



# ACCESS

THE BEGINNING OF YOUR

# FUTURE

A Compilation of Students' Experiences Past and Present  
Compiled by Barbara Hempel  
Access Services and Disability Support Services  
Cork Institute of Technology



Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Chorcaí  
Cork Institute of Technology

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the students who took part in this publication. Thank you to those who gave permission to use their names and photographs where applicable this was very much appreciated as it gave realism to the whole publication and hopefully will act as a catalyst for students both mature and second level who have thoughts of entering CIT to complete their third level education.

**Barbara Hempel**  
Disability Support Service



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W: [www.cit.ie/studentlife.access\\_disability](http://www.cit.ie/studentlife.access_disability)

# Foreword

The Access Service works with four groups of students, i.e. socio-economic disadvantaged students, ethnic minorities, mature students, and students with disabilities. The Access Service provides pre-entry, entry and post-entry supports for students from these categories. We believe that education is a right not a privilege and that given the correct supports and encouragement, all students can reach their full potential. In the past number of years the CIT Access Service has grown and developed with the assistance of external funding sources such as the Strategic Innovation Fund, and Dormant Account Funding. These funds allowed CIT to pilot programmes which aimed at increasing numbers of students from under-represented groups. The funding provided CIT with an opportunity to expand its Access service to students and ensure that students who were in need of assistance in order to progress and achieve their goal, did so.

This publication highlights the individual stories of students who have used the Access Service and have benefitted from the supports that it provides. The stories all have one thing in common and that is that the students overcame difficulties and obstacles, and through their determination and courage, they achieved their ambitions.

On behalf of the Access Service team I would like to thank the students who have told their personal stories as part of this publication. I am sure that they will provide encouragement, reassurance and advice for any prospective student who is reading this and maybe has doubts about the possibility of studying at Third Level. These personal accounts have not been edited so the reader can appreciate the students' own experience.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Access Service team who work so hard to ensure that the needs of our students are met. Your commitment to equity of access and opportunity is highly commendable. Thanks also to Barbara Hempel who listened to each student's story over the past number of weeks and who successfully compiled the publication.

**Deirdre Creedon**  
Access Officer



# Foreword

The Disability Support Service in CIT is fully committed to assisting students with disabilities to access their courses successfully and achieve their academic goals. The students that share their stories in this publication, have faced challenges along the way, however, their stories will show a clear message – with support, success is a real possibility.

The one thing remains evident throughout is that each student has a unique experience and faces unique individual challenges along the way - socially, academically and/or personally. The Disability Support Service works to attempt to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to their education.


The Disability Support Service has grown in many ways over the last number of years with the development of an Assistive Technology Service, Learning Support Service, the employment of an Assistive Technology Officer and the inclusion in the DARE scheme, to name but a few significant developments. The number of students who are supported through the Disability Support Service has also increased.

I would like to sincerely thank all the staff that have worked with the students who are registered with us over the years. Your support and cooperation has been invaluable to this service and has encouraged us to ensure that we are constantly endeavouring to improve the services that we provide.


There is no question that the main reason for the success these students have achieved is their own determination, enthusiasm and commitment. I would like to extend sincere gratitude to the students who participated in this publication. These students not only are inspirational to prospective students but also to the current student population. I wish them all the best for the future and it was a pleasure and a privilege to be in a position to provide support for these students over the years.

For students with disabilities who are contemplating applying to CIT, I hope this publication has encouraged and inspired you. I also trust that reading these students' stories has made you aware that CIT Disability Support Service works with a diverse group of students and we are here to assist and encourage you during your studies.

**Laura O'Rourke**  
Disability Support Officer



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# Dyslexia and College Life

**Stacie Finnegan**

**ECCE 3rd Year**



I am studying Early Childhood Care and Education in CIT. I am in third year. I was diagnosed with Dyslexia in sixth year in secondary school. During my Leaving Certificate, I got loads of help as I was able to avail of a separate room for my exams, a reader, and spelling and grammar waiver. All I wanted to do was go to college, nothing would stop me, even my disability.

