

# **Towards Equal Outcomes**

**A survey of the career experiences of  
graduates with disabilities and  
employer responses to diversity,  
University of Limerick, 1997 - 2003**

**Careers Service  
Cooperative Education & Careers Division  
University of Limerick**

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**September 2005**

## *Towards Equal Outcomes*

This report is part of the Careers Support Service for Students with Disabilities offered by the Cooperative Education & Careers Division of the University of Limerick. The Careers Support Service is funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as part of the Strategic initiatives Scheme. This research project was undertaken in consultation with and funded by FÁS Mid-West Regional Office.

The Careers Service acknowledges that 'graduates with disabilities' are not a homogeneous group. Disability is unique to the experience of each individual. For the purposes of the survey, there is some categorisation of disabilities.

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## **Foreword**

This report looks at the employment patterns of University of Limerick (UL) graduates with disabilities for the period 1997-2003. The findings are based on two surveys conducted by the Cooperative Education & Careers Service between January and March 2005. The survey covers 70 UL graduates with disabilities and 120 employers in the mid-west region. Both surveys consider aspects of disability provision in the workplace from the perspective of both graduate and employer.

The focus of the graduate survey is on the transition from third level education to employment. The employment experiences of this group of graduates are measured against the backdrop of specialist career interventions for students and graduates with disabilities that have been developed within the UL Careers Service. These include customised careers support services that are tailored to the diverse needs of graduates with disabilities and supported under the Higher Education Authority's Strategic Initiatives Scheme.

The main objective of the employer survey is to establish whether the labour market for graduates with disabilities is responding to legislative and funding provisions currently available to promote equal participation in the workplace. The impact of funding and supports provided through relevant state agencies is assessed. This is done with particular reference to the range of schemes and grants available through FÁS, the National Training and Employment Authority.

## **Acknowledgements**

Acknowledgement is made to the graduates and employers who participated in this survey; to FÁS Mid-West for providing funding for the project, in particular, to Patrick O' Sullivan, Jerry Madden and Chris Delaney; to Brenda Shinnors-Kennedy for providing the graduate database; to John King for research and statistical analysis; to Denise Flannery for her skill in producing the final report; to Phyl Fitzgerald for proof reading; to the Marketing Centre for Small Business for support and training; to Ann Marie Costelloe for the cover design; and to Press22, Eoin Stephenson, Birte Schultz and Derek Spaight for the photographs.

## **Executive Summary**

The Higher Education Authority acknowledges that, while participation in higher education has grown significantly over the past 40 years, it has not been equally shared by all members of society, including people with disabilities. “Tackling social exclusion through education has been a national policy priority in Ireland since the mid-1990s, but to date there has been insufficient emphasis on the outcome of access activities” (HEA, 2004). This is compounded by the absence of any recorded information on the career destinations of graduates with disabilities in Ireland. This information gap prompted this particular research project.

In consultation with FÁS, it was agreed to conduct a survey that focused on both the employment experiences of University of Limerick graduates with disabilities and employer responses to disability provision in the workplace. This report provides a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the experiences of both in the context of improved interventions both within the UL Careers Service and external supports available in the wider graduate employment market.

The report is premised on the notion that equality of participation in education for each individual student is reflected in equality of outcome in the workplace for each individual graduate. In this respect, careers services are at the forefront of ‘widening participation’ activities that occupy the agenda of most higher education institutions.

The overall findings of the survey challenge many of the negative perceptions around disability and graduate employment, and highlight the positive impact of tailored career support services within the University in improving the employability of graduates with disabilities. Yet, there are low levels of awareness amongst both graduates and employers on the range of external supports and funding available to promote equality of participation in the workplace. This is largely because issues of accessibility and disability provision are seen as responses to individual employees or potential employees rather than intrinsic to the culture and recruitment practices of organisations.

The survey results provide very useful data on the employment pattern and experiences of a group of UL graduates with disabilities. There is a need to build on this regional database by means of a national survey that covers the higher education sector. This would provide a comprehensive picture of the employment pattern of graduates with disabilities throughout the country.

