

TU Dublin Junior Cycle Workshop Programme Evaluation



Acronyms

ACE – Access & Civic Engagement

BIS – Business Improvement Solutions

CBA – Classroom Based Assessment

CLiC – Computer Learning in Communities

CSPE- Civic, Social and Political Education

DES - Department of Education and Skills

DIT - Dublin Institute of Technology

HE – Higher Education

JCWP – Junior Cycle Workshop Programme

NAP – National Access Plan

NEPS - National Educational Psychological Service

OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PATH – Programme for Access to Higher Education

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SEG – Socio Economic Group

STEM – Science Technology Engineering Maths

TU Dublin - Technological University Dublin

UN – United Nations

UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

SAPS - Small Area Population Statistics

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Junior Cycle Workshop Programme (JCWP)

Impact

<u>HOW MUCH DID THE JCWP DO?</u>	<u>HOW WELL DID THE JCWP DO</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Delivered more than 250 workshops. ❖ Offered 15 workshop topics. ❖ Engaged 13 DEIS schools. ❖ Facilitated 5,984 student visits to TU Dublin. ❖ Expanded access across Central Dublin ❖ Evaluated the programme internally annually and externally in 2023. ❖ Delivered by the Access and Outreach team in TU Dublin ❖ Project Co-ordinator was a key enabler. ❖ Delivered to 1,063 students in 2020-21 during Covid lockdowns. ❖ TU Dublin have consistently delivered the JCWP over seven academic years during periods of TU Dublin merger and Covid 19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Achieved over 90% satisfaction among students on nine areas of delivery. ❖ Increased the number of schools engaged from 4 to 13. ❖ Achieved year on year philanthropic funding from basis.point since 2018. ❖ Secured additional funding for 'Sport for Life.' Wellbeing Programme. ❖ Secured expert professionals to deliver "Sport for Life." Wellbeing Programme. ❖ 100% of schools and students want the JCWP to continue. ❖ TU Dublin is trusted by schools, teachers, and students to deliver a relevant student centred JCWP.
<h3><u>WHAT DIFFERENCE DID THE JCWP MAKE?</u></h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Opened the TU Dublin Grangegorman campus to students from 13 DEIS schools. ❖ Provided opportunities for schools to engage with TU Dublin. ❖ Students were more informed about the opportunities in higher education. ❖ Students' aspirations and motivations in relation to higher education improved. ❖ 93% of third years who attended want to progress to higher education. ❖ Students were inspired about different disciplines through engagement in workshops. ❖ Students were more informed about STEM subjects and the pathways to careers that specialising in such subjects can offer. ❖ Students were more resilient, confident and had greater self-belief because of their participation. ❖ Schools had a mechanism through "Sport for Life" to integrate wellbeing into the curriculum in response to Department of Education policy. ❖ Students had enhanced emotional and social skills. ❖ Attendance at the workshops assisted teachers with methods for the classroom-based assessments on the Junior Cycle Curriculum. ❖ Parents were more informed about opportunities for their children to pursue higher education. 	

Section 1: Introduction

This section introduces the Junior Cycle Workshop Programme (JCWP) and provides an overview of the context and methodology for this evaluation.

1.1 Background

The JCWP was developed in consultation with DEIS schools¹ and is an early intervention programme to demystify Higher Education (HE) for junior cycle students. It gives students the opportunity to experience university activities through hands on, age-appropriate workshops on-campus. Through the JCWP, TU Dublin seeks to instil a sense of belonging in HE for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and expose young people to potential new areas of interest such as design, science, engineering, music, and technology.

The Access and Civic Engagement office (ACE)² in TU Dublin began delivering the JCWP to four local DEIS linked secondary schools in the Grangegorman Area in 2016. Through continuing philanthropic support, the JCWP was expanded to 13 schools in Central Dublin in the period 2018-20. Further funding from basis.point in 2021 for 3 years has enabled it to become more embedded in schools and the scope, range, and content of the workshops to be enhanced. The aims of the Junior Cycle Workshop Programme are to:

1. Open the TU Dublin Grangegorman Campus to DEIS schools
2. Provide opportunities for schools to engage with TU Dublin
3. Inform students of a variety of careers choices
4. Promote an awareness of study opportunities available in higher education

Workshops are offered to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year students, some aligned to national Awareness Weeks e.g., Maths Week, Design Week, Science Week or College Awareness Week. Teachers select workshops that best match students' interests and capabilities. The programme aims is to support young people in DEIS schools to gain more knowledge of higher education, to become familiar with a university campus and to make informed choices about their futures.

¹Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years). 658 Primary Schools and 194 Secondary Schools in Ireland have DEIS status.

² In 2022 following an organisational design process the Access and Civic Engagement office was restructured and this area of work is now known as Access and Outreach.

The expected outcomes of the JCWP are:

- Students are more informed about the opportunities in Higher Education.
- Students' aspirations and motivations in relation to Higher Education have improved.
- Students are inspired about different disciplines through engagement in workshops.
- Schools, teachers, and parents are more informed about the range of opportunities and pathways for learners that exist in Higher Education including apprenticeship.

Basis.point is the charity of the Irish funds industry and its wider ecosystem with the ambition to give every child in Ireland equal access to a brighter future by funding evidence based educational programmes that tackle complex issues arising as children journey through their educational lifecycle to reach their life goals. They fund programmes that offer children access to support structures to enable them to reach their potential that they ordinarily might not have access to.

The JCWP team have built strong working relationships with key personnel in participating schools, and through evaluation systems, are able to identify additional needs which TU Dublin can meet. In 2020, in response to the Covid 19 pandemic, the JCWP moved online, and despite the challenges of this format, managed to increase its engagement to 1,063 students. A key finding from schools following the pandemic was the need for increased support in delivering activities relating to student wellbeing. Thanks to funding from basis.point, TU Dublin piloted a new wellbeing initiative in April 2023 called '*Sport for Life*'- *Junior Cycle Wellbeing* using sport as part of a wellbeing programme to engage 1st years in their transition to secondary school.

1.2 Strategic Context

“Education has the power to transform lives, lift people out of poverty and break down cycles of disadvantage. Education is not an end in itself – it can enable people to reach their full potential, and create value, prosperity, resilience and a cohesive, sustainable and vibrant society. An inclusive higher education system is a priority for Ireland’s economic, social and equality objectives³”.

This section explores the strategic context within which the JCWP is delivered encompassing the National Access Plan, TU Dublin’s Strategic Intent 2030, progression rates to Higher Education for students with low socio-economic status and the importance of wellbeing for educational attainment.

1.2.1 National Access Plan (NAP) 2022-2028

The Programme for Access to Higher Education, Strand 3 (PATH 3) is a fund established by the Department of Education and Skills, now the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in 2017 as a commitment to support the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-28. This plan has two overarching ambitions.

1. The higher education student body, at all levels and across all programmes, reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population.
2. Higher education institutions are inclusive with universally designed environments which support student success, outcomes, equity, and diversity.

A whole-of-education approach to equity of access, participation and success in higher education involving all levels of the education system is a recurring theme in the NAP. This starts at pre-school and continues as the learner journeys through primary and post-primary into further and higher education. The NAP recognises the importance of early intervention and of creating a sense of belonging in education as well as suitable pathways that help students to meet their potential, raise their aspirations and support the ambition to pursue further education⁴.

The National Access Plan (NAP) identifies three main groups who are underrepresented in the higher education student population, namely.

- Socioeconomically disadvantaged.
- Members of Irish Traveller and Roma communities.
- Those with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities.

³ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-28

1.2.2 TU Dublin Strategic Intent 2030

Viewed through the lens of the UN Sustainability Goals (SDGs), the TU Dublin Strategic Intent 2030, was launched in January 2020 and focuses on three pillars of People, Planet and Partnership. These three pillars inform the university's approach to educational, research and engagement practices, ensuring that TU Dublin delivers real change, innovation, and impact for society. TU Dublin is committed to providing lifelong education opportunities at every level:

- Providing and promoting multiple entry points and progression pathways for all.
- Ensuring flexibility in structure, mode & place of delivery to suit an evolving global landscape.
- By providing our communities, industry, and wider society with targeted and relevant lifelong learning opportunities.

The Access and Outreach Service is cross-campus and is part of the Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Department in TU Dublin. It ensures the widest possible participation in higher education of the local communities they serve and underrepresented groups, with a particular focus on the National Access Plan and TU Dublin's Strategic Intent 2030 ambitions. Access and Outreach comprises a suite of activities related to breaking down the barriers between higher education and communities which are historically underserved by it and providing opportunities for alternative entry routes.

Close cooperation with targeted schools at primary and post primary levels and community groups are a hallmark of effective Access, in addition to maintaining expert levels of understanding and knowledge to assist students from underrepresented backgrounds to access HE. TU Dublin recognises Access as part of early intervention and provide programmes in DEIS primary and secondary schools linked to TU Dublin to ease the transition from primary to secondary education and third level. These include the STEM: Try Five Project, CLiC News, TY Challenge Programme and the Young Creators Programme. A range of supports are also available from TU Dublin for students in Senior Cycle.

1.2.3 Socio Economic Groups (SEG)

The continuing need for Access and Outreach is borne out by national data. While there has been a significant increase in participation rates - 55% in 2017, (Higher Education Authority, 2018) - wide social class disparities remain, with only 27% of low SEG students progressing to higher education in 2017 (Higher Education Authority, 2018).

According to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index from the Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) in the 2016 Census, third level progression rates to Higher Education (HE) remain much higher in affluent areas such as Dublin 6 (100%), Dublin 14 (96%), Dublin 2, 3, 4 (all 90%) than in less affluent areas such as Dublin 11 (54%), Dublin 10 (55%) and Dublin 1 and 22 (both 57%).

Findings from the NAP based on 2020/2021 HE student data highlighted that one in ten higher education students in Ireland were from disadvantaged areas, one in five were affluent, 29% were Marginally Below Average, and 42% were Marginally Above Average.

1.2.4 Wellbeing

Supporting all aspects of a student's life in addition to academic support is key to their success. Many junior cycle students in Irish secondary schools face difficulties with motivation, confidence, self-esteem, coping skills and expressing themselves. It is well documented that the transition from primary to secondary school has a significant impact on students, encompassing multiple social, academic, and environmental changes, which can negatively impact personal wellbeing.