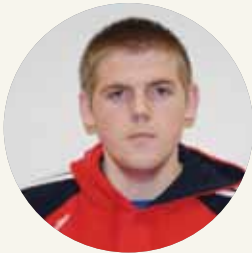
I always wanted to work with children, I felt this was my area that I wanted to work in. After all the stress, I got the course I wanted but I was afraid of not getting the help and support I got in school in CIT. I looked into it and they said they would give me, all the support I needed.

I got a laptop to use the Read and Write Gold software. I was able to get a tutor every week one-to-one a separate room, a reader, a waiver and extra time for exams. This is my third year availing of the Disability Support Service and I think it is fantastic. It has helped me reach my maximum ability and reach my true potential especially with the tutor I have every week. She has certainly given me a positive impact on my college work. She has put me in the right direction throughout the years.

The Disability Support Office has definitely helped me to achieve my goal so far to get me to third year. My advice to anyone coming to CIT is to decide what you want to achieve and work at it. Don't be afraid to say you have a disability we are special and no different to any other person. We can achieve just as much as those who don't have dyslexia. Be proud and show off that you are dyslexic. Watch out for others and have fun.

# Access - the kick start to my education...

**Adam Crean**  
**Social Care 1st Year**



To this day I suppose all I can do is thank the members of the Access Programme in CIT, the people in that office do an absolutely amazing job. In 2010 I sat my Leaving Certificate at the age of sixteen which in my opinion was wrong. I was too young and too immature to be sitting that type of exam. Before the Leaving Certificate our school was visited by Louise Bermingham who works in the Access office. It was this woman who introduced me to the thought of attending CIT. I knew I wanted to go to college but I didn't think I would ever make it there as I felt I was below the average standard of a typical college student. Louise assured me if I really wanted it then I would have to work hard to get a place. When the Leaving Certificate was a few weeks away I studied day and night to try to get good grades but in the end I fell short on points. In the Leaving Certificate I got 195 points below what was required to be accepted through the Access programme. When I received my Leaving Certificate results I was devastated I felt like all hope was gone and in a way I felt like I would end up drawing the dole, but after a phone call to Louise, I was back on track. Within 24 hours of that conversation I had applied for a FETAC Level 5 course in Cork College of Commerce which was Early Childhood and Education which Louise recommended as it was linked to Social Care.

When I received a letter telling me I was accepted for the course I was over the moon and I knew what I had to do in order to get into CIT so there was no messing about I got straight down to business. During my time in the College of Commerce I felt that I matured an awful lot but also developed habits like keeping to deadlines and also working as part of



a team. Throughout the year Louise kept in contact with me which meant an awful lot as in a way rather than her just talking to me I was becoming more and more motivated and failing was not an option. Thankfully at the end of the year after my exams and all the assignments my results arrived in the post and I got 9 distinctions which equaled 450 points at FETAC level and when converted equaled 400 CAO points. The year I spent in the College of Commerce has made me a better person and in a way changed my life. It helped me to mature as I now see things from different perspectives, but I also realised I was there because I wanted to be there, unlike school where you are made attend.

Even though I went to what is termed a disadvantaged school it does not mean I am disadvantaged, the school may have a label but I do not. I refused to give up on myself even though my friends would laugh when I would say I want to go to college. All I can say is now I am the one laughing as I am now a first year in Social Care under the Access programme and loving every minute.

Classes are difficult but in order to overcome them work is needed but I am not alone as I have wonderful friends who are more than willing to help but also the support services in the college are fantastic. I am only half way through first year but I know the day I receive my degree will be a sad day as I will be saying goodbye to the place which kick-started my future.