## **Key Survey Results: The Graduate Perspective**

The graduate survey reflects the employment status, attitudes and experiences of some 42 graduates with disabilities who completed their studies in UL between 1997 and 2003. The survey was conducted in January 2005 and the key findings are as follows:

### **Employment Details**

- The overall results of the survey are very encouraging, as 74% of respondents were employed at the time of the survey. The findings challenge the often negative perceptions on the employment patterns of graduates with disabilities.
- A significant proportion of graduates, some 17%, were pursuing some form of further study.
- Some 7% were seeking employment, and only 2% were not available for employment.
- The geographical distribution of graduates with disabilities does not reflect that of either the total UL graduate population or the total national graduate population and is limited by issues of transport and access. As a result, graduates with disabilities are more likely to remain in the mid-west region and less likely to move to Dublin.

### **Experiences of the Job Search Process**

- The majority of respondents, 89%, considered that having a degree made them more employable, and very few had concerns about ability to do the job.
- Lack of employer awareness and concern around disclosing a disability are cited as key issues for graduates with disabilities when looking for work. More than half choose to disclose their disabilities to employers.
- The level of graduate interaction with key external support services that work to promote disability provision and equal participation in the workplace is relatively low and 87% of respondents are unaware of the labour market grants available to help them gain or retain employment.
- The main source of information on job vacancies was the Cooperative Education & Careers Division in UL.

## **Experiences in the Workplace**

- The most significant barriers to equal participation in the workplace were environmental and cultural i.e. access, transport, awareness and disclosure.
- More than half the graduates did not require any adaptations or accommodations in the workplace.
- Only 17% of respondents reported that their employers provided disability awareness training in the workplace.

### **Key Survey Results: The Employer Perspective**

The second strand of this research project was a survey of employers in the mid-west region to determine their awareness and usage of supports available to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities. This report reflects the views of some 50 employers who participated in the survey. The key findings are as follows:

## **Employment Practices**

- Approximately one third of these employers, 30%, confirmed that they currently employ people with disabilities, and 66% either did not employ or were not aware of any person with disability in their workforce.
- The employment level of graduates with disabilities was somewhat lower, with 20% of respondents confirming that they currently employ graduates with disabilities.
- Most companies are conscious of the importance of ensuring that their recruitment practices do not discriminate against people with disabilities. Three quarters refer to equal opportunity policies in the text of the advertisements, and 31% have disability-proofed their recruitment and selection practices.
- More than half the companies invite requests for special arrangements that candidates have at interview stage; however, only 29% provide application materials in alternative formats.
- There was relatively little support for positive discrimination in the recruitment of people with disabilities, with only 35% supporting this approach.

### **Physical Access**

- Half of the respondent companies have conducted an access audit of their premises. Yet while guidelines are available, no formal standardised process exists for conducting access audits in the workplace.
- The vast majority of companies, 85%, confirmed that entrances are clearly signed, and 70% reported that entrances are ramped.

### **Support Schemes**

- The survey highlights a significant gap between the level of awareness of the various state support schemes available to employers to promote equality of participation in the workplace and the usage of these schemes. Although most were aware of the existence of these supports, the level of applications is extraordinarily low. In fact, only four of the respondents had actually applied for any funding.
- In the case of the Disabled Employee Retention Aid Scheme, none of the respondents was even aware that funding was available for this purpose.

### **Disability Awareness Training**

- The report shows a high level of interest in disability awareness training provided by external organisations in the mid-west region. Some 40% of respondents had attended seminars and workshops organised by the University of Limerick Careers Support Service.
- Only one third of companies surveyed provide their own disability awareness training for staff.

## **Conclusions**

The findings of this report challenge the perception that graduates with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed than non disabled graduates. The report highlights the effectiveness of tailored careers and disability support services within higher education institutions in responding to the diverse and individual needs of graduates with disabilities. Careers Services have a vital role in to play in supporting students with disabilities as they prepare to make the transition from education to a professional career.

Comparisons on salary levels and on the geographical distribution of employment patterns of graduates with disabilities show some disparity with the total UL graduate population. This may in part be due to differences in sample size, but there is valid evidence of cultural and environmental barriers to equality of outcomes in the graduate recruitment market.

The report further finds that at regional and national level, networking between services that work to promote equality of participation in the workplace is poor and arbitrary. This is reflected in low levels of awareness and lack of clarity amongst graduates and employers on the range of funding and supports available to promote an inclusive workplace. The level of take-up on the range of grants and funding available through FÁS to promote the employment of people with disabilities was critically low.