In 2020, a UNICEF report warned that areas of progress on child wellbeing such as in education are at risk of falling behind because of the pandemic. UNICEF noted the "catastrophic" impact of the pandemic on children's wellbeing, mental and physical health, and development due to anxiety, stay-at-home restrictions, school closures and economic loss. Prior to the pandemic, the Irish government's Department of Education and Skills (DES) had released its Wellbeing Promotion Process, which includes a policy providing clear guidance for schools on developing and delivering wellbeing activities, a framework for practice and a self-evaluation process to be implemented in all secondary schools by 2023.

In addition, many parents face challenges in engaging with their children in the early teenage years, along with facing challenges when coping with the changes that come from entering the secondary school system. This has been magnified due to Covid 19 and repeated lockdowns. Parents can play a central role in their child's wellbeing and are invited to get involved. According to the OECD,

"...educational initiatives based in schools can raise the educational level of the adults involved, and result in a general sense of empowerment in the local community."

“Parental involvement, especially in areas of socio-economic deprivation, does not just benefit the children and the school - it is a crucial aspect of lifelong learning⁵”.

In response to the prevailing strategic and policy context, the JCWP was expanded in 2022-23, to incorporate a Student Wellbeing Programme. This provided specialist support to schools, students, and parents to promote a holistic approach to wellbeing and add value to existing programmes within schools.

1.3 Evaluation Methodology

To fully maximise the potential of the JCWP and to ensure that they are delivering a project that is achieving its objectives and desired outcomes, TU Dublin after a competitive tendering process commissioned Business Improvement Solutions (BIS) to undertake an independent evaluation of the JCWP since its inception in 2016. The evaluation methodology adopted by BIS to meet the terms of reference for the evaluation encompassed:

- A desk review of funding applications, national policies and strategies, TU Dublin internal surveys, and TU Dublin strategies and policies to deepen understanding of the JCWP.
- Design of an evaluation framework setting out the approach to the study.
- Semi-structured 1-1 interviews with teachers from 12 of the participating schools.
- Focus group discussion with 60 students who participated in the JCWP.
- Focus group discussions with 81 students who participated in ‘Sport for Life’.
- Online questionnaire completed by five teachers who accompanied students from their school to ‘Sport for Life.’
- On-going liaison with the TU Dublin Engagement Outreach Manager & Coordinator.
- Thematic analysis of the data to inform a final evaluation report.

This evaluation has been enhanced by access to internal evaluations undertaken by TU Dublin on the JCWP since 2018 for their annual donor impact reports to basis.point. The evaluation methodology and questionnaires for the annual evaluations were approved by TU Dublin’s Research Ethics Committee.

⁵ Parents as Partners in Schooling, OECD, taken from Information Booklet for participating DEIS schools

Section 2: The JCWP 2016-23

This section will explore the evolution of the JCWP since its inception.

2.1 Outputs

The JCWP commenced in 2016 with four local DEIS schools in the Grangegorman area. Datasets available from the 2017-18 academic year onwards are presented in Table 1. It demonstrates year on year growth in the number of schools engaging up to 2021-22 and in student visits to the TU Dublin campus to participate in the JCWP throughout the six-year period. Funding from basis.point has been secured annually since 2017-18.

It is noteworthy that while there was some drop off in numbers as expected in the 2020 spring and summer terms due to Covid 19, this did not extend to the 2020-21 academic year. There were 1,063 student visits in the 2020-21 year at a time when public health restrictions were most stringent. Table 1 and Figure 1 illustrate the increase in numbers attending the JCWP over the 2016-23 period.

Year	No. of Schools	Total Student Visits
2016-2017	4	201
2017-2018	5	609
2018-2019	7	858
2019-2020	9	933
2020-2021	11	1063
2021-2022	13	1072
2022-2023	12	1248

Table 1 JCWP Key Statistics 2016-23

In addition to the challenges brought about by Covid 19, staff changes and gaps in project coordination it was also a period of significant organisational change with the merger of Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Institute of Technology Tallaght and Institute of Technology Blanchardstown with TU Dublin and the resultant restructuring.

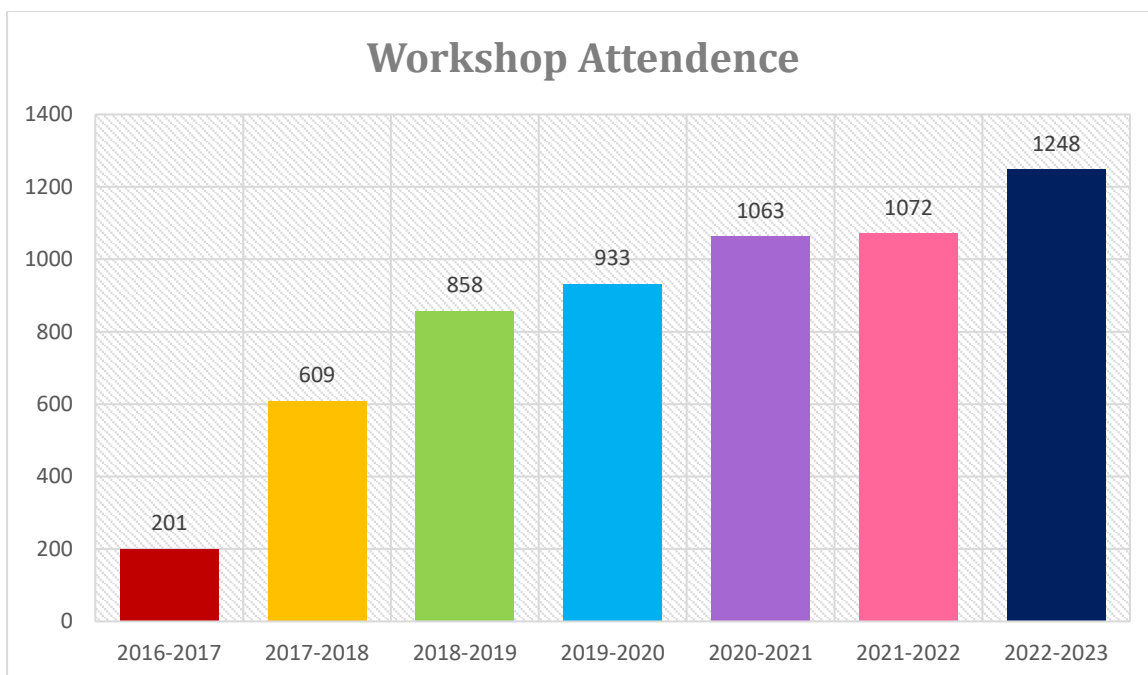


Figure 1 Workshop Numbers 2016-23

In 2021-22, 63% (n=672) student visitors were male with 37% (n=400) female. In 2022-23, 59% (n=739) were male and 41% (n=509) female. The participating schools detailed in Table 2 are located on both sides of the Liffey in an area of Central Dublin spanning Dublin 1 to Dublin 8. All are designated DEIS schools and their student population of circa 150-300 are reflective of the modern demographic of Dublin with many nationalities and ethnic groups represented.

School	Area
Larkin Community College	D1
O'Connell Secondary School	D1
CBS Westland Row	D2
CBS James Street Secondary School	D8
Marino College	D3
St. Joseph's Secondary CBS	D3
Ringsend Technical College	D4
Cabra Community College	D7
St. Joseph's Stanhope Secondary School	D7
St. Paul's CBS	D7
Mercy Secondary-Inchicore	D8
Mount Carmel Secondary School	D8
Presentation Warrenmount Secondary School	D8

Table 2 Dublin Post Codes of Participant Schools

As part of the approach coming out of Covid 19, TU Dublin in 2021-22 facilitated a hybrid blend of in-school and on-campus visits. The workshops for Semester 1 started out in the schools rather than on campus in adherence to TU Dublin Covid-19 protocols. While this proved challenging for the team in respect of workshop equipment carriage and travel, it was a valuable community outreach piece in terms of finding out more about the needs and resource of schools and their students.

2.2 Workshops

The depth and scope of the JCWP evolved with new workshops offered year on year. Workshops are aligned with the Junior Cycle curriculum and reflect the priority towards Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) based subjects. Table 3 presents an overview of workshop activity over the five-year period commencing September 2018. It evidences an average delivery of 47 workshops per year. In 2020-21 when Covid was at its most restrictive, 43 workshops were delivered including nine Science Covid workshops attended by 169 students from six schools.

There is some indication that workshops come in and out of favour with Business & Entrepreneurship delivered in 2018-19 and 2019-20 and not appearing again until 2022-23. The addition of Robotics, Renewable Energy and Forensics is indicative of the responsiveness of TU Dublin to feedback from teachers and schools on subjects that would benefit students the most. Trends in 3rd year suggest a focus on study skills, health, mindfulness, nutrition, and wellbeing in advance of sitting the Junior Certificate.

2.2.1 Workshop Content

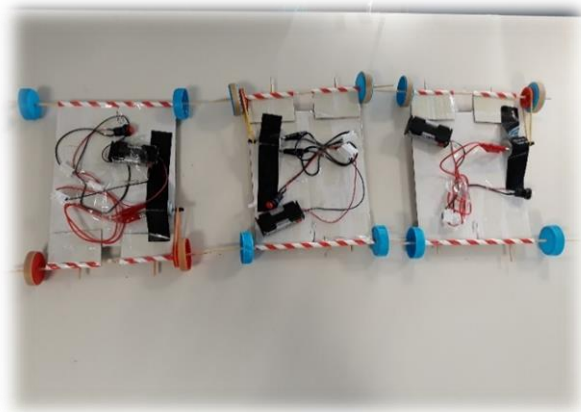
Details on workshop content and delivery is offered in the remainder of this section.

Graphic Design



In pairs, students interview one another, create a point-of view, ideated, and roughly sketch out several designs for the perfect button badge for their partner. Regardless of their creative abilities, with text and basic shapes, the students can produce a badge of a reasonable artistic standard. Workshops take place using laptops with artwork created using online software or by students themselves.