# Mature Student Learning Experience...

**Marion Gaffney**

**Bachelor of Business**



I left school at 15. After major surgery in 2008, I decided to go back to college, something I wanted to do for years but never thought that I was capable. I studied a FETAC Level 5 course and then applied to CIT in 2010 which is the best thing that I've done. The support here is fabulous even starting with the Orientation days you met people of a similar age. That was great as I was anxious about that. I thought that I may have been too old. CIT runs a two day Orientation Programme for mature applicants who have accepted a course in CIT. The aim of the programme is to ease the transition into CIT for mature students by inviting them into the college prior to the commencement of their course. During the programme, participants are provided with a tour of CIT campuses, introductory support workshops and information on student services.

Meeting people my own age made it a lot easier for me to settle in. As part of the Orientation days I loved the fact that students who started off like I did here at my age, are now doing their Masters! They came to speak to us which I found very inspiring and I thought ok, I can do this! The Orientation days for me were the encouragement to stay, you walked out of here and couldn't wait to come back and study here. They showed us where the gym was, where the library was, they showed us how to set up our email which was quite good for someone like me who is not very technical. It made you feel you had started already and that you were part of the place. I have found the mature student supports fabulous.

When we were having problems with certain modules they put on extra tutorials especially with the economics, which I find a very hard subject, but I found with the extra tutorial classes, I'm absolutely flying at it now and I love it! I am really enjoying studying and I'm so glad that I eventually plucked up the courage to go back to complete my education.

I passed with a 1st last year and am doing very well this year so far, and hoping for another 1st at the end of second year. I intend to carry on and do a Master's in Business Information Systems, all going well, as I am now enjoying all of the IT (studies) and that was my weakest skill when I started. I also love learning Spanish as I always wanted to learn a language. I hope to get a job in the technology side of business in the future, where I can use my new language and hopefully get to travel and see the world as it has always been a dream of mine.

# Path to CIT...

**Shane Doocey**

**Business Studies 1st Year**



I entered CIT through the CIT Progression Scheme, which I applied for in my final year of secondary school. I first became aware of the Progression Scheme through Louise Bermingham, the Post Entry Supports Officer in CIT who visited my school on a regular basis to not only promote the progression scheme itself but also the many other services which CIT has to offer. I found the application process to be quite straight forward and took no hesitation in applying. Once the CAO offers had been announced I found myself short of points for my first preference course. It was after this I had found out my application for the Progression Scheme was successful as I was allowed to begin my first preference course on a reduced points basis. Prior to my first day in college I was invited to an induction which was organised by the Access Service where I was able to meet others who had been successful in their application to the progression scheme. We were informed of all the many different services which are run in CIT such as the IT services, Students' Union, Access Service, the Chaplaincy team and many more. We were given a tour of the campus which I found very helpful because when classes began I was able to find my way around more easily.

During my first few weeks in CIT, Louise Bermingham and Deirdre Creedon, CIT's Access Officer were in contact to see how I was settling in. I found it very easy to pop into the Access Service with any questions I had whether it was to do with grants or student supports or even issues around specific subjects I was taking. It was not long before I was really benefitting from the supports which the Progression Scheme allowed me. I received financial assistance from the Student Assistance Fund for transport and class materials and I was also attending Economic workshops with a small group of students as this was an area where I found myself slipping.

Once I had told Louise that this was an area where I may need some sort of support I was able to attend a small group session with one of the lecturers. Throughout the year I was in regular contact with the Access Service and I also got on board with the Access Award Programme as well as becoming a Student Leader. I have had the opportunity to speak to groups of secondary school students about the progression scheme and I enjoy doing it because it has been an amazing experience for me coming through college this way. The progression scheme has given a place in CIT to those who do not have any means of getting through college and to those, who by no fault of their own, have not had anyone in their family progress to third level previously. My experience of the progression scheme has been very positive and I look forward to the day that I get my degree as the Access Service will be top of my thank you list.

