key in this.

  >>  Even like when we think about things like technology, right. So you think about young people coming up nowadays, even my own child, so into the technology, why can't technology be more mainstreamed? That notion of things that we think are specialist. When we go back to even say the TV remote, where would you be without it, that was invented for someone who was quadriplegic. Now we take it for granted, many of us cannot live without our remote
control and some TVs are designed with know buttons. So if you take something specialist and make it available to everybody.

One of the things that comes up in terms of colleges is students recording my lectures. But there are many reasons that people might need to do that so why don't we make that more available. We are going to touch on this quickly because I know time is of the essence in terms of this presentation. But now with the whole COVID-19 situation and people having to be offsite for the coming year and recording is coming into its own. So this thing of pushing things that were specialist at the top and pushing them down where they are not specialist any more, they are just part of the fabric of our college.

So in terms of redefining your role, as I said the disability service has many -- the disability officer and the service has many, many remits. So you are working with individuals particularly with high support needs, that's always going to be part of your role. We can't see that ever changing.

But why can't you be a strong driver of inclusive practice? Perhaps you are already. But it's that notion of you have so much experience and so much
knowledge around inclusion, that inclusion, you could be the driver of this inclusive practice and a leading role as we say in the slide, of that whole college approach because you have so much knowledge. You may already be doing it, but why is it not being moved further into the centre for you and becoming a centre of expertise.

The challenge for you and the challenge for us is to make inclusivity internalised so it's a general ethos of the whole place, not just this notion of, you know, inclusion or special support, oh that's for a different group, you know. Bringing it into the mindset that inclusion is for everybody and that you can be a driving force in that and you should be in the centre of that conversation because you have so much knowledge. You are a pivotal source of knowledge in this.

That's a very interesting document as well. Like all of these documents we are discussing today, they are actually available on our website. With that, I think, it's is going to be the redefining of the role. Dara are talk about where we are at the moment.

>> Really this is to wrap up and just to say we have been working on this a long time and we still have
a long way to go. But just to give a sense of some of the things that tell us we are moving in the right direction. We would run professional development on universal design for learning, every time we run it that sells out within a day or two. There's increasing demand and we are running a national roll out for several hundred Irish practitioners later this year and expect that to be sold out too. I think that's a really positive sign.

There's positive signs that universal design will feature much more prominently in the National Access Plan for equity of access to higher education which will start in 2021. It is already referenced in the current one, but hope it will take a much stronger point of place. The new national further education and training strategy that's just launched actually places the idea and I'm using this language as a quotation, "consistent learner support underpinned by the principles of universal design as a strategic priority within that document".

Again we are starting to see things happening at different levels and we're beginning to see of the language of universal design and universal design for learning appearing in college policies and institution strategies all over the country now. For example, a
new institutional strategy was just launched by the National University of Ireland in Galway. That was released in January. Again, that places universal design as a strategic commitment.

So I think we are really starting to see this whole college approach develop and evolve. We are not there yet, far far from it and I always think of these things as an ever-evolving continuum we never land at the destination with accessibility and inclusion, it's always something that develops as our societal approach to people with disabilities and diversity in general develops as well.

Just to leave you with some links. We have www.ahead.ie/roadmap which is the document which we referenced in this session and www.ahead.ie/udl talks more about universal design for learning and gives a strong introduction to that. So you are maybe interested in those links. We'll make sure that NADP can share the link for the video as well.

Just to leave you with three reflective questions for you to consider. Again, we are not specialists in the UK model of provision but we know that there has been a strong link between the DSA and students, an individual link between the support and the student which has
existed a long time in the UK. One of the questions we'd like to ask is: Is the current UK model of provision actually a barrier to equity? In terms of barriers to the whole college approach is what we are asking. What can you do in your institution to promote a system where inclusion is everyone's business? So how can you begin to be a voice if you are not working already on this, or if you are already there, how can you further this cause in your own institution?

Lastly, a question relating to the times we live in: Has COVID-19 highlighted the importance of the whole college approach to inclusion? I think time is defeating us. Any thoughts to wrap up?

