

How to Manage Your Mental Health Difficulties at UCD

Managing mental health difficulties effectively at third level involves the utilisation of a number of available services and tools. It is also vital that each individual student takes responsibility for their own academic career at UCD. The aim of the UCD Access & Lifelong Learning (ALL) is to allow all students registered with Disability Support to become independent learners so they can develop the skills expected of successful graduates and take these skills into the workplace. The following guidelines are designed to help you to reach that goal.

Communication

It is important that you communicate with UCD about your Mental Health Difficulties in order to overcome any disadvantages you may experience.

1. You should register with ALL as soon as possible after you enter UCD/receive a diagnosis. Attending a needs assessment will ensure that you receive the appropriate supports.
2. You will receive a letter of registration from ALL following your needs assessment. This confirms that you are registered with ALL and outlines the supports you receive. You must provide this letter to your lecturers/tutors in order to inform staff about your support needs and request alternative exam arrangements for mid-semester exams, class tests or locally arranged exams.

Supports available to all UCD students

- Writing Support Centre
 - UCD Writing Centre provides free, one-to-one tuition and a range of workshops on all aspects of the writing process. You can find this service in Link Space 2 of the James Joyce Library See <http://www.ucd.ie/writingcentre/> for more details.
- Maths Support Centre
 - The Maths Support Centre (MSC) offers free support in mathematics to students from all programmes in UCD. Support is given through one-on-one and small group tuition on a drop in basis during semesters. There is no need to make an appointment in advance. See www.ucd.ie/msc for more details.
- Student Counselling Service
 - UCD provide a free and confidential service staffed by professionally qualified psychologists and counsellors. UCD aim to provide easily accessible support for students when personal issues arise that affect their happiness, well-being, capacity to cope, relationships or learning. For more information and to arrange an appointment see: <http://www.ucd.ie/studentcounselling/>

Exam Accommodations

- A number of exam accommodations are available to help students to overcome any disadvantage they may experience because of their mental health difficulties. Based on your diagnosis and needs assessment ALL will grant you the supports necessary for you. Exam accommodations may include use of the alternative exam centre or extra time (10 minutes extra per hour in exams). It is important to note that these supports are granted based on national guidelines. Therefore these supports may not be appropriate for every student diagnosed with Mental Health Difficulties.
- ALL organises alternative exam arrangements for end of semester exams only. If you wish to use an exam accommodation for any mid-semester exam or class test it is your responsibility to contact the module co-ordinator at the beginning of the semester. Failure to do this may result in you not receiving your exam accommodations as they can take some time to arrange.

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Assistive Technology

There is a range of Assistive Technology resources available for students in UCD. These consist of software and devices many of which can help students with their day-to-day tasks as a student. Assistive Technology of particular interest to students with Mental Health Difficulties includes:

- Recording Tool - Livescribe Smartpen

The Livescribe Smartpen is an electronic pen that has a built-in recorder. The pen synchronizes the recording with the notes taken by the student in class. Afterwards the student can click on any part of their notes and the pen will play back what the lecturer was saying at that time.

- Mind Mapping software

A mind map is a visual representation of ideas. This software can help you to organise your ideas in a useful way. This software can be used to create notes following lectures or reading. It can also be used when planning essays.

Learning Support

- ALL provides learning support primarily through group workshops. These workshops are run numerous times over both semesters and are advertised to students via email. These workshops are designed to help you learn the skills you need to succeed at university. Learning support workshops include, but are not limited to, the following topics:
 - Note taking
 - Time management and organisation
 - Study skills
 - Academic writing & Research skills
 - Presentations and group work
 - Avoiding Plagiarism
 - Exam Preparation;
- All material used in workshops is made available via Blackboard. These materials include slides, handouts, exercises and an audio version of all workshops. All first year students registering with ALL are given access to this Blackboard module. If you would like to request access to this module then please send your request to disability@ucd.ie.

Transition to Third Level

Many students find the transition to third level from the very structured environment quite challenging. In order to prevent feeling overwhelmed it is important that you communicate with your tutors/lecturers with any questions you have or problems you might be facing with your modules/assessments. Communication can help to lessen feelings of anxiety or stress. You can find more information on how to reduce stress, especially around exams, on the Learning Support Blackboard Module. If you are struggling with the transition to UCD please contact ALL to discuss how we can help.

Useful Online Resources

- www.headstrong.ie
- www.reachout.com
- www.mentalhealthireland.ie