Product Design



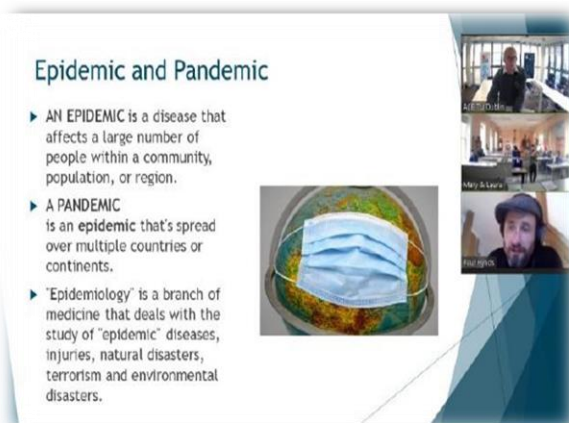
Students are given a presentation on propulsion, potential and kinetic energy, Newton's Laws of Motion, and the Product Design Process. Components for rubber band cars are given to each student. Once they have the theory, in pairs, the students build a working rubber band car. Students individually build a working car enabling a competition to be held to determine the car that will travel the furthest.

Electronics



In Electronics, students learn about atoms, ions, static electricity, basic components, and open, closed, and short circuits. They then proceed to use newly acquired materials to assemble two redesigned projects, a light sabre, and a breadboard circuit. Students keep their projects and take them home ensuring they can experiment with their creations and get a better practical understanding of the subject.

Science & Health {Covid 19}



The COVID-19 pandemic raised many questions, which justified the development of a specific science workshop. This workshop attempted to answer many Covid related questions from the scientific, health and human perspective. Many areas of study which can be linked to the pandemic and its impact on society were covered: Epidemic and Pandemic, Zoonotic Diseases, R Zero Number, Data Analysis, Flattening the Curve, Pathogens, Germs and Antigens, Viruses, Immune System, Corona Virus Parts, Vaccination, Prevention, and News Sources.

Fitness



In the second lockdown, there was a lot of stress for students dealing with the homeschooling aspect of the pandemic and the strain that it brought in terms of accessing equipment and motivation for schoolwork. The students were brought through the steps of a 30 minute High Intensity Interval Training workout session by the TU Dublin Sports & Fitness team. The students carried this out through school and home supervision with cameras off. No fitness equipment was needed as it was all based on bodyweight exercise.

Sports & Nutrition



This workshop investigated different areas of Sports Science and included a range of sporting activities, delivered by the staff in TU Dublin Sports. The workshop also focused on having a balanced diet and attitudes towards healthy eating. Students were able to work out the different food groups and the number of units required in the food pyramid for their own eating habits.

Mathematics

The emphasis on the workshop was building students mathematical confidence and having as much fun along the way as possible. They used simple maths concepts to guide the students through a pizza and patterns-based problem and solution.

Business & Entrepreneurship

Incorporating the best of a board game into a business context, this workshop encourages students to run their own business and compete, collaborate, and negotiate with other students. This workshop is designed to recreate the real-life thrills and challenges of entrepreneurship in a fun and educational social learning experience and at the same time provide an engaging and experiential group learning opportunity.

Music



In this workshop students use music technology software to create their own compositions. Students learn the basic physics of sound, experimenting and playing with different instrument, and developing listening skills. Students cover the basic sequencing and compositional skills and building blocks of making music using loops,

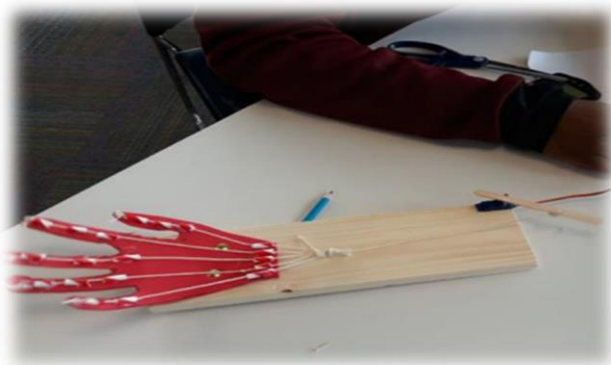
samples and recording instruments. This workshop assists and supports teachers with ideas for the classroom-based assessments on the Junior Cycle Curriculum.

Renewable Energy



The workshop allows students to explore wind and solar renewable energy technologies. By learning about this technology through experimentation, students not only find out how these technologies work, but hopefully they will be inspired to explore alternative energy technologies outside the classroom. During this workshop students build their own wind turbine. The sense of accomplishment and wonder in completing the turbine and witnessing energy generation was recounted by pupils during the focus groups with students discussed in Section 4.

Biomechanics



Biomechanics is the science of movement of a living body, including how muscles, bones, tendons, and ligaments work together to produce movement. In this workshop students make and design their own bionic arm and use 'Electromyography' to measure muscle response or electrical activity in response to a nerve's stimulation of the muscle.

Study Skills



The main purpose of the study skills webinar is to help students with their organisational techniques and to teach them how to study. The aim is to increase their confidence in their own ability to achieve. Teachers in schools that have been involved with the JCWP for a few years felt that the study skills workshop contributed to good Junior Certificate results.

Architecture



The range of activities in this workshop gives students a chance to participate and experience real-world maths applications as they build a model of their dream home. Components of this workshop include room costing (catalogue prices, exchange rates and additional costs), measurements and scaling, area, and materials calculations.

Robotic Programming



Students work in pairs during this workshop and are challenged to programme an Edison robot and complete several different tasks. The robotic programming process involves problem solving and collaboration. Students compete to get their robot to complete an obstacle course.

CSI Forensics



The Crime Scene Investigation Forensics workshop with the help of the An Garda Síochána and PhD students at TU Dublin, gives the secondary school students the opportunity to solve a crime using forensic entomology, chromatography, fingerprinting and handwriting analysis. Students also get to extract DNA. This workshop has developed significantly over the years and contributors to the focus group discussions vividly recalled its various components.

2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
Title	Number	Title	Number	Title	Number	Title	Number	Title	Number
First Year		First Year		First Year		First Year		First Year	
Design Build	5	Architecture	2	Graphic Design	8	Graphic Design	11	Graphic Design	7
Design Process	5	Design Process	2	Product Design	1	Product Design	8	Product Design	7
Product Design	8	Product Design	8	Nutrition & Wellbeing	4	Electronics	8	Business & Entrepreneurship	5
Business & Entrepreneurship	2								
Second Year		Second Year		Second Year		Second Year		Second Year	
Study Skills	6	Study Skills	6	Study Skills	1	Biomechanics	5	Biomechanics	2
Electronics	3	Electronics	1	Electronics	3	Maths	2	Forensics	6
Renewable Energy	2	Renewable Energy	3	Fitness	5	Music	2	Music	5
Robotic Programming	5	Robotic Programming	6	Nutrition & Wellbeing	2			Renewable Energy	5
Forensics	4	Forensics	7	Maths	1			Robotics	1
Sports Science	2			Science (Covid 19)	9				
Third Year		Third Year		Third Year		Third Year		Third Year	
Wellbeing & Mindfulness	4	Wellbeing & Mindfulness	6	Study Skills	6	Study Skills	7	Study Skills	8
Study Skills	5	Study Skills	8	Music	3	Maths	1		
						Nutrition & Wellbeing	5		
Total	49	Total	49	Total	43	Total	49	Total	46

Table 3 JCWP Workshops 2018-23

Section 3: 'Sport for Life' Wellbeing Programme

Student wellbeing was the overriding priority for both schools and TU Dublin emerging from Covid 19. Positive feedback from the JCWP Sports workshop was a catalyst to explore a more intensive sport-based programme. With the support of basis.point, TU Dublin designed a pilot wellbeing initiative for Junior Cycle students in secondary schools.

3.1 Aims & Objectives

The 'Sport for Life' wellbeing programme aim was to increase the emotional wellbeing and mental health of students by offering an extensive programme of specialist supports and activities. The transition from primary to secondary school has a significant impact on students, encompassing multiple social, academic and environmental changes, which can negatively impact wellbeing. To support students in this transition, the first pilot of 'Sport for Life' in April 2023 was targeted at first year students with eight DEIS schools participating.

‘SPORT FOR LIFE’
Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme
TU Dublin City Campus
April 17th - May 25th 2023

‘The will must be stronger than the skill’
Muhammad Ali

**Féidearthachtaí as Cuimse
Infinite Possibilities**

The TU Dublin Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme is delighted to offer a new series of workshops and sports activities to promote wellbeing, build leadership, emotional resilience, mental health and positivity in daily life to first-year students.

Alongside the student programme, schools will receive resources to enhance wellbeing activities. Parents will also access a webinar series to help them understand their child’s emotional needs and support wellbeing.

basis.point
joined up giving

Dublin City Sport & Wellbeing Partnership

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The objectives of the 'Sport for Life' Wellbeing Programme are to:

- Add value and specialist support to schools’ wellbeing programmes.
- Provide structures and supports for schools and parents to work together to develop a holistic approach to students’ wellbeing.
- Strengthen students’ resilience and levels of self-confidence, self-esteem, awareness and self-belief.
- Encourage students to recognise their own unique strengths.
- Increase awareness of how to express feelings and enhance emotional and social skills.
- Empower parents to understand and support their child’s emotional needs and general wellbeing and feel more comfortable and confident in their relationships with their children.

3.2 Participation

Students engaged in the five-week programme designed to build leadership skills, emotional and mental resilience and positive wellbeing.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2023

'SPORT FOR LIFE'- JUNIOR CYCLE WELLBEING 17 April - 25th May 2023

Monday - Thursday (MORNING/AFTERNOON -WORKSHOPS & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES)

WEEK 1 (17th April):
Transition to 1st year and Study skills *In schools

WEEK 2 (24th April):
Introduction to Mindfulness and Meditation + Go Balistic Taster Session (Soccer, GAA, Basketball) – TU Dublin Campus

WEEK 3 (1st May):
Confidence building and Positive Body Image + Circuit Training and Yoga – TU Dublin Campus

WEEK 4 (8th May) :
Emotional intelligence, empathy and compassion + Boxing + Martial Arts – TU Dublin Campus

WEEK 5 (15th May):
Anger, Stress and anxiety, self esteem and Resilience + Tag Rugby and Frisbee – TU Dublin Campus

WEEK 6 (22th May):
Presentation and award ceremonies

* All facilitators in school events have been Garda vetted. Booking link will include social media consent form for schools.