# Believe in Your Dreams

**Lisa Duncan**

**Bachelor of Business (Honours) Graduate**



I became deaf when I was 5 weeks old due to German measles. When I was 4 years old, my parents sent me to the deaf school in Douglas in Cork where I stayed till I was 12. I had to move to Dublin because there was no secondary school in Cork for deaf children at that time. My parents were heartbroken when I left Cork. My mother spoke on the radio complaining about the situation, and saying there should be a special secondary school set up in Cork for deaf children. I had an absolutely great experience living up in Dublin, I made lots of friends and had a good social life.

When I was finished school, I decided to pick a business course in CIT because I love business. It was also handy that CIT had that course where my home was. I knew very little about the disability support service. I knew that they provided access for students with disabilities depending on their own needs for study but I didn't know what different types of support services they had. In my mind, I didn't know what to expect regarding the type of support I could get. I knew I would need some support or I would not be able to do a course myself.

On the first day of college, I was in a huge lecture room/theatre with more than 100 students - compared to 6 – 8 students in my class in both schools in Cork and Dublin. I was uncomfortable introducing myself being deaf. In the next few months, I made new friends and didn't have any problem with socialising but I found it a struggle to cope with my studies and I failed a few of my exams in first year. I needed to use the support services. I met with the Disability Support Officer in the Access Service who suggested that I try using a note taker for my studies. I tried several

different support services and I finally knew what services would meet my needs for my studies. The highlight of my first year was passing my exams in the summer.

Going from 1st to 3rd year involved totally different ways to use services within my course. In 1st year I was absolutely lost and I didn't know what kind of service to use or which would be suitable for my studies. I used to get note takers but I realised it didn't work out for me. So the disability support officer offered me the option to work with stereotyping - and they were the best notes that I could ask for! I couldn't have coped without them and I would have left college if I didn't have them.

Things went the same way for 2nd year but the language of the course was getting harder, and sign language is my first language. I got one-to-one tutorials with a few interpreters which were a great help. I found it really difficult without an interpreter in labs because of the theory, but it was way better and fully understandable when I had an interpreter. I had a scribe for 2nd year for accounting class, because I was slow at writing all the figures out and I was falling behind and missing theory without a stereo typist, I realised there was loads of theory so I decided to avail of a stereo typist again and keep the notes for study. Stereotype was much better for me and fitted in well with everything.

When I came to 3rd year, it hit me and I was absolutely panicked because all the subjects were so hard and new to me, the language was very difficult. I was involved in group projects, individual projects, giving presentations, essay and exams. I was extremely worried about how to cope with the modules but again the Disability services were amazing to me. I had access to tutorials which were massively helpful, they helped with my essays to do translation and proofreading with an interpreter

to help the essays look more like professional English. Interpreters did translation for my exams which was really important for me and it was a big help, and the Disability Administrator in the exams office gave me 15 minutes extra per hour in the examinations. My results in 3rd and 4th year were the best results I ever got, all thanks to the brilliant services and supports I received. As my modules changed my supports were changed accordingly in collaboration with the Disability Support Officer. I used the same services in both 3rd and 4th year and it was so comfortable to have full access for my studies. There was a new technology with a small screen next to the laptop with stereotype on the table so I didn't have to carry my own laptop which was so handy.

My final year was the most stressful and tough one but it turned out well with the exams in the end. I completed my 4 years Bachelor of Business honours degree course and it showed me that I could believe in myself and achieve my dream in my life. I believe, during my time in first year, awareness of disabilities and special needs was not as high profile in college as now, there is a big difference as CIT is very aware of the needs of students with disabilities.

College Life had its up and down experiences but I miss college life and I still keep in touch with my lovely friends. Thanks so much to the people who worked with me for years in CIT. I don't think I would have persevered without the support of the Disability Support Service. These four years have been the best years of my life so far. I am proud of myself because my dream came true. I have a good job in Abbott in Clonmel since September and I am loving every minute of it.