The absence of standard and comparable performance indicators of best practice on the accessible workplace in the context of both physical access and recruitment and selection practices undermines the development of disability confident employment practices.

## **Recommendations**

A number of recommendations for graduates, employers, careers services, and higher education institutions include:

### **Graduates with Disabilities**

- Become more proactive in promoting disability awareness in the workplace.
- Support the establishment of regional forums in affiliation with GET AHEAD, the National Forum of Graduates with Disabilities.
- Build Alumni networks to raise the profile of graduates with disabilities in the workplace.
- Identify and network with appropriate support services.

### **Employers**

- Consider the business case for recruiting graduates with disabilities.
- Become involved in mentoring and internship programmes that work to promote diversity in the workplace.

- Integrate disability awareness training within the organisational culture as a tool of best practice in people management.
- Identify and network with appropriate services.

### **Careers Services**

- Ensure that careers services are accessible and relevant in both format and content to the needs of all students.
- Collaborate with other support services and employer organisations to promote the business case for employing graduates with disabilities.
- Work with alumni and use the expertise available from students and graduates with disabilities to improve disability provision in careers education.
- Contribute to national third level initiatives that monitor the employment record and career progression of graduates with disabilities to provide accurate and up-to-date information to prospective students.

### **Higher Education Institutions**

- Participate in a national survey that would allow for an in depth analysis of graduate employment by disability type and employment classification. Work with employers groups, expert agencies and regional organisations in multi agency approach to develop mentoring and internship programmes that promote equal participation in the workplace by graduates with disabilities.
- Develop modules to increase the level of expertise available in assistive technology and disability awareness training.

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## **Introduction**

The Careers Service at the University of Limerick (UL), in consultation with FÁS Mid-West Regional Office, identified a need to provide current and accurate data on the employment patterns of graduates with disabilities. The survey reviewed:

1. The employment patterns and experiences of UL graduates with disabilities.
2. Employer awareness/usage of the supports available to promote equal participation in the workplace. These supports include a range of grant-aided schemes/allowances available to support and sustain the development of best practice in recruitment, selection and employment of graduates with disabilities.

The survey reflects the Careers Service commitment to the broader institutional and national agenda of enhancing equity in higher education. This agenda is supported by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) under the Strategic Initiatives Scheme. The Disability Liaison Office in UL works to support disability provision in all aspects of the university experience. The Careers Service also has designed targeted programmes to ensure that traditionally under-represented student groups are equally effective in making the transition from third level education to employment.

The survey had three objectives. The first was to provide accurate data on the current employment status of graduates with disabilities. This would examine the graduate profiles, job-search status, awareness of available sources of support and levels of interaction between service providers and the target graduate group; in effect, to give an overview of employment and disability issues from the graduate perspective.

The second aim was to measure disability awareness amongst employers in the mid-west region. Some 120 employers were surveyed, half of whom are known to have previously participated in disability awareness training provided by the Careers Support Service at the University of Limerick. The survey looked at selection and recruitment practices, general access provision and participation in disability awareness training. In addition, it measured the interaction between employers and disability support agencies, including the level of usage of funding mechanisms for the employment of graduates with disabilities. There was particular emphasis on the range of disability grants and schemes available through FÁS. These included:

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- The Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant.
- The Employment Support Scheme.
- Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme.
- Disabled Employee Retention Aid Scheme.
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant.
- Personal Reader Grant.
- Supported Employment.

Details of the supports available are outlined in Section 3.

This survey was undertaken in cooperation with FÁS Mid-West and will be presented in consultation with the national Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) as a prototype for a national survey on the employment patterns of graduates with disabilities in Ireland.

The final aim of the project was to provide research training and a six-month employment opportunity for a graduate with a disability. The graduate survey was undertaken in January 2005, followed by the employer survey in March.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Graduate Survey**

All UL graduates who were registered with the Disability Liaison Office and who graduated from the University of Limerick between 1997 and 2003 were surveyed in January 2005. The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was provided in alternative formats on request. A total of 70 graduates were included in the sampling frame.