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A total of 343 young people engaged with the 'Sport for Life' Wellbeing Programme from eight schools. 65% (n=224) were male and 35% (n=119) were female. The wellbeing programme recognised the crucial role parents have to play in enhancing their child and family wellbeing. TU Dublin coordinated two workshops for parents prior to Christmas 2022.

Workshop 1 was a parental guide to the key skills and attributes students need to succeed in school. Workshop 2 focused on the skill of assertive communication and how it can reduce conflict between parents and their children; and between parents (both living together and separated). Further consultation with schools indicated that courses to support parents should be offered to parents when pupils are in 6th class prior to entry to secondary school. A programme of both face to face and online programmes are planned for roll put in September 2023

3.3 Feedback



The external evaluator observed the programme over two days and, in the process, engaged with 81 students and four teachers and school support staff on site. 90% (n=73) of students expressed that they were very satisfied with the programme and it represented a good use of their time.

90% (n=73) of students indicated that their confidence in themselves had increased as a result of the programme. Similarly their confidence to participate in Sport had increased as in some cases they had partaken in sports such as cricket and rugby which they had never done before. Students of all physical literacy levels felt included by the coaches and this engendered an increased motivation to “give it a go”. There was also a sense that the programme had facilitated students to recognise their own strengths.

80% (n=64) felt that the wellbeing and mindfulness elements helped them to understand their emotions better and crucially made them more likely to talk to someone about their feelings. Both teachers and students agreed that it helped to bring out a latent competitive spirit in some students and that the programme has made them more resilient. 70% (n=56) indicated the programme enabled them to make connections with classmates that hadn’t been possible since they started in first year in August 2022.

“I have been sitting beside people in class for months, but we never really spoke, then during the sports we got talking” Sport for Life Participant

In order to ensure the highest standards of delivery, TU Dublin engaged external expertise in the field of wellbeing for teenagers to deliver the programmes. The diversity of the students with many different nationalities was evident, participants from India were naturals at cricket which is their national sport. Teachers highlighted that students who were autistic or had a learning difficulty were seamlessly included in the sports and group activities. This was testament to the coaches who included professionals from Dublin City Sports Partnership and Leinster Rugby. During the “go ballistic” week one activities, the coaches monitored the students and tailored the games and activities for the subsequent weeks from this assessment.

One of the main objectives of the programme was to add value to existing school or club-based sports that students are or could be involved in. 40% (n=40) of the students sampled indicated that they were involved with a sporting club. One third of the sample (n=27) indicated that in the previous week they did a total of 60 minutes physical activity on 3 or more days. Both teachers and students were unanimous that it was the best time of year to run the programme for first years as it is coming towards the end of term and there is an increased possibility of good weather. 100% (n=81) of students would like to see the programme continue in the future.

An additional⁶ five teachers and school support staff completed an online survey to ensure their insights were reflected in the evaluation. Table 4 presents the results from the rated survey questions which were asked on a scale of 1 (low satisfaction level) to 10 (highest satisfaction level) Satisfaction levels were very high ranging from 8.6 (86%) to 9.4 (94%).

Question	Rating
Satisfaction with the coordination of the student wellbeing programme.	9.4
Satisfaction with the delivery of the student wellbeing programme?	9.0
Satisfaction with the duration (6 weeks) of the student wellbeing programme?	9.2
Satisfaction with the content of the student wellbeing programme?	9.0
Satisfaction with the time of year chosen to deliver the student wellbeing programme?	8.6

Table 4 Sport for Life School personnel feedback

⁶ To the four teachers who engaged with the evaluator on-site

100% of teachers (n=5) felt that the activities and sports were inclusive for students of all abilities. Group and game-based activities, mixing of all student's capabilities, bonding, being led by a new voice, having fun, exposure to new sports (cricket and rugby to some) and realising their potential/ skills were identified by teachers as being the best parts of the programme. Smaller wellbeing groups and creating a leader board or an activity that happens over the course of the 6 weeks that they can work on (A Push challenge, A 1km time trial loop) were among the suggestions for future programmes.

Training for teachers to integrate 'Sport for Life' activities into the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum and in mindfulness and resilience was suggested to enhance student wellbeing. Teachers provided examples of wellbeing activities currently on offer in schools such as, nurture room, restorative practice, and clubs and societies.

Teachers felt that parents would be interested in attending the closing award ceremony for future programmes. Some teachers suggested an open morning in the first week so parents could meet TU Dublin staff and Sport for Life coaches. Teachers suggested parental involvement could be increased through collaboration between TU Dublin and School Parents Committees.

Section 4: Stakeholder Consultation

This section presents the feedback from the consultations with students and teachers and is inclusive of data collection collated by BIS in the 2022-23 academic year and data collected by the TU Dublin Access & Outreach team for their annual reports to funders from 2018. For clarity and ease of reference, we will present the approach adopted and findings on an annual basis in the subsequent sub sections. Quotes are included in the relevant sections from students who engaged in the JCWP and teachers from the participant DEIS schools who accompanied students to the workshops or coordinated their attendance.

4.1 2017-18

This programme was evaluated using a combination of both student and school personnel survey questionnaires, as well as feedback from a focus group that consisted of guidance counsellors, and school support staff. The Access and Outreach team administered two questionnaires to students. The first was completed before the workshop to get a baseline understanding of their perceptions and aspirations. A second questionnaire was completed after the workshop to capture and understand any changes.

4.1.1 Students

Based on a sample of 19 students on a 1-10 Likert scale, the recorded average interest in attending third level prior to attending the JCWP was 7.3. This rose to 7.5 after participation. When asked if they felt that third level was a 'possibility' for them, students on average responded 8, with 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 10 = 'strongly agree'. Before the JCWP, students, on average, rated their 'comfort visiting TU Dublin on their own or with their family' as 6.3. Participating in the JCWP seemed to diminish fears that students held, as the average rating after completing rose to 7. Students experienced an increase in knowledge; before attending their respective workshop(s), students on average indicated their knowledge level on the respective topic as 4.7 out of 10. After participating, on average, their knowledge level of the subject increased to 8.3.

4.1.2 School Personnel

Out of a sample of ten comprising guidance counsellors, teachers and school support staff, when asked if they would recommend the JCWP 100% said 'yes'. On average, based on a 1-10 Likert Scale, they reported satisfaction with the workshop content as 7.2. The average satisfaction score in relation to workshop format was 7.5. In terms of the range of workshop elements, schools, on average, indicated a satisfaction level of 8.7. The average satisfaction level of school personnel with the presentation or delivery of the workshops and their effectiveness in keeping the students engaged was 7.8 and 7.5 respectively.

4.2 2018-19

The 2018-19 JCWP was evaluated using a combination of both student and school personnel survey questionnaires. Pre and post programme questionnaires were used to gain an insight into students' perceptions on attending third level education.

4.2.1 Students

A total of 376 questionnaires were completed by participants. Based on a 1-10 Likert scale, the recorded average interest in attending third level, prior to the JCWP was 8.3. The interest level rose to 9.2 after participating. When students were asked if they enjoyed the workshops, on a scale of 1-10 (1 = hated it, 10 = loved it) 75% of students scored the workshops with a score of 7 or higher. In all workshops, students indicated an increase in knowledge gained.

4.2.2 School Personnel

A total of 29 school personnel (guidance counsellors, teachers, support staff) completed surveys. Feedback was received on nine of the workshops provided. A large proportion of school personnel (78.6%) indicated that the workshops attended achieved the aims set out for the programme. All 29 school personnel who completed questionnaires would recommend the workshops to other schools and found the workshops have been of benefit to the students who participated.

On average based on a 1-10 Likert Scale, school personnel indicated their satisfaction with the workshop content and format as 8.5. In terms of the range of workshop interactive elements, school personnel on average indicated a satisfaction level of 8.5. The average satisfaction level of school personnel with the level of challenge for students in workshops was 8.7. When asked about their perceptions of the degree to which students were kept engaged during the workshops, school personnel indicated an average of 8.4

"The students loved their visits to TU Dublin.....They gained an immense amount of knowledge from attending the workshops. They learned about careers they had no knowledge about before..... Their minds were open to new talents and interests they did not know they had.....Being part of the workshops at TU Dublin has opened up the world of our first-year students and has started them on the road of thinking about their futures and all the possibilities open to them". School Guidance Counsellor

4.3 2019-20

The 2019-20 JCWP was evaluated using a combination of both student and school personnel survey questionnaires, school staff also contributed verbally and by email to the co-ordinator during and after workshops. It should be noted that in this academic year, schools were closed from March 2020 in response to Covid 19.

4.3.1 Students

356 pre programme questionnaires were returned, no post programme questionnaires were administered due to the onset of Covid 19. Students were asked on a 1-10 Likert Scale to respond to a range of questions. When asked how comfortable they felt visiting TU Dublin on your own or with your family (1 = Extremely Uncomfortable, 10 = Extremely Comfortable).

- 1st Years – Students’ average level of comfort was 6.9 out of 10.
- 2nd Years - Students’ average level of comfort was 6.6 out of 10.
- 3rd Years – Students’ average level of comfort was 7.5 out of 10.

When asked how interested they were in attending college one day?

- 1st years -85.2% of students indicated that they were interested in attending college.
- 2nd years-85.1% of students indicated that they were interested in attending college.
- 3rd years - 93% of students indicated that they were interested in attending college.

Students experienced an increase in knowledge; before attending their respective workshop(s), students on average indicated their knowledge level on the respective topic as 4.9 out of 10. After participating, on average, their knowledge level of the subject increased by to 8.2.

4.3.2 School Personnel

86% of school personnel indicated that the workshops fully achieved the aims set out for the programme. Based on a 1-10 Likert Scale, school personnel indicated their satisfaction with the workshop content as 9.3. The average satisfaction score in relation to workshop format was also 9.3. On the range of workshop interactive elements, school personnel on average indicated a satisfaction level of 9.0.

The average satisfaction level of school personnel with the level of challenge for students in workshops was 8.9. When asked about their perceptions of the degree to which students were kept engaged during the workshops, school personnel indicated an average of 9.0. Individual qualitative feedback from Guidance Counsellors helps to verify the benefits to the students from participating.