>> No, I think that's it really. I hope you got a lot from this session and we look forward to interacting with you over the chat.

>> Yes, thank you very much. Take care and stay safe.

>> Dara and Lorraine, thanks so much for that. That was a really brilliant presentation and given us a lot of food for thought there. You have posed some questions for people to ponder on and do put your questions in the chat box or Q&A those attending and thinking about those questions.
Dara, maybe I could come to you. You asked about COVID. There is a question on the Q&A from Diana which says: I'm interested in the subject of online teaching in relation to the COVID situation. As a specialist one-to-one tutor I am finding that many of my students are having difficulty with the technology of online teaching or struggling with online platforms such as Teams, for example working out who is speaking in a large group, or having difficulty following written threads. Departments may feel that it suits everybody but in reality it may not. Could you comment please?

>> Yes, I think it is perfect because it landed with the last question there that was: does the COVID-19 situation actually highlight the importance of the whole college approach and I think it's a perfect example that question right there. Because what we are seeing is basically that the college hasn't in its formation of how it's going to go about its teaching and learning in response to the situation, it hasn't placed a strong inclusion voice in the room when it's liaising on that. So the result is that the tutors and disability support staff are actually getting these individual issues that are coming up that haven't been considered from
the design perspective when the move was happening.

So I think in relation to our presentation, that's how those two things are very strongly linked because if they have that inclusion voice in the room, then those issues can be teased out and get things like, for example, the platforms being used selected with inclusion and accessibility factored in and the choice for those platforms to happen. For example, institutional online approaches to student etiquette, like introducing yourself before you speak, when dealing with online settings.

And again, in the online teaching practice itself, at an institutional approach to what your educator should and shouldn't do and if the inclusion voices are in the room, that institutional approach to inclusion is happening then those things can function well and those responses then have more accessibility and inclusion baked in. We know, in reality, we can't capture all those things by design, there will be always be issues that come up which will have to be dealt with more on an individual basis. But I think that's how it works in relation to our contribution there. Is there anything that I missed, Lorraine?

>> Yes, I think as well for some people who were
in college last year who are returning to college, I think there's a need to do needs assessment reviews which takes into account the fact that we are now in a different situation and that people maybe do have needs that are because they are offsite and things like accessing PA services or ISL.

I have had situations, been in meetings where I had the ISL interpreter, the person and then me as well. So figuring out what way that is going to work and what is the right platform to use as well, as Dara said. There are different choices out there in terms of what is available. But it is about having that dialogue around what people actually need.

>> Can I add? One of the things, I think, that is alongside that, and it is a broader perspective outside simply the disabled student community, is the assumption, I guess, that all higher education students have access to the relevant technologies and softwares to assist them during study. I think this is going to become more prevalent in a broader sense in the sector as time goes on, particularly as the sector is kind of using technology in a more reliant way with students. There's a cultural and sector change in terms of that. Do you have any thoughts on that, Dara or Lorraine?
>> I think that's definitely true in the case of in Ireland here. Even in terms of what happened today at the beginning when you had to turn off your video, you know, it's that curve around actually how is this going to work and over time -- I mean, my own situation with the wifi was it used to go every day at 2 o'clock, like why is it going at 2 o'clock? As you say, some people don't actually have access to the technology, so how are they going to be supported. So there's so many different elements to it that have to be considered.

>> I think as well from the AHEAD perspective one of our strong messages to all of the institutions, through all of the guidance we have been working on with our national teaching and learning forum, our view was that the only response that was going to work for students and allow them to progress effectively at this stage was to provide options at all stages. That's one of the key messages of the universal design for learning framework, is that we provide options for engagement, provide options and representations and provide options in expression and in ways to express yourself.

So that's kind of, you know, that's heavily linked to that piece around technology because if you can't engage them in an exam at a particular three-hour
window on a particular day and you know your technology is not reliable, where you have that safety net where you know there's options for you to meet the learning outcomes in a different way. That's an essential for me.