# How wonderful is Assistive Technology

**Margaret O'Leary**

**Bachelor of Art in Community Development**



My experiences of learning were negative and I never learnt to read and write till I was thirty years old. I started in Coláiste Stiofán Naofa in 2009 and for the first year I struggled to keep up with my studies. I was assessed for dyslexia but it was found that I had a specific learning disability. I failed computers and only received passes in my second year. To support me in my learning I was given a computer and Dictaphone with Read and Write Gold software. This programme opened up a whole world to me. I was able to complete my assignments. I repeated my computers exam and was awarded a pass. I obtained distinctions in my other assignments and I graduated with a FETAC Level Five.

I applied to CIT after completing my FETAC Level Five and I am now at CIT doing a degree in Community Development so that I will obtain a degree. Due to my Learning Difficulties I am registered with the Disability Support Service. On the advice of the Disability Support Officer I was referred to the Assistive Technology Service and I now use the Assistive Technology Service within the CIT. I need the use of Assistive Technology in order to complete my degree. It is important for people with difficulties to be able to complete their studies. I fully support the Assistive Technology and the Disability Support Service because without it I would not be able attain my degree.

# Second Chances...

**P.J. Dennehy**

**Bachelor of Business (Honours) Graduate**



In the summer of 2006, having finished building my own house and exited a family business with all the hassle and legalities that it entailed, I was left wondering where I was going next or more pointedly (as my partner dis say) what was I going to do now. I had been more or less self-employed in one capacity or another for twenty years. From Sales and Marketing to Information Technology, from construction sites and supervision to business development, to warehousing and transport of agricultural feedstuffs and fertilizer. After putting together a C.V. and doing a little research, I approached two reputable recruitment agencies in Cork to be posed the question by them, What are you? This forced me to look at myself and my C.V. from the employers perspective which did prove to be a wake-up call considering that I felt I would be capable of taking a variety of roles and being confident of mastering them in a short period.

It was around this time, July 2006, I saw an advert in the Examiner for a CIT/EOD Certificate Level 6 course in Business Studies and an information event taking place in the Rory Gallagher Theatre. I thought that this might be the answer to putting a formal qualification alongside the wealth of experience I felt I possessed. But it was with a considerable amount of trepidation I went to the information day. Following a few short presentations I approached the course co-ordinator and the Head of the EOD (Equal Opportunities Department) to be met with huge encouragement and enthusiasm for my decision/consideration of returning to education. This definitely was a major step in getting me back to education. I put in my application and was accepted onto the course but still harboured doubts on both my ability to undertake the

work and my capacity to be a full-time student for two years. The first few weeks took a bit of acclimatization particularly as some participants had problems sorting themselves out and committing to the programme, but once the dust settled and the class and groups found some cohesion it proved to be a great journey. The defining moment for many of our class of approx. 30 mature students (aged 23 to 58) was when we had completed our Christmas exams and received our results, we then felt, “Yes” we can manage this and see it through to the end. Twenty six went on to finish the Level 6, subsequently sixteen went on to do a Level 7 and then a Level 8 Honours degree. As of 2011, six students carried on to do a Level 9 Master’s degree.

What always played a prominent role in the experience of being a mature student at CIT was how approachable and helpful the lecturers and staff were throughout the five years I spent there. It was as much for the interaction outside of the classroom as against the learning inside it that my education benefitted. The support and services run by the Access and the Mature Students office were of a great benefit to many of us over the time we spent in CIT. If a query or issue could not be dealt with there and then, invariably they provided the information and referral to help us students resolve the question. A major benefit, especially for mature students with considerable commitments to partners, children, parents and home was the flexibility allowed to us regarding deadlines and assistance in completing tasks and coursework, obviously within reason. All in all a very positive and rewarding experience. By the way, there is a solution to the parking issue at CIT... buy a motor bike.