“Excellent work, if we keep on investing in education and harness talent like this the future of the country is bright! Thanks to all” Teacher in participant DEIS school.

4.4 2020-21 & 2021-22

Delivery of the JCWP was online from September 2020 but had reverted to on-campus delivery by late 2021. As similar tools were used to evaluate the JCWP albeit with slightly different sample sizes in both academic years, we will compare the results in this section.

4.4.1 Students

Students were asked questions about the workshops they attended and asked to respond indicating Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree as appropriate.

In 2020-21, 92% (n=127) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were practical & hands on. In 2021-22, it was 91% (n=140)

92% (n=127) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop materials were easy to use and follow. In 2021-22, it was 93% (n=130)

92% (n=127) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were engaging. In 2021-22, it was 91% (n=140)

92% (n=127) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they learned new information about the topic during the workshops. In 2021-22, it was 91% (n=138)

92% (n=127) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were delivered was at the right pace. In 2021-22, it was 89% (n=132)

92% (n=127) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the presentation of the workshops was clear and understandable. In 2021-22, it was 90% (n=136)

92% (n=127) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were enjoyable. In 2021-22, it was 96% (n=161)

92% (n=127) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the workshop to a friend. In 2021-22, it was 88% (n=130)

4.4.2 School Personnel

School personnel were asked to complete an online questionnaire on a range of questions in relation to the workshops. They were asked to rate each statement on a scale of 1- 5, (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree). The average response rating of 4.5 in 2020-21 and 4.6 in 2021-22 across all questions is testament to a high level of satisfaction in respect of the format, delivery, challenge, materials, and relevance to the Junior Cycle Curriculum.

“It is always good to have classroom learning reinforced by outside voices. The workshops are a novelty and in a difficult year were a break from the norm.” Teacher in participant DEIS school

“Junior Cycle workshop presenters are genuinely so interested and deeply invested in student welfare and promoting student support. This becomes apparent in the stellar standards of the workshops. They really engage and sustain the interest of our students; this is not an easy thing to do!” Teacher in participant DEIS school

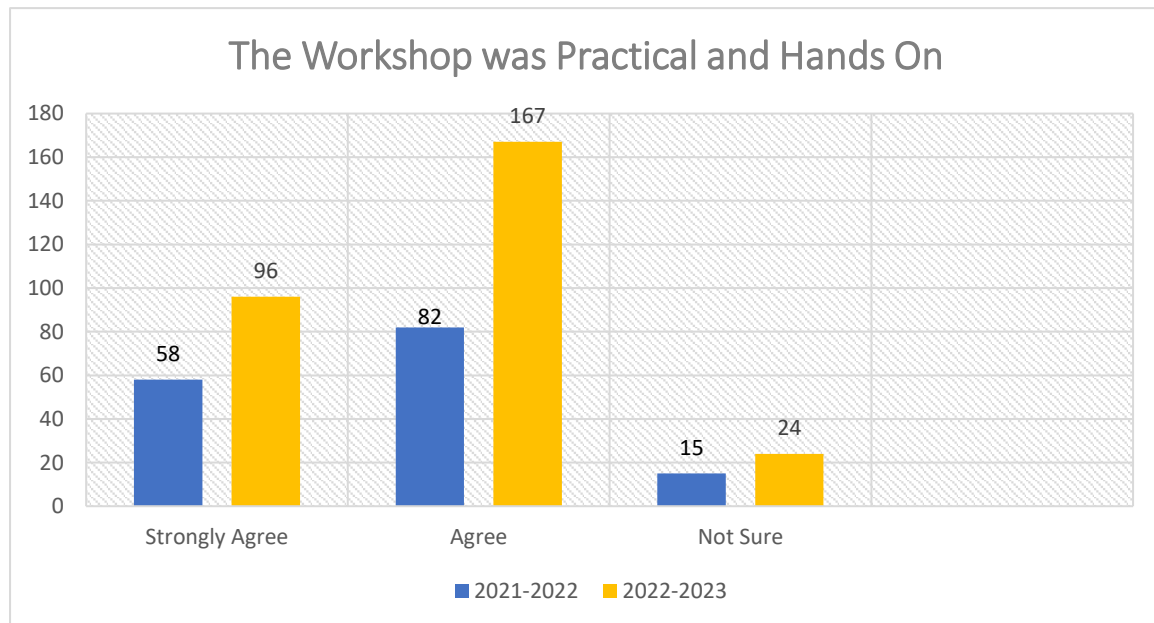
School personnel comprising teachers and guidance counsellors in both years were asked to complete an online questionnaire on a range of questions relating to the coordination, content, delivery, and impact of the workshops. 26 school personnel responded to the questionnaire. They were asked to rate each statement on a scale of 1- 5, (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree). Table 4 presents the average rating out of 5 per question. All questions were rated at 4.5 or above in 2021-22 demonstrating a very high level of satisfaction across all aspects of the workshops. Ratings were slightly lower in 2020-21 with one rating below 4.0, however the majority were at 4.5 or above out of 5.

Question	Rating 2021	Rating 2022
Workshops were a good format	4.6	4.5
Workshops had a good range of interactive elements	4.5	4.5
Workshops at appropriate level to challenge age groups	4.5	4.6
Workshops were appropriate length	4.0	4.5
Workshops presented in interesting & engaging manner	4.0	4.6
Workshops kept students engaged	3.8	4.5
Learning Materials were useful & well prepared	4.5	4.7

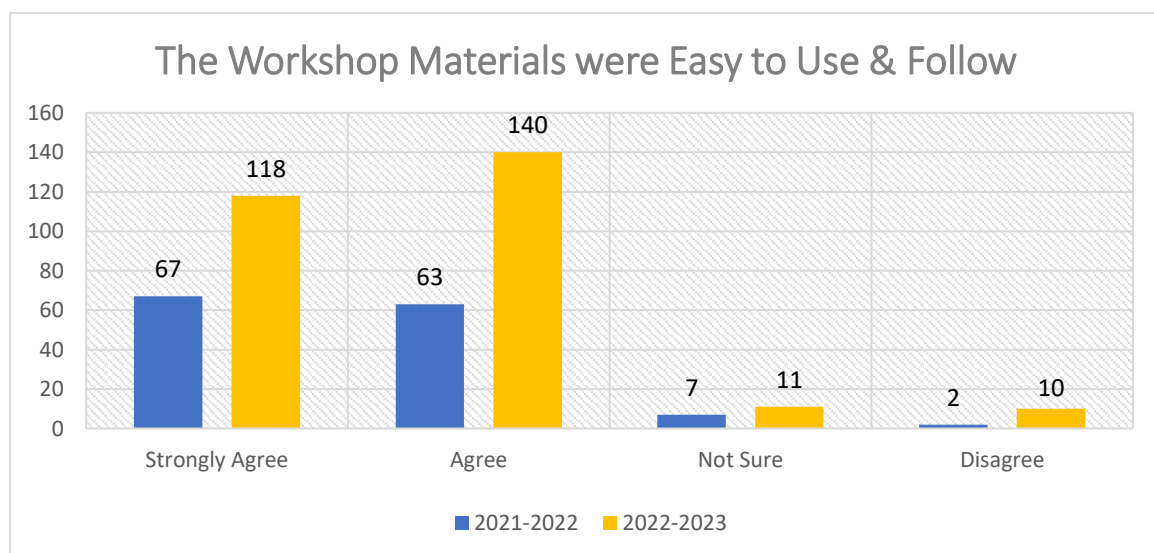
Table 5 School personnel feedback 2020-21 and 2021-22

4.5 2022-23

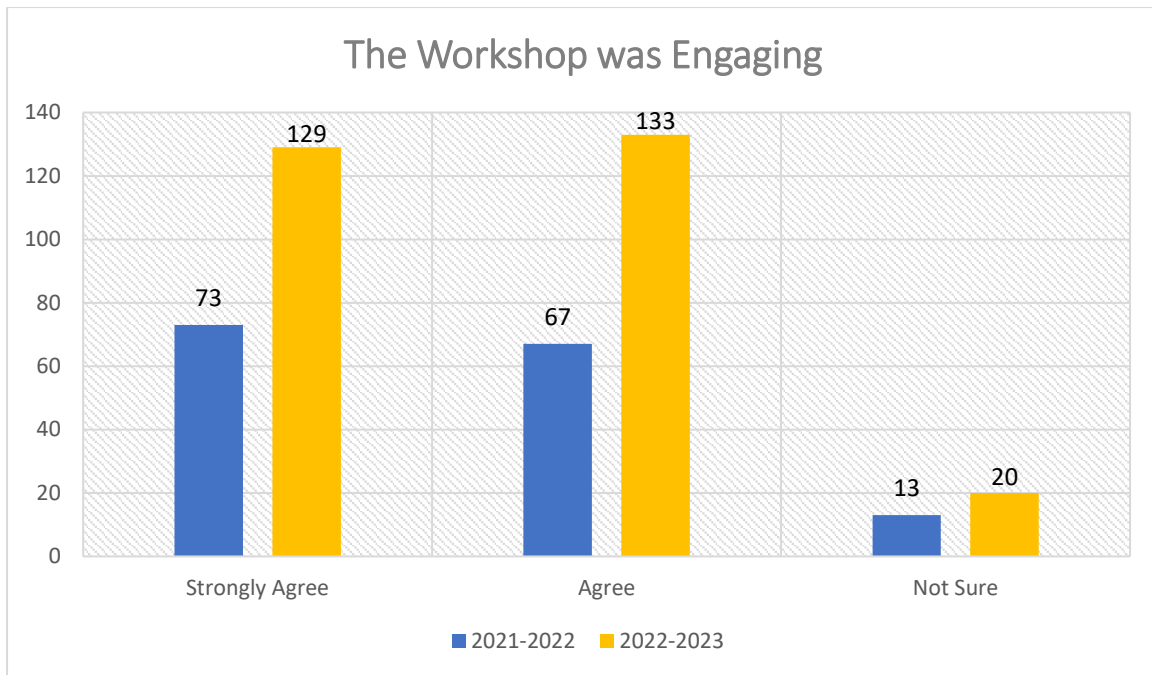
Equivalent tools and ratings to previous years were used by Outreach staff for the evaluation of the 2022-23 JCWP. The participant survey response rate was significantly higher in 2022-23 than previous years with circa 280 responses to each question. For each of the questions 85% or more respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Chart illustrations are offered below in comparison with 2021-22.