>> Can I just add as well that we have done a lot of work with academics around making materials accessible and those webinars are available on our website. But there was plenty of conversation around simply using Word instead of PDFs and those sorts of things will affect how people will interact with materials. And then are you using captioning, if you are using video is there, you know, sign language, is there closed captions. So there are those things to consider.

>> Thanks for that. John Harding has made a point on the Q&A in relation to the questions about is the current UK model actually a barrier to equity and he is commenting, the fact that support systems such as DSAs are still designed, the core model very much here, so that involves producing evidence, disclosing, making adjustments, he feels that it's a barrier to the institutional view of UDL. Do you feel that this is a similar issue in an Irish context?

>> Will I start on that one, Lorraine? I suppose
from the Irish context, just to give you some backdrop, our model is based on the fund for students with disabilities. There are two funding sources for equity. One is provided directly through the student grant, so any students which is any student from one of the target groups under which disability is one receives the student grant, so if you have a weighting of point 3, so if you take the typical student grant as one, you get 1.3 for a student in the access cohort. So that's really about the more mainstream inclusion approaches.

Then we have a model called the fund for students with disabilities which is based more on the disclosure of disability and the medical verification and all that. Certainly, it was a very big barrier, it has improved in recent years because what happened is the funding model has changed for the FSD whereby it used to have to be spent on the individual student that applied for it. But instead institutions are now giving autonomy, it's still ringfenced for disability, but they have autonomy on how they spend the whole funding pot. So that means what you are seeing is, for example, more institutional approaches to technology provision, so what can we do to promote good technology use across the university that will actually remove the barrier in the first place,
instead of providing an expensive piece of technology to overcome a challenge, that's happening there.

So I mean there's still barriers with that model to a degree, but there is also, of course, legislation that guarantees the right for people with disabilities to support and actually in Irish legislation there's a right for needs assessments to take place. So further needs assessment to take place and the verification has to happen and all that. So there is a bit of stuff that we still need to untangle as we move more towards the philosophy. But we are seeing, from an Irish context, it happening on different levels. For example, in primary and secondary there has been a significant loosening of the relationship between medical verification and the provision on support in terms of the hurdles to overcome to get that support have been significantly lowered.

So I would say we are heading more and more in the direction of less onus on students to make that commitment to provide evidence and provide, you know, to disclose in ways that are quite actually onerous on them into something that's more loose and free and actually is based more on what students need.

>> Just to add as well, it's not an either-or model.
The reasonable accommodation still sits at the top of the pyramid. But it's about, I suppose what we are trying to do is push as many supports as possible to the bottom so that they are spread wider and there's less money needed. Because ultimately I think one of the driving forces behind it was as well was the fact that we did have less money, you know. So you have got the equality bit on one side, people want to have more mainstream services and on the other side there's less money anyway so the two sort of like have interplayed in how it has been rolled out.

>>> I would love to hear some of the NADP reflections on it and it's my understanding in recent years that the DSA has had significant cuts and as a reaction -- sorry, I haven't the department name right, but you have more mainstream inclusion budget. Is that fair to say? I'm wondering can you see that beginning to affect the approach to it?

>>> I can chime in with that and I'm sure any of the members can feel free to comment as well. I think you can raise your hand if you would like to ask a question relating. I think, yes, from an English point of view and, well, UK perspective the DSA has been reformed from 2015 and it's still ongoing and the similar
aspect is the pushing for equity for disabled students within accessing study, but also at the national element which is of efficiency of use of money. I think is probably the most diplomatic way of putting that. That will be increasing pressure on specialist disability services in supporting students.

In terms of inclusivity, all higher education providers have a legal duty to provide inclusive methods of engagement with students to ensure there is equity within that teaching and learning basis. Although it doesn't have a direct correlation with DSA, dare I say it. So there is this kind of gap between what institutions are legally obliged to deliver and the whole element around the specialist nature of disabled students accessing funding and therefore engaging with teaching and learning. There is still some development. I'm quite happy for any of the delegates to agree or disagree or add on to that.