# Never Been Happier

**Edel Crowley**

**Accounting 4th Year**



I am a fourth year student of Accounting in CIT. I came to CIT due to its location to my home. I decided to apply to CIT only as it was closer than UCC and also I felt it had a more practical approach to learning as opposed to UCC. When I was filling out my CAO my guidance counselor advised me on the entry routes especially as I have Dyspraxia. As I had a disability I would be entitled to register with the Disability Support Service in CIT. On my first day of induction at CIT I attended different talks and tours in relation to becoming familiar with the college. I must say though the orientation support could have been a bit better as I was not aware that you had to show your ID card at the reception desk in the open access office and the library so it kind of delayed my settling in a bit.

However, once I made contact with the disability office I was given supports such as scribe, note taker etc. In second year, I got a wonderful tutor through the Disability Support Service called Barry Griffin who gave me regular one-to-one tutorials and also made everything seem so easy to understand. Barry had a calming influence on me as I am prone to get anxious. He realised that the notes given to me by my note taker were not helping me as they were also being shared by another student and I just got a copy of them so they were not being geared to my learning needs. Barry approached the Disability Support on my behalf and suggested that I not use a note taker and try a different approach. In third year, as I was specialising in accounting, the class size increased dramatically. At times there were 50 to 100 students at the lecture which was difficult for me as I had developed a rapport with the lecturers and they were aware of my learning needs. In a big group like this it was harder to get access to the lecturers.

I again approached the Disability Support Service and they provided me with an accounting tutor Ronan O'Sullivan. As a result of these supports I did very well in my exams. My last year included an elective module called Interdisciplinary New Product Development which I found extremely difficult but with the help of my new tutor Maurice O'Brien I got through it.

My future plans are to complete my degree and apply to the taxation institute for an internship then I will be a qualified tax consultant after two years. Overall my years in CIT have been the best years of my life as I have finally been able to hold my head high and accept that even though I have a learning disability I can still be whatever I want to be.

# Life Changing Experience

## Busola Julius

### Graduate Higher Certificate in Community Development



I am a graduate of Community Development (Higher Certificate) in CIT. I am originally from Nigeria and came to Ireland as an Asylum Seeker. As English is not my first language I found it very difficult in the beginning. I knew I would have to learn and improve my English as well as become Computer Literate in order to be part of Irish society. I began evening classes in both these areas and progressed to studying Childcare at Level 3. I worked in child minding for a short while after but had still ambitions to go further in education. I attended Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa and completed a FETAC Level 5 Social Studies course. During this course I did my placement in the COPE Foundation where I worked with people with disabilities. I found this very challenging but interesting. During my placement I saw how well people with disabilities are treated in comparison with people with disabilities in Nigeria. This experience made me more determined to work within the area of community support and to improve myself further through education. It was through education I felt I would become an independent woman and achieve my goals. I decided to apply for a place in third level. I applied through the CAO for a place in UCC and CIT.

I did not get a place on the Bachelor of Social Work in UCC but I got a place on Community Development in CIT.

My first days and weeks in CIT were very daunting as I was meeting new people, and dealing with a different culture, I found it hard to adjust and adapt to the learning levels. There is a big difference between FETAC Level 5 and first year third level. During this time I thought why am I

doing this, how will I get through my assignments if I am having difficulties with an essay. If I gave up I would be a failure and I did not want this. I wanted to be a role model for my children and other people of ethnic minorities who perhaps were thinking of third level but were afraid to take the step. I met with counselors within the college who advised me of the Access Service. I contacted the Access Service and I was given educational supports through tutorials with lecturers, my class mates also helped me.

Three years on and I have graduated with a Higher Certificate in Community Development. I am also in my second year of social care in WIT. I feel I am progressing all the time and giving myself options in relation to future employment through the courses I am studying. At this stage I am really enjoying my education experience as I have gained confidence and better self-awareness and self-esteem. I can see change in my interaction with people and society. I no longer worry about my ability as I know if I need help the supports are there in the Access Service. I hope after my study to have the opportunity to put in practice the knowledge I have gained from education. And perhaps at a later stage I will undertake a master's in social work which will complete my education ambition.