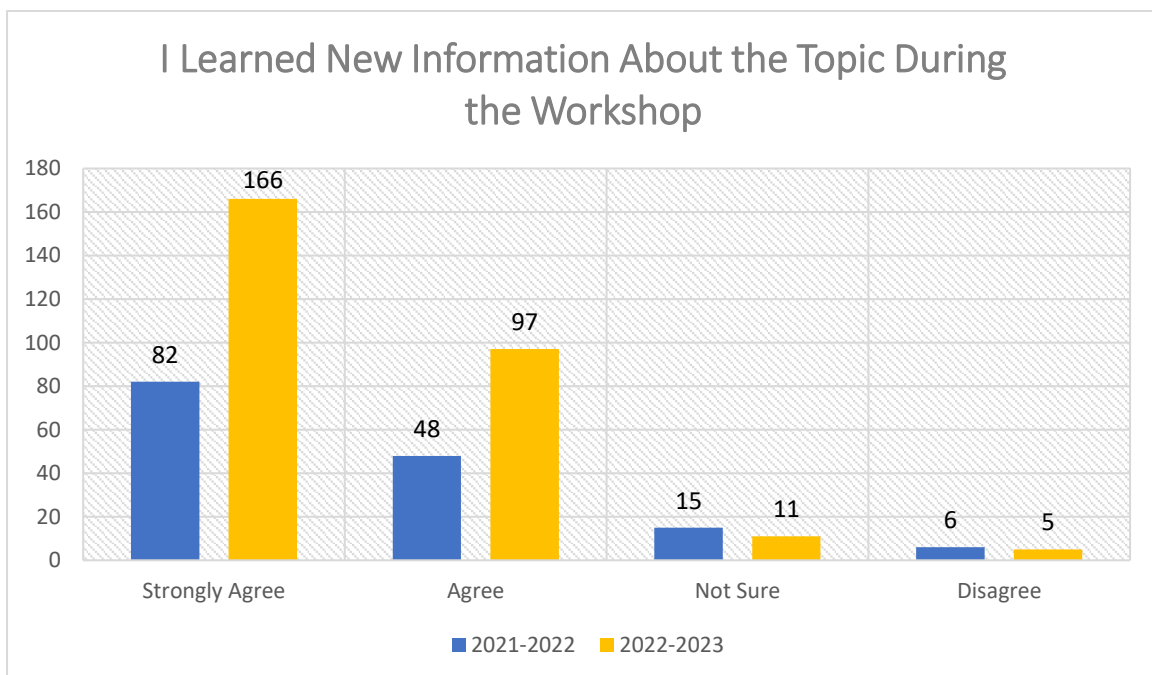
92% (n=263) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were practical and hands on. In 2021-22, it was 91% (n=140).



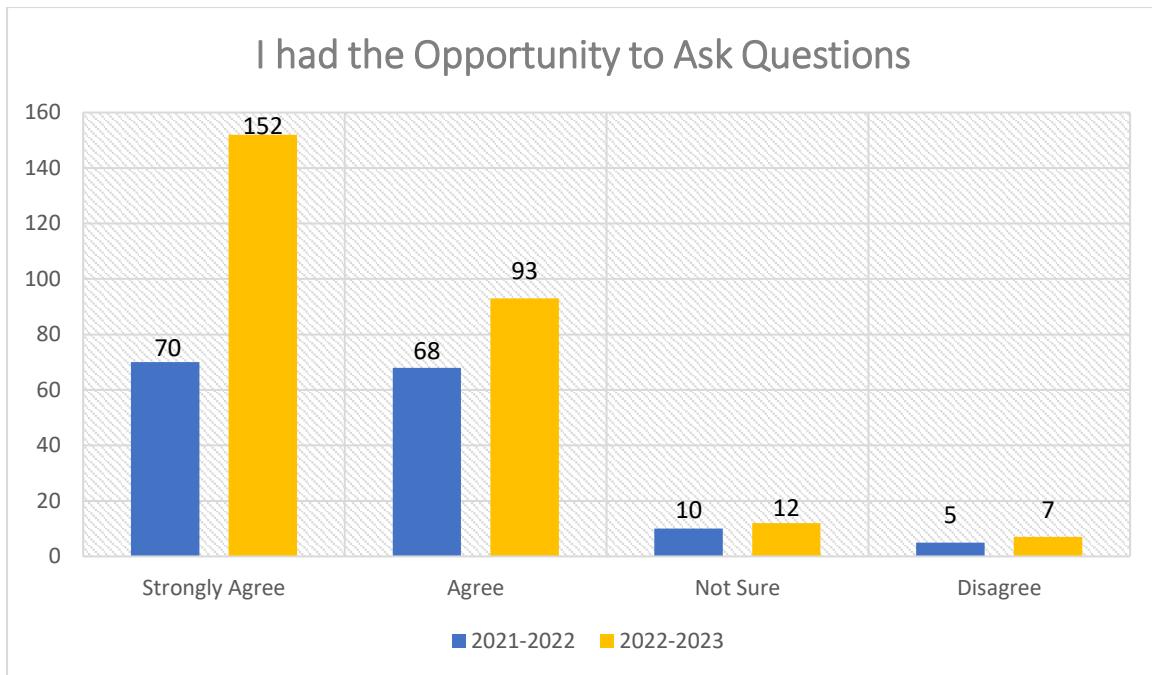
92% (n=258) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop materials were easy to use and follow. In 2021-22, it was 93% (n=130).



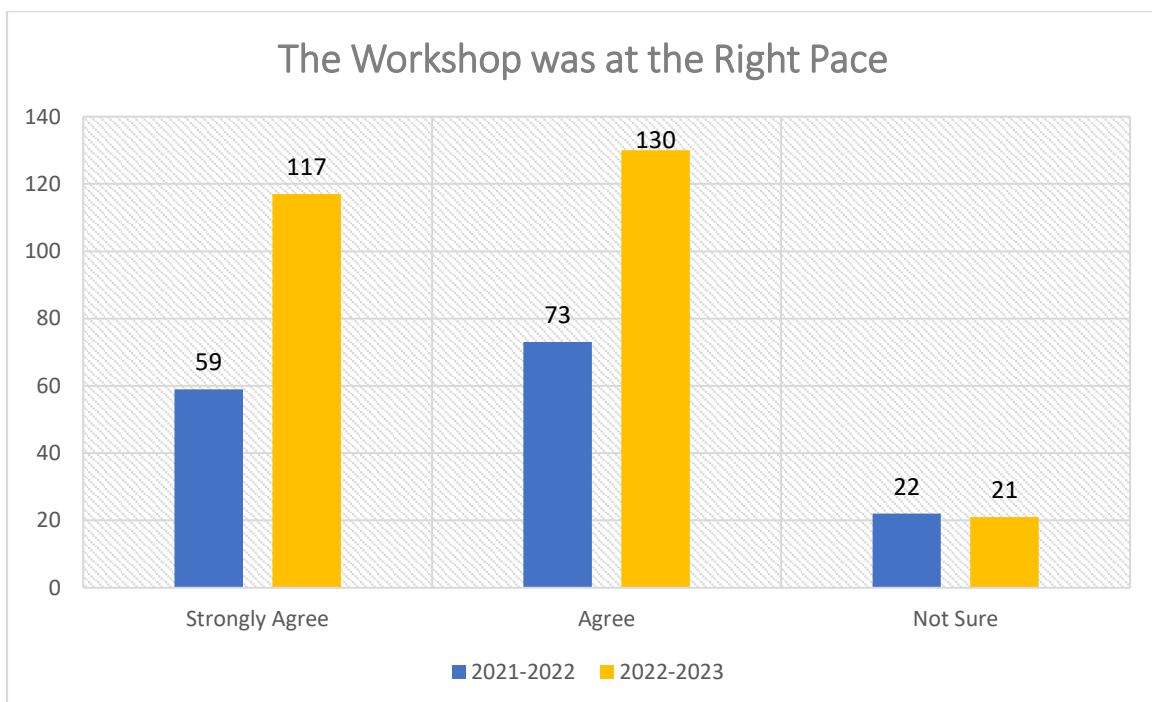
93% (n=262) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were engaging. In 2021-22, it was 91% (n=140).



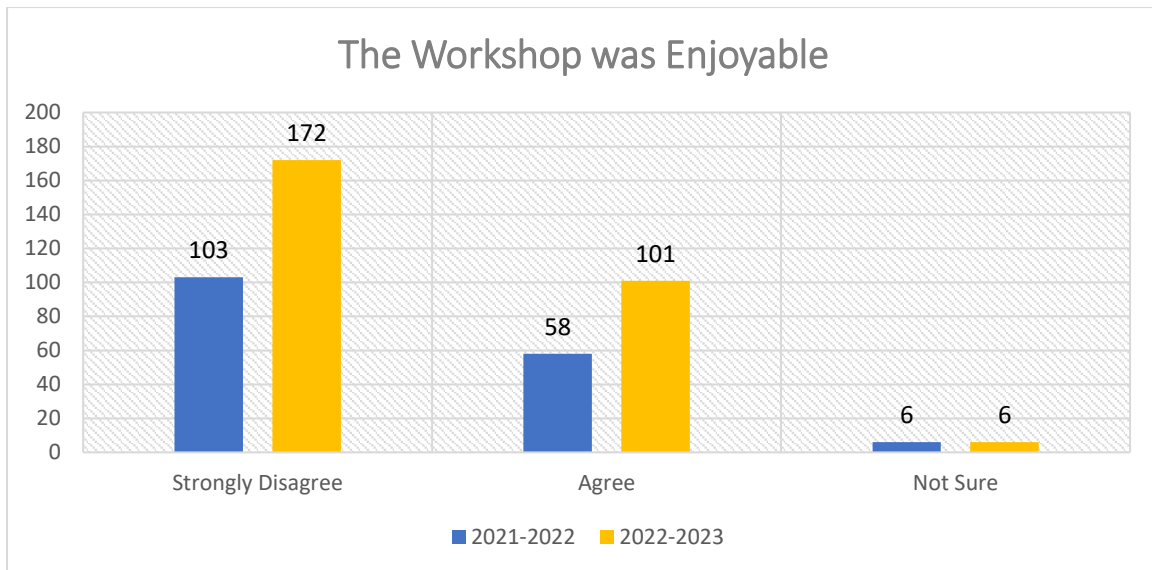
94% (n=263) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they learned new information about the topic during the workshops. In 2021-22, it was 91% (n=138).