The format of the first section of the questionnaire was similar to the questionnaire used in the annual First Destinations Survey (UL Careers Service, 2003) conducted by UL Careers Service on behalf of the Higher Education Authority. This allows for some comparison of results with the total UL graduate population. The second section dealt with qualitative issues. This required responses to open ended questions regarding the graduate experience of issues of access and disability awareness and available supports/accommodations in the workplace. The initial response was quite low and the postal survey was followed up with a series of telephone calls, resulting in a final response rate of 60%.

In terms of secondary research, no published material exists on career destinations of graduates with disabilities in Ireland. In the UK, however, the Disability Development Network, part of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), produced a series of reports on the first destinations of UK graduates with disabilities. The findings challenge many widely held views on the opportunities available to them. These reports were used as background reference material for this survey. References are also drawn from material published by the National Disability Authority, the Equality Authority, Workway, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, and a number of other reports relating to disability issues in the workplace, all of which are listed in the references.

### **Employer Survey**

Following consultations with FÁS, a questionnaire was designed as the basis of a tele-survey and delivered to 120 employers in the mid-west region. Of the total number of employers contacted, 50% were known to have previously participated in disability awareness training provided by the UL Careers Service. The final response rate was 42%.

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The key areas reviewed under the survey included recruitment and selection procedures, general access provision, and disability awareness training. The survey also looked at employer interface with available supports and agencies that work to promote the equality agenda in the workplace. This included awareness of the range of grants and schemes available to support the employment of people with disabilities. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix 2.

### **Research Assistant Training**

A Research Assistant was appointed and received initial training from the Marketing Centre for Small Business at the University of Limerick. The training, undertaken between December 2004 and January 2005, included Principles of Market Research, Questionnaire Design, Market Research Techniques, Questionnaire Analysis, specifically SPSS Data Analysis and Reporting.

### **Notes on Terminology**

The term 'Graduates with Disabilities' is used to describe those graduates who, by registering with the Disability Liaison Office, identified themselves as having a disability during their undergraduate studies. The Careers Service acknowledges that 'graduates with disabilities' are not a homogenous group. Disability is unique to the experience of each individual. However, for the purpose of this survey, there is some categorisation of types of disabilities.

## **Section 1: Statistical Analysis of Graduate Survey**

The statistical analysis of the quantitative data covered in the survey provides a detailed analysis of the general profile; employment status, location of employment, and salary levels of graduates with disabilities.

Using 2003 as a base year, comparisons are drawn with the employment patterns of the total UL graduate population. Some qualitative analysis is made on underlying factors that influence particularly the geographical distribution of the employment patterns of graduates with disabilities.

### **Profile of Respondents**

The criterion for inclusion in the survey is the formal definition of a graduate with a disability. For the purposes of the survey, disability is defined as given under the Employment Equality Act “as including total or partial absence of bodily or mental facilities, chronic disease, whether manifest or not, learning and personality disorders. It includes a condition, illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour and shall be taken to include a disability which exists at present, or which previously existed but no longer exists or which may exist in the future or which is imputed to a person” (Government of Ireland, 1998).

All respondents were registered with the Disability Liaison Service at the University of Limerick and all respondents graduated between 1997 and 2003. Seventy graduates were included in the sampling frame and the findings of the survey are based on a 60% response rate.

**Degree Background**

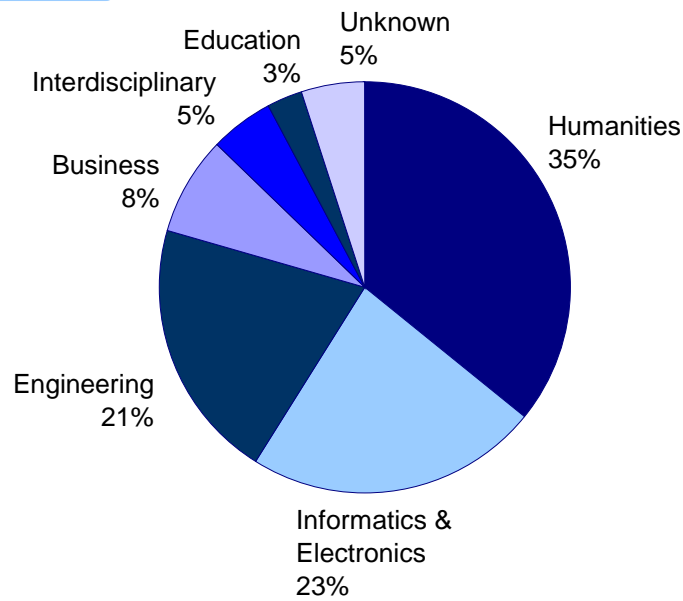


Figure 1: Degree Background of the Graduates with Disabilities (n=42)

Respondents were predominantly graduates from the colleges of Humanities, Informatics & Electronics, and Engineering.