But I think that's what I can share with you with regard to your points that you have just raised.

Thanks, Brian. John has followed up on his previous point about the barriers to the UK system and he has said one of the reasons that Cambridge withdrew from the DSA is they found it was a much more flexible
approach to approving student support because it was obvious that students needed rather than they had to have the right piece of paper. He has found that moving to online learning and assessment has really helped to get the universal design approach much more on the agenda of the academics and senior leaders and also systems folk.

He has also added: this may be controversial, but the sooner we have an allocation in the same way the Irish institutions seem to have we can determine within our own institutions how to support the students better. It will remove huge delays for the students and endless red tape, and I suspect he's not alone in that view.

One of the things that was done as well, in terms of that piece on efficiencies and the delays for students, one of the things that was done in Ireland was that the FSD allocations or funds for students with disabilities allocations, probably which is the most similar in nature to the DSA, is actually based on the previous years' students. So the institutions actually get that upfront so they know what their budget is before any student ever comes in in their semester. So in the Irish system they come through the CAO, which is the equivalent of your UCAS, and there's already base
level information about the disability type and things like that. So they have a lot of information before the needs assessment even happens. So they can begin to plan their response much further in advance. So I think that's maybe a little bit of a hint that John was saying there in terms of one of the things that has been good about our system which has changed in the last four or five years in response.

>>> I should clarify. I said that Cambridge had come away from the DSA, I should clarify only part of the DSA. Sorry about that, John, I didn't represent your question fully there.

I think other people may have posted. Let's have a look. John again added they went from three to four months wait for students from application to award under the DSA system, to three days under their internal process. So that evidences the huge difference in value to students.

>>> I'm interested to hear actually from people in the room, John has referenced to it earlier on there, the COVID-19 situation, I'm just wondering the disability and access officers out there in the UK feeling that they are being coming more from senior leadership to being included in some of the response. In Ireland, certainly,
I think there has been a huge recognition of the requirement for flexibility because people are seeing it more in their own lives, they are seeing things like connections and maybe childcare and other responsibilities at home, all those types of things. So the recognition of the flexibility has resulted maybe in disability, in certain institutions at least, have been included more in that senior decision-making process and they are being invited to the table more. Is that an experience that has been echoed over there?

>> I'll let people comment in the chat. Certainly I'm from the University of Oxford and that has been my experience and of our team and our experience has been very much we have been consulted a lot more, there seems to be much more in the way of willingness and wish to become inclusive and the fact that people have had to respond so promptly to the current COVID situation has reassured people that it can be done and evidenced that it can work quite well for many people, not for everyone, but it has done a lot in many ways to drive forward the inclusive agenda which is certainly a positive from my point of view. I'm looking if people have added further comments.

>> I was going to add, I think Pauline sent
a comment to all the panelists: in the UK, lack of UDL at school level has acted as a barrier to entry to university, students with disabilities are more likely to be excluded, or achieve lower grades and not proceed to university. I think that's an incredibly valid point and one that I know in national meetings in the UK are being discussed which is about that, the student journey. When they come into higher education that's, you know, following going through a further education process and going through statutory education as standard. So actually, you know, the whole ethos of universal design for learning should be transcending the whole student journey from the age of 4 or 5 all the way through to higher education and that's something that's currently missing in the UK.

How does that compare with the Irish perspective?

>> I think in primary school it's quite good in terms of how they teach in primary school. I think when they get to secondary I think it's more about that rote learning. So I don't think UDL is really -- we have definitely had a few queries around what UDL is because it's becoming more well known in Ireland. But it's definitely something that's more developed in tertiary education.
>> I think what's happening is it's definitely -- we have had a very similar situation to you guys on that. Actually the provisional support in higher education is quite advanced in Ireland, like I'm sure it is in the UK as well. We were finding that with a lot of cohorts the problems were going back much further into education, particularly with the sensory disabilities, massive problems in Ireland, very, very low representation at the HE level.