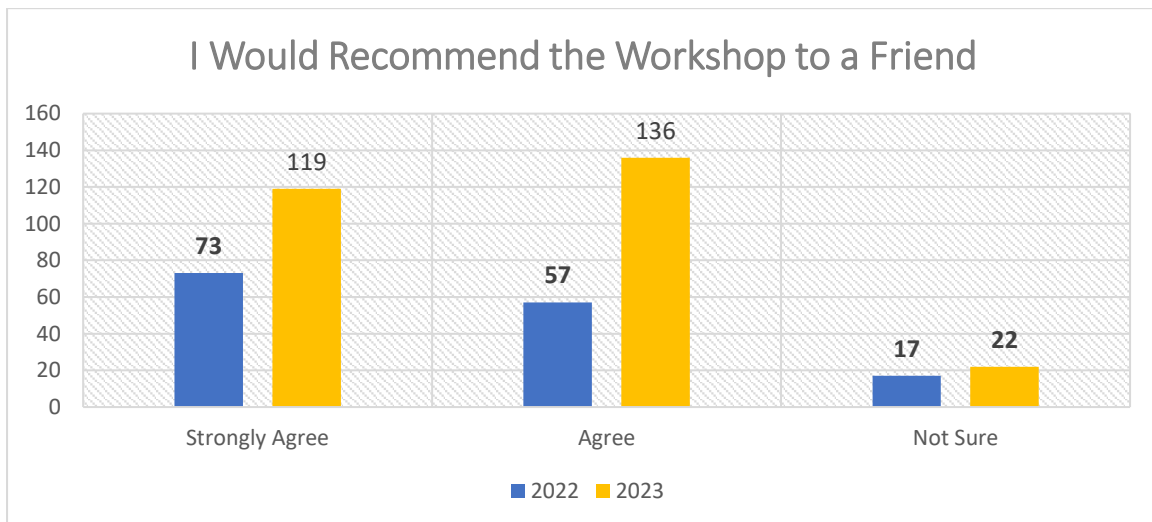
93% agreed or strongly agreed that they had the opportunity to ask questions during the workshop. In 2021-22 it was 91% (n=138).



92% agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop was facilitated at the right pace. In 2021-22 it was 86% (n=132).



98% agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop was enjoyable. In 2021-22 it was 96% (n=161).



92% (n=255) agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the workshop to a friend. In 2021-22 it was 88% (n=130).

4.5.1 Consultation with Teachers for External Evaluation

12 teachers participated in semi-structured 1-1 discussions with the external evaluator in the months of November and December 2022. 66% (n=8) were guidance teachers, 17% (n=2) were Deputy Principals with the remainder Maths and English teachers. Three of the teachers were from schools that had been involved with the JCWP since its inception in 2016. All of the other schools were JCWP participants for three or more years. This subsection thematically analyses the teacher feedback with quotes from teachers in participant DEIS schools interwoven.

Many of the schools were also engaged with TU Dublin's Senior Cycle Access Programme and relationships had been fostered over a long period of time, the JCWP was a seamless transition for some schools. The longevity of the JCWP since 2016 gave the schools the confidence to plan for their continued participation. This contrasts with one off programmes offered to schools referenced by teachers which tended to "fizzle out" The increased choice of workshops available year on year was welcomed by teachers. The suggestions for new workshops came from TU Dublin's commitment to getting and responding to feedback from schools.

Schools try to ensure that each of their Junior Cycle years attend at least one workshop per annum. This means that by the end of third year, they will have attended a minimum of three workshops. Teachers welcomed the focus on STEM subjects, the most popular workshops among their students are Product Design, Graphic Design, Business, Study Skills, Forensics, Robotics and Sports and Nutrition. TU Dublin's response to Covid 19 was also highlighted by teachers. The JCWP was transitioned quickly to on-line delivery which was valuable for the teachers and students at a time of such change and uncertainty. Materials were delivered to the schools in advance and teachers supported the set up for on-line delivery.

While acknowledging the need to facilitate new workshops based on the Junior Cycle Curriculum, all teachers were reassured that there was a study skills workshop available. This was one that they always tried to have their classes attend especially in third year when students are getting serious about studying for exams. With the recent shift to classroom-based assessment (CBA) at Junior Cycle level, teachers extracted learning from the JCWP and used content for CBA in second and third year.

Workshops aligned with the Junior Cycle Syllabus made it easier for students to apply the learning when back in the classroom. A different perspective and environment enabled students to view the subject differently and with more clarity than in the classroom. This had a further positive impact observed by teachers as it made the students "*more engaged in and inquisitive about*" the subject when back in class. "*It makes the subject easier to teach it in class*"

The career guidance teachers emphasised the fit between the JCWP and whole school guidance directive from the Department of Education which mandates secondary schools to deliver guidance from first year. Increasing awareness of the opportunities available at third level and facilitating familiarity with the TU Dublin campus was heralded and it is now firmly embedded as part of the whole school guidance approach. "*The JCWP is perfect way to introduce guidance to first years. It allows them to sample the university campus environment and be comfortable learning in it which can be a motivator for them to work hard in school to get the points to go to University*".

100% (n=12) felt that their students are more informed about the opportunities in higher education through participation in JCWP.

“Attendance at the workshops increases knowledge immediately as the student knows that similar or related courses are offered by TU Dublin”

“It opens up the subject of third level education for Junior Cycle students, previously this would only have happened at Senior Cycle, it creates a different culture and mindset”

All felt that students’ aspirations and motivations in relation to higher education have improved.

“Normalises the idea of third level, if you can see it, you can be it”

“Sampling this on their own doorstep can be transformational for a student whose parents and grandparents did not have the same opportunity”

“They now talk about when they go to college rather than if”

100% (n=12) felt that students are inspired about different disciplines through the JCWP.

“The practical tasks in product design and forensics have inspired some students to think about pursuing these in the future, previously they would not have considered such subjects”

75% (n=6) felt that parents are more informed about the range of opportunities and pathways for learners that exist in higher education.

“Before the student attends a JCWP workshop, we send a note to the parents for consent, this increases the likelihood of asking their son/daughter about the workshop. In many cases, the student will take the practical work home with them from the workshop which parents will see”

4.5.2 Focus Groups with Students

The evaluator facilitated focus group discussions with 60 students in five participant schools⁷ in February 2023. This sub section discusses the findings with quotes from students entwined. Based on a show of hands and the evaluator's analysis of the feedback, the following were key findings. 100% (n=60) felt that their expectations for the programme have been exceeded, 90% (n=54) had never been to a university campus before and they found the environment stimulating. What started out for many as a good way to get out of the classroom for a couple of hours morphed into a very worthwhile learning experience.

⁷ Stanhope Street Girls Secondary School, St Joseph's Fairview, Mercy Secondary School Inchicore, CBS James Street and St. Paul's CBS North Brunswick Steet.

Despite time having elapsed since some engaged with the JCWP, they fondly recollected their experience of the practical tasks such as making cars in product design, generating electricity in the renewable energy workshop, designing badges in graphic design, finger printing in forensics, designing robots in robotics and finding out more about body motion and performance in biomechanics. 90% (n=54) felt that they were more informed about the opportunities in higher education from participating in the JCWP, for many the realisation that building cars or generating energy could be a realistic career choice for them on their own doorstep was enlightening.

“I live close by and have walked past the campus many times as it was being built and I often wondered what went on inside the place. It was amazing to get inside and see all the equipment and what can come from it”.

95% (n=57) are more motivated to attend higher education and linked to this increased motivation is that clarity that the JCWP has given to the students.

“I maybe thought that university is not for me as I am not sure about what I want to do and I might not get the results, but this had me think more about it. There seems to be so many different options”.

There was some evidence that the STEM based workshops triggered an interest to pursue such subjects academically.

“I liked finding out more about body movement and speed in the workshop, it is a bit of biology and physics, but I never really liked these subjects in school, it is something to think about”.

Suggestions for future workshops included, Podcasting, video making⁸, geography, filmmaking, medicine, martial arts, arts and crafts, cooking, social skills, woodwork and computers.

⁸ Podcasting and video making will be part of the 2023-24 JCWP workshop options.

Section 5: Discussion and Learning

Based on the body of qualitative and quantitative data made available to and generated through this evaluation, we find that the TU Dublin Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme has met their aims and objectives and achieved its aspired outcomes set out in their funding applications and in the terms of reference for this evaluation. This section discusses these overall findings offering enablers for success and key learnings.

5.1 Innovative and Unique

The JCWP is innovative and unique in that it offers consistent engagement with TU Dublin throughout the junior cycle from 1st to 3rd year. While other Higher Education Institutions offer one off programmes and activities for different years, the desk research for this evaluation did not identify a programme with the equivalent resources and consistency across the three-year cycle. It is positioned within a comprehensive suite of TU Dublin Access and Outreach programmes that bridge the gap between primary and secondary school and junior and senior cycle in secondary school. Teachers referenced the ease with which those who have attended TU Dublin in Junior Cycle transition to the Senior Cycle access programmes due to the familiarity with the TU Dublin campus.

5.2 Greater access for DEIS Schools

Opening the TU Dublin Grangegorman campus to students from DEIS schools was a key objective for the JCWP. Since 2016, over 5,984 student visits to participate in the JCWP have been facilitated. At the outset in 2016, the programme engaged four local schools in Dublin 1 and 7, by 2022 this had increased to thirteen schools across Central Dublin including Dublin 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 all of whom have a diverse range of students.

This expanded school reach has provided opportunities for more schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas to engage with TU Dublin. It also contributes strategically to the National Access Plan (NAP) which identifies low socioeconomic as one of the three main groups who are underrepresented in the higher education student population. The JCWP is framed around the evidence that early intervention with additional supports for those from low SEG widens participation in HE and upholds the principle of education for all.