**Gender**

The gender of respondents was quite evenly balanced with just a slight majority of respondents, 55%, being male.

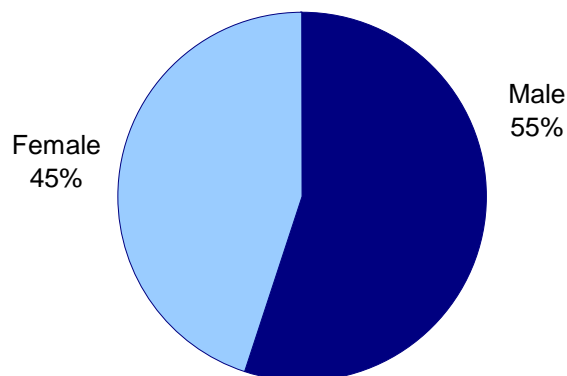


Figure 2: Gender of Respondents (n=42)

### Year of Graduation

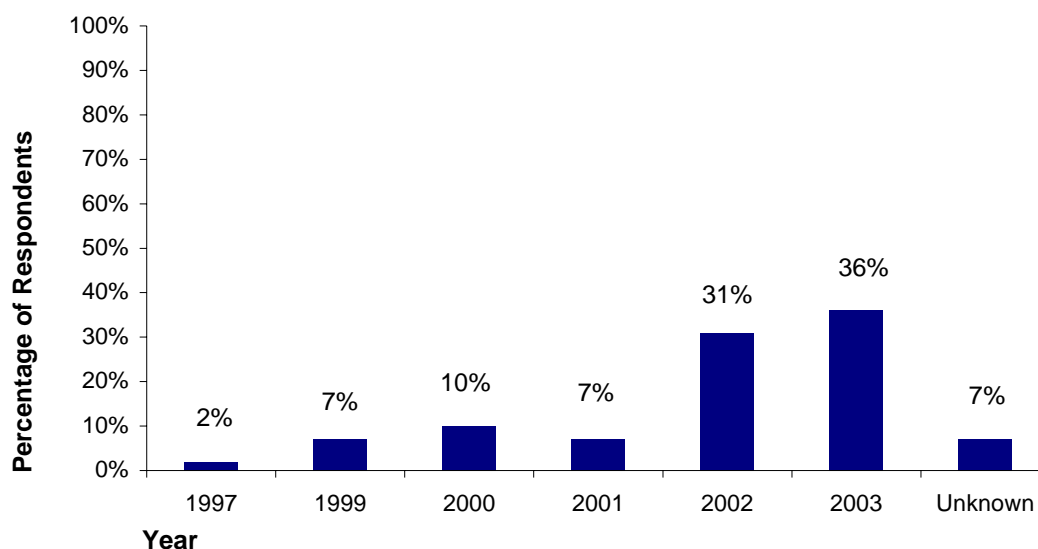


Figure 3: Graduation Years 1997 - 2003 (n=42)

The distribution over the period 1997-2003, shows a significant increase in the numbers graduating in 2002 and 2003. This reflects internal policy in relation to the University's strategic commitment to the agenda for widening participation. Externally, influential factors included the Employment Equality Act (1998), contributions from the National Disability Authority and the Equality Authority, and commitments under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.

In the context of third level education, the Universities Act (1997) prompted the introduction of direct entry systems and the provision of targeted funding through the Higher Education Authority's Strategic Initiative Scheme to support traditionally under-represented student groups.

The appointment of Disability Liaison Officers was critical to promoting a supportive and inclusive learning environment. The role of the Disability Liaison Office in admission procedures and the development of taster and other pre-entry measures encouraged and facilitated an increase in the number of applications from students with disabilities.