I think what we are starting to see over the last number of years is just beginning to see the seeds sown for that. For example, we had recently a review of our junior cycle, which would be your GCSE equivalent, and in the junior cycle we are seeing much more changes towards a flexible, fluid approach based on teacher-led assessment and not continuous assessment based and more opportunities for teachers to be creative in the way they deliver and respond to diversity in their own classrooms.

We are starting to see the national council for curriculum and assessment in Ireland, which is the body that deals with primary and secondary level curriculum, becoming really interested in the UDL approach, specifically that label UDL, and indeed one of their key
people has just got a scholarship to do a project on UDL and how that might be implemented in the secondary and primary system.

So it's beginning to move now. It's probably a little bit behind in the HE system in Ireland. But we are starting to get movement on it.

>> I'm conscious of the time. I see we have reached 3 o'clock. I want to say thank you again, Dara and Lorraine, it has been brilliant to have you here talking with us today and your presentation was excellent. Thank you very much. I'll hand over to Brian for some follow-up.

>> Thank you Helen and thank you Dara and Lorraine. What I didn't mention at the start of the session is Dara works very closely with NADP and AHEAD work very closely with NADP. Dara is the CEO of AHEAD and is currently the Link European network chair. So we work in very close coordination with Dara, not only representing the Irish perspective but also working with the UK end or the European colleagues. So forgive me, Dara, for not mentioning that. But I think that's an important perspective of the work that you do, is of high value but also notwithstanding the wider perspective.
Indeed, I'm really delighted to be involved in Link and have support of individuals like yourself, Brian.

Thank you so much. Not that I was fishing at all, Dara. What I will be saying to members is I'm working on a video -- don't get too excited because it's me working on the video -- but what I wanted to do is introduce the Link partnership and what's that about and some of the things we are working on. Hopefully we can get that up in the next week or so and give you a better understanding of the Link partnership.

So a big thank you to Dara and Lorraine and also to Jo because Jo has been working really hard to work through some of the technical difficulties and my deepest apologies, yes, indeed a big clap. My deepest apologies to members if there are any glitches, particularly around the captioning. What I will do to reassure you all is that the video of the session will be posted onto the webpage with all the captioning, as soon as we are able to, in follow-up.

So thank you ever so much. I would also ask all delegates before or as and when you get some time to give us some feedback on the session and including the technical glitches. Please be open and honest and critical and we need to learn from the exercise. As you
know, the virtual conference is the first time we have delivered a conference in this way and format, so there's a degree of learning for us.

What I can introduce you to is for week 9 which is next Wednesday we have another session and I love the title of this session: Teamwork Makes the Dream Work and it's for academics and disability teams working collaboratively and will be presented by De Montfort through Idalina Rodrigues and Rachel Davies. Bookings are now open for that session for next week.

I can also add that we are working on the NADP journal. Just a reminder if you are thinking of submitting anything to the journal you need to submit your proposals by the end of September. A gentle reminder and this is the exciting bit for our final bit, week 10, the week after next we are having a networking event and the office have asked if you can please submit any photos and videos in writing about what you have done to relax and support yourself during the whole period of lockdown which I'm sure will make for interesting reading. What I would add is just ensure that it's appropriate to share.

The last thing I will say is we are working on our AGM and for those who have access to the NADP mail
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forum I know Lynn Wilson has posted plans about the AGM which we are legally obliged to do, but obviously there will be some changes as to that process, please have a read through that. As a series of members, we would value your engagement in that process.

With that, that's my end of session ramble, dare I say it. Thank you so much to our presenters again and also to Helen for coordinating the Q&A and Jo for the technical support and Lynn who was unable to join us for the full session because she's not very well today. But she has been a star in putting this together, working through the conference details and working with the presenters. She's a valuable asset to NADP and hopefully she'll be very well soon and will be here for next week. I know that we have missed her this afternoon.

Without further ado, I hope you have gained some value from the session, enjoy the sunshine if you have sunshine where you are, clearly not in Ireland where it appears to be a bit dull today, so my apologies for my colleagues in Ireland. But enjoy the weather and the rest of the week. Do take care of yourselves.