5.3 More informed students

What started off in 2016 as a four subject based workshop programme has evolved in the subsequent seven years to incorporate fourteen different workshops. All are aligned to the Junior Cycle syllabus, reflect ongoing feedback from teachers on emerging needs and are linked to courses that TU Dublin offer. Pre and post data collection from internal evaluations of the programme consistently found that students were more informed about the opportunities in higher education.

The retrospective data collection for the external evaluation found similar progression in students being informed about the variety of opportunities available but also the career options that such courses open up. From the 2022-23 cohort, 90% (n=54) felt that they were more informed about the opportunities in higher education.

5.4 Student aspiration and motivation

Students aspirations and motivation to attend higher education increased as a result of the JCWP by circa 10% using a Likert scale rating pre and post programme. The biggest increase in this area was in the third-year student group. From the 2022-23 cohort, 95% (n=57) indicated that they were interested in attending higher education. This is an important finding as it is likely that by third year it is more apparent whether third level is a realistic goal.

This increase can be related to the enhanced level of awareness described in Section 4.3 and can also be attributed to students feeling more comfortable in the university environment. The highest level of comfort was found in third year students which is likely due to having attended the JCWP in first and second years and the resulting familiarity. Aspirations for attending higher education was consistently in the mid 80 per cents for first years with a small increase from this for second years.

5.5 Inspired by different disciplines

The JCWP has evolved with new workshops offered year on year, with subjects increasingly reflecting the priority towards STEM subjects. This is based on teacher feedback and a strategic drive to increase access to career opportunities associated with STEM for those in DEIS schools where there is a lower take up of such subjects in Higher Education.

It was evident from student feedback that the JCWP had inspired participants to look at disciplines such as forensics and biomechanics as subject options. This can be attributed to the engaging way the workshops were delivered and the practical tasks such as making cars, generating electricity, designing badges and finger printing.

5.6 Teachers

While the primary benefactors from the JCWP were the participants, it was also positively received by teachers. They viewed the programme as being highly effective and a much-needed intervention presenting the university and a sample of learning opportunities in junior cycle that may otherwise not be available until transition year or later. It makes their job easier as when back in class, participants were more engaged and stimulated. It is established as a bedrock for their whole school guidance approach in line with government policy.

Teachers highlighted that the campus visits contribute to demystifying the concept of university for their students in a fun and engaging way. Though well informed about higher education courses and opportunities, the career guidance teachers indicated that they picked up additional information from the JCWP to enhance the currency of their own knowledge. Teachers highlighted that the workshop content assisted them in their CBA for second- and third-year students.

5.7 Sport for Life

TU Dublin's 'Sport for Life' Wellbeing programme provided enhanced wellbeing activities for students, while also supporting schools to respond to government policy on wellbeing in education. Students engaged in activities and workshops to build leadership skills, emotional and mental resilience, and positive wellbeing. It added value to existing wellbeing supports offered through the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, after schools' clubs and additional programmes such as Restorative Practice, cook clubs, yoga, and music. 'Sport for Life' provided structures and supports for schools and TU Dublin to work together on developing an integrated approach to students' wellbeing.

The data collection for this evaluation evidenced that 'Sport for Life' strengthened students' resilience, self-confidence, self-esteem, awareness, and self-belief. Furthermore, it encouraged students to recognise their own unique strengths, fostered an increased awareness of how to express feelings and enhanced emotional and social skills. Participants had varying levels of physical literacy, one third of the sample (n=27) in the previous week did a total of 60 minutes physical activity on 3 or more days. Feedback suggests that completion of 'Sport for Life' could be a catalyst for increased physical activity for participants.

5.8 Value for Money

The executive summary for this evaluation is framed around the impact card which documents, how much the JCWP did, how well it did it, and the difference that it made to stakeholders. What is not possible to quantify immediately is the longer-term impact of this programme but nonetheless it needs to be acknowledged in any value for money analysis. Widening Participation in HE accrues benefits for individuals, under-represented communities, society and for staff and students in TU Dublin.

It is likely that some from the first programme in 2016 were inspired and motivated to attend third level education and this trend will have sustained year on year. These have and will continue to include the first generation of families to progress to third level. This will enhance career opportunities, build social capital and improve living standards in some of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Dublin.

Given the increased reach of JCWP, the numbers engaged, and the outcomes achieved for students, schools and underrepresented communities which was possible due to prudent budget management by the TU Dublin Access and Outreach team, we conclude that the JCWP has delivered value for money for its funders.

5.9 Enablers

There were many enablers for the success and impact of the JCWP. The TU Dublin Access and Outreach team have their own resources to deliver the programme and they have a varied skill set and backgrounds in media and science. They are not dependent on lecturers from other TU Dublin departments. Even in periods where the project coordinator post was vacant, the Access and Outreach team worked tirelessly to ensure consistency in the delivery. This engendered trust and credibility with the schools. The practical and hands on nature of the workshops appealing to both the weakest and strongest academically was heralded by both students and teachers.

The flexibility of the scheduling for schools was crucial. The Access and Outreach team understand the pressures and stresses on teachers in schools and were successful in maintaining a balance and avoiding overloading them with additional workload during the school term. Being within walking distance of TU Dublin was an enabler for those schools closest to the campus, for those further away, public or private transport was required which was a barrier for some. Schools referenced the ease of the registration process, signing up for the programmes in September and January. The study skills workshops were enablers for improved study techniques in preparation for good Junior Certificate exams.

Building partnerships is key to access. TU Dublin work collaboratively with local DEIS schools, community groups and other statutory education partners to devise and implement activities to support engagement and progression to Higher Education among socioeconomically disadvantaged communities which has enriched the JCWP. One example of this collaboration was getting An Garda Síochána involved in co-delivering part of the Forensics workshop. TU Dublin academic staff contributed to some workshops when they had the capacity to do so. The 'Sport for Life' programme involved collaboration between Dublin City Council, TU Dublin Sports and Leinster Rugby to deliver the sports elements.

Continuing to deliver during Covid strengthened the connection with schools. Between June and August 2020, a plan was devised to ensure the programme continued to build on momentum of previous years in a Covid-safe way. This plan involved changes to the workshop schedule, modification of the content to be able to deliver in various formats, and the development of new content to link in with themes responding to the moment, including pandemic-related topics and mental health, fitness and wellbeing workshops.

In September 2020, it became clear that the only option would be online delivery. Significant time went into reviewing each workshop to determine the feasibility of online delivery. Three additional workshops were developed during this timeframe and each school was provided with equipment including a microphone, tripod and webcam to ensure workshops would be as interactive as possible for student engagement. Advice from the project coordinator was also available to support the set-up of this equipment.

Section 6: Recommendations

Based on the data collated for this evaluation and our knowledge of this sector, several recommendations are proposed for consideration.

6.1 Parental Engagement

We acknowledge the efforts made to engage parents through workshops delivered in advance of 'Sport for Life' in October and November 2022 and the ongoing work with local organisations to enhance parental engagement. We recommend continuation of this work with consideration given to inviting parents to end of year celebration/prizegiving events in the future at the end of third year when engagement with JCWP will finish. Seeing their son/daughter participate in sports can be transformational for parents, we would therefore recommend an open morning for parents during future 'Sport for Life' programmes when they can drop in, chat to coaches, teachers and TU Dublin staff and watch their child participate.

6.2 Teacher Training

Teachers expressed an interest in training on how elements of the wellbeing programme could be integrated into SPHE curriculum. We recommend exploring this further with teachers in each participant school to co-design an approach that integrates the wellbeing aspect. Options could include training for guidance teachers to deliver mindfulness and resilience programmes.

6.3 Disability

DEIS schools have a higher proportion of students with learning difficulties, many of which remain undiagnosed due to the waiting list for National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). The National Access Plan identifies those with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, as one of the three main groups who are underrepresented in higher education. At post-primary level, it is estimated that 17.9% of 13-year-olds have some form of special educational need (SEN)⁹. Teachers highlighted that a small number of 'Sport for Life' participants had intellectual disabilities and felt very included in the activities. We recommend that TU Dublin promote future programmes to schools as being disability inclusive.

⁹ <https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/03263-NCSE-EdExps-Children-SEN-FINAL-UPLOAD.pdf>

6.4 Programme Additions

We recommend that TU Dublin consider the suggestions made for additional workshops and activities by students and teachers through the data collection for this evaluation. These included, geography, filmmaking, medicine, martial arts, arts and crafts, cooking, social skills, woodwork, and computers. On the sports side, athletics was suggested through linking in with a local club. Two of the suggestions, podcasting and video making will be part of the 2023-24 JCWP offering.

6.5 Hybrid Delivery

We recommend that TU Dublin consider delivering some workshops on-site for schools some distance from the Grangegorman campus who must use their own or public transport to access the JCWP. This would be part of a blended approach as on campus attendance is essential to enhance the overall experience. Using this hybrid approach would mitigate staff cover issues and increase awareness across schools. It may also stimulate involvement from teachers of the workshop subjects such as STEM who could coordinate the setting up of the classroom/laboratory for the workshop.

6.6 Promotion

We recommend that TU Dublin use every opportunity to promote the JCWP and in doing so the TU Dublin brand. Workshops could be augmented with short testimony video clips from previous JCWP participants who are now TU Dublin students doing the workshop or related course. A tour of the TU Dublin Campus would provide students with a sense of the scale of the space, facilities, and equipment. Promotion to schools and students through merchandising, pens, key rings, pen drives should also be considered resources permitting.

6.7 Project Coordination

With the recent merger TU Dublin now has campuses in Dublin City Centre, Blanchardstown, and Tallaght with a student population of more than 29,000. Expanding access to the JCWP for DEIS schools in Blanchardstown and Tallaght will necessitate considerable additional resources and planning as the demographics and culture are different. To increase capacity, we endorse the sentiment that all TU Dublin lecturers should contribute some time to Access programmes in the future. Having a Project Coordinator is a critical enabler with the sheer scale and scope of the workload in coordinating, promoting, delivering and evaluating the JCWP. Future planning for the JCWP should factor in a dedicated project coordination resource.



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