**First Destinations of UL Graduates with Disabilities 1997 - 2003**

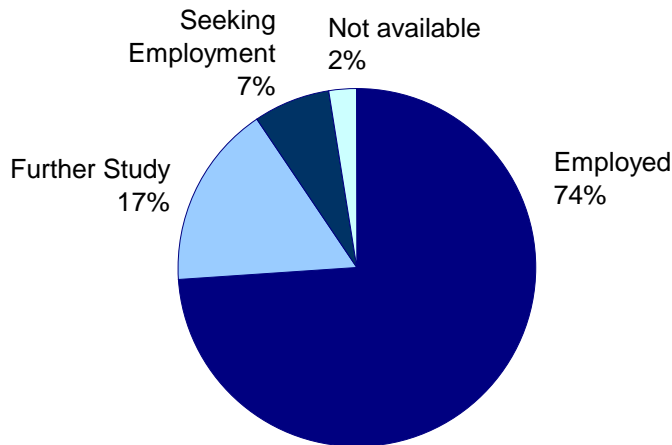


Figure 4: First Destinations of Respondents 1997 – 2003 (n=42)

The overall results of the survey for the period 1997 to 2003 are very positive:

- 74% of respondents were in employment.
- 17% were pursuing further study.
- 7% were seeking employment at the time of the survey.

A comparison with other under-represented students groups is valid. For example, mature students have received comparable targeted supports in career development at third level. A survey of mature graduates from the University of Limerick (1998-2002) was conducted in 2003 and the report ‘Mature Reflections’ (UL Careers Service, 2004) provided information on the employment record of 60 respondents. The results showed that 73% of mature students were in full-time employment in Ireland by 2003.

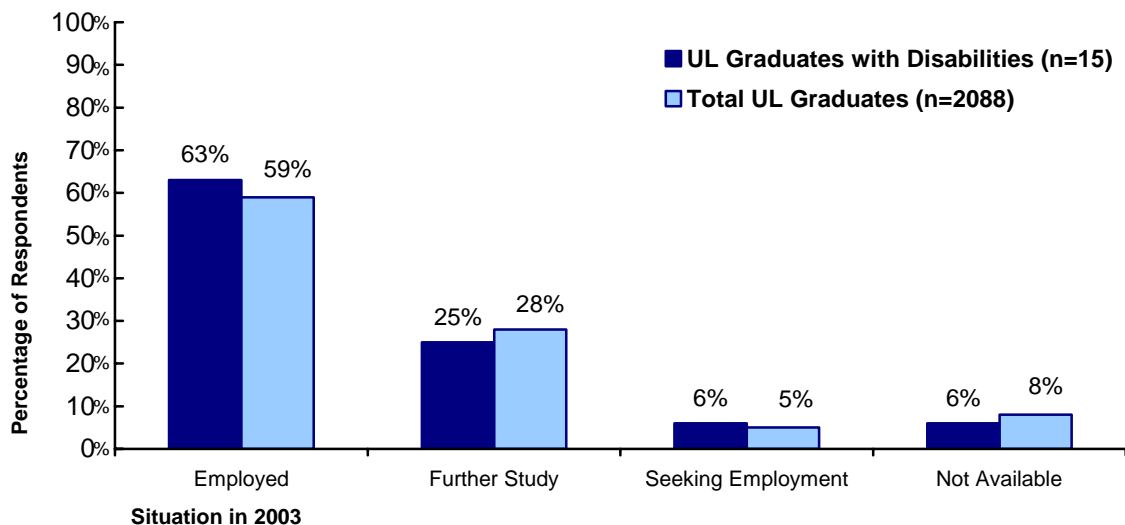


Figure 5: First Destinations of UL Graduates with Disabilities compared with Total UL Graduates, 2003

Focusing on the first destinations of the peak year 2003 allows some interesting comparisons between graduates with disabilities and the total UL graduate population. An analysis of respondents who graduated in 2003 shows that 63% were in employment compared with 59% of the total UL graduate population. Despite obvious differences in scale, these statistics are more favourable than those recorded in the 2003 UK national survey (AGCAS, 2005), with 48.4% of graduates with disabilities in full-time employment compared with 54.6% of non-disabled graduates. Other key findings in the UL survey of 2003 graduates include:

- 25% of graduates with disabilities entered further study, compared with 28% of the total UL graduate population.
- 6% of graduates with disabilities were seeking employment at the time of the survey, compared with 5% of the total UL graduate population.
- 6% of graduates with disabilities were unavailable for work, compared with 8% of the total UL graduate population.