# Access for All...

## Leanne McDonagh

HDip for Art & Design Teachers

BA (Honours) in Fine Art



I am a member of the Travelling Community and I am currently a student of the Higher Diploma in Art Teaching at Crawford College of Art and Design.

When I was in secondary school I did not have any interest in going to college. However I was good at Art and the teachers from my secondary school encouraged me to fulfill my potential in this area. I agreed after much persuasion to at least fill out the CAO form thinking nothing ventured nothing gained. When the results and college places came out I actually got offers for the two courses I had applied for Graphic Design, and Art and Design in CIT Crawford College of Art and Design.

Although I was very apprehensive and still not sure if I really wanted to go to college I decided to give it a try. The first few weeks were great and I was surprised how much I enjoyed it. It was not a chore as I had expected. I loved what I was doing and I was excited to learn as much as I could about Art. In the first year of college I was introduced to Deirdre Creedon in the Access Office at CIT. This contact enabled me to avail of financial supports through the Students Assistance Fund. These funds contributed to the costs of my course materials and took the pressure off financially.

Through my contact with Deirdre, I became involved as a guest speaker for the CIT/UCC Partnership Programme for Travellers. I spoke to many traveller students attending different schools around the city. It was interesting to see the reactions of these students when I mentioned I was a member of the traveller community. It was as if they did not expect



a guest speaker representing third level colleges to be a traveller. I was looked upon by the different schools as a role model for these students. The idea behind the programme was to ignite a spark in these students and to show them there is access for all in education.

In relation to societies, the general perceptions of travelers who become educated are then ostracised from their communities could not be further from the truth. The following is a quote from a traveller in relation to my achievements in education “fair play at least you are doing something with your life”. I am now doing the Higher Diploma for Art & Design Teachers and doing my practice in my old school, Loreto Secondary School, in Fermoy. I am glad I took the advice and encouragement from my secondary school teachers to do the best I could to fulfill my potential.