It is difficult, however, to draw any firm conclusions because of the significant differences in the sample sizes of these two cohorts.

#### Graduates with Disabilities by Disability

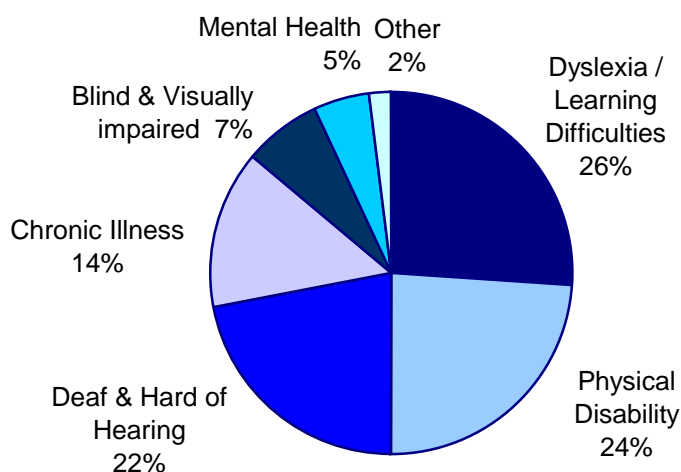


Figure 6: Graduates with Disabilities by Disability 1997 – 2003 (n=42)

A breakdown on the individual disability of respondents identified the highest number of graduates as having dyslexia/learning difficulties. The sample was not sufficiently large to reach valid conclusions under each category of disability. However, a UK study, 'What Happens Next' (AGCAS, 2005), based on over 182,000 graduates reached some very informative conclusions in the area of employability and unseen disability. In the context of this UK study, removing dyslexia and unseen disability

from the overall picture meant that, in 2003, overall employment rates for graduates with disabilities would drop from 48.4% to 40%, which is significantly lower than the figure of 54.6% for non-disabled graduates. Similarly, unemployment figures for the remaining disabled groups would rise from the overall figure of 9.6% to 11.7%, compared with 6.9% of non-disabled graduates. Furthermore, 30.3% of graduates who are 'wheelchair users/have mobility difficulties' were in full-time paid employment compared to 48.4% of disabled graduates and 54.6% of non-disabled graduates.

The scale of the UL survey did not support detailed analysis by specific disability, but there is some evidence to suggest that for the year 2003, 20% of graduates who are 'wheelchair users/have mobility difficulties' are in full-time paid employment, compared to overall 63% of graduates with disabilities and 59% of the total UL graduate population.

'Disability and Work', a survey conducted by the National Disability Authority (2005), also concluded that mobility difficulties reduced employment: "Employment rates for people whose disability involves their feet or their legs ... is 33 percentage points lower than the non-disabled population. This large gap may reflect barriers other than the ability to perform a job." Issues of access and transport and the impact on the geographical distribution of the employment patterns of graduates with disabilities are discussed in more detail in Section 2.

## Salaries

### Salary Levels

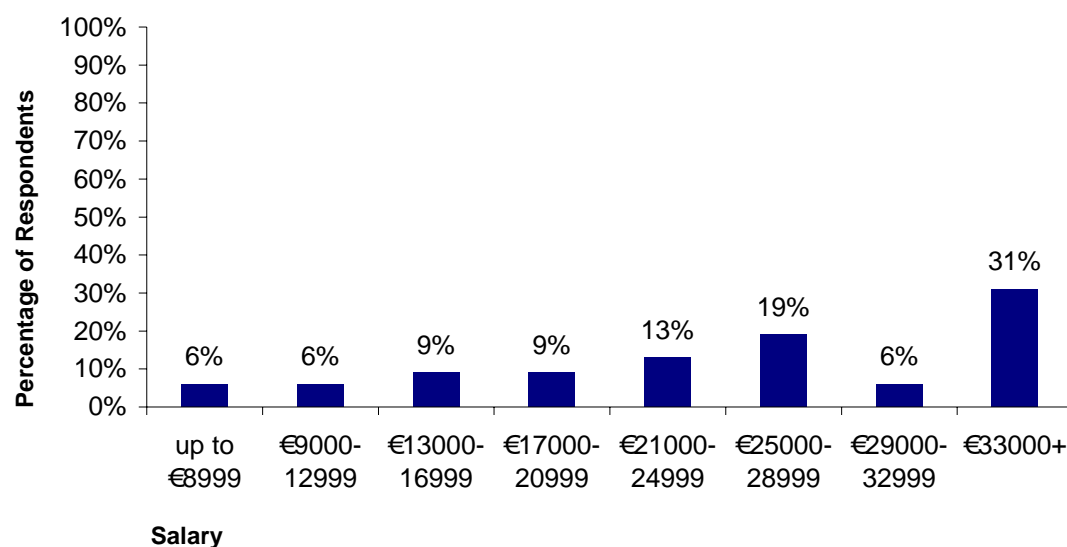


Figure 7: Salaries of UL Graduates with Disabilities 1997 – 2003 (n=32)

Salary levels are frequently used as a measure of the status of graduate jobs. A central concern is that graduates with disabilities may not be employed in graduate entry-level jobs. A longitudinal analysis of career progression would add additional valuable perspectives. However, almost a third of graduates reported a salary in excess of €33,000, which compares favourably with the total UL graduate population.

### Salaries 2003

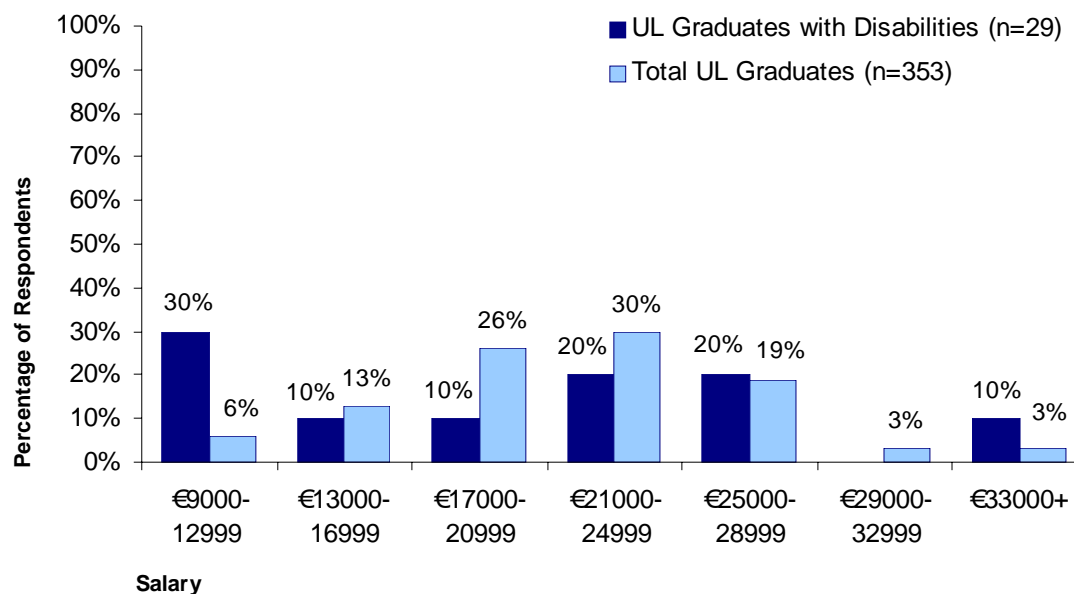


Figure 8: Salaries of UL Graduates with Disabilities compared with Total UL Graduates, 2003

It is possible to make some comparisons between the salary levels of graduates with disabilities and the total UL graduate cohort for the year 2003. This comparison indicates some significant discrepancies. However, this may in part be attributed to differences in scale. Salary data for graduates with disabilities is limited, in that it is based on the evidence of a small number of respondents. Nevertheless, a comparison between salaries earned by graduates with disabilities and the salary levels of the total UL graduate population for the year 2003 found the following results:

- 30% of graduates with disabilities reported salaries of less than €13,000.
- 20% of graduates with disabilities were earning between €21,000 and €25,000, compared with 30% of the total UL graduate population.
- The discrepancy in salary levels was less pronounced for the numbers of graduates earning between €25,000 and €29,000. 20% of graduates with disabilities recorded this salary level, compared to 19% of the total UL graduate population.

### Geographical Location