# A New Country

## Aimable Shumbusho

### Information Technology Management 4th Year Graduate of Information Technology Support 2011

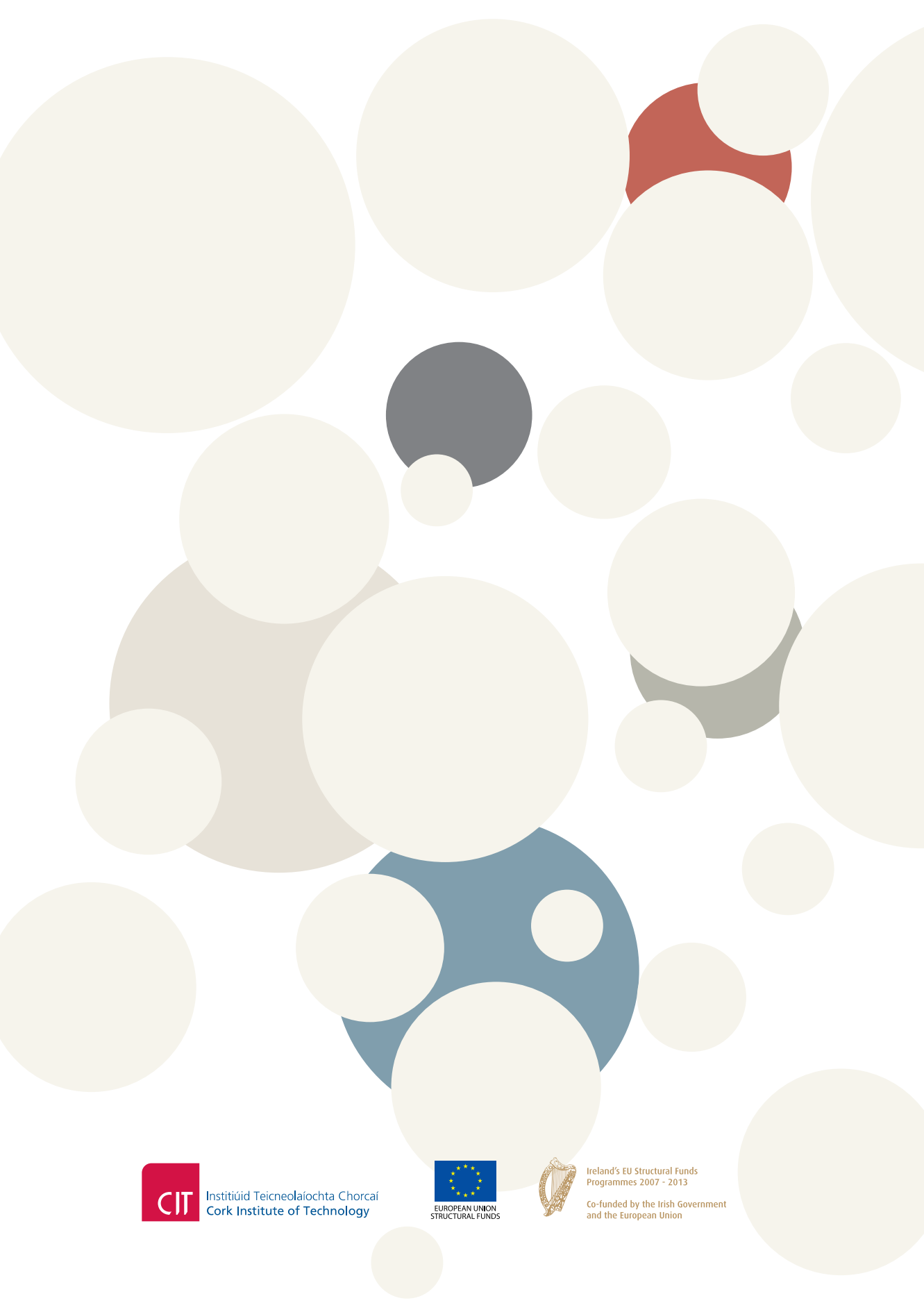


I am studying Information Technology Management in CIT. I am originally from Rwanda and I came to Ireland as a refugee in 2005. I remained under Refugee Status for six months. During this time I had plenty of free time to think and realised that the way forward in a new country was to improve my education. To progress and contribute to Irish society I would need to further my education. I always had an interest in computers and decided it would be interesting to study Information Technology. I applied through the Central Applications Office (CAO) for CIT and UCC. To my surprise I was offered a place in both colleges to study Information Technology but I decided to accept the place in CIT. The course in CIT was in Information Technology Support which I was more interested in as compared to the course in UCC which was Information Technology in Business.

At the CIT induction day the student leaders took a group of us on a tour of the CIT campus which included a visit to the Access Office. We met with Deirdre Creedon, CIT Access Officer who outlined to the group the supports that were available to students with disabilities, learning needs etc. I was very impressed by this and promised myself that I would make an appointment with Deirdre to see if I might be able to get some support with my English. After my first few days in CIT I met with Deirdre who put in place some English language classes for me which have greatly helped with my college study. I have also received assistance from the Students Assistance Fund towards my accommodation costs. The Access Office is the key for many students in CIT. It has helped a lot of students, if it was not here I am sure that there are many students who would have quit college.

# Conclusion

The purpose of this publication was to show the college experiences of students and graduates who were supported by the Access and Disability Support Services and to highlight the impact and contribution the above mentioned services have and continue to have on the students who avail of the services. Both services have endeavoured to support students of all ethnicity and socio economic groups. Given the many challenges students face in regard to marginalization, socio economic, ethnicity, culture etc., these students can only continue to achieve and overcome these barriers with the support of the staff of the Access/Disability Support Service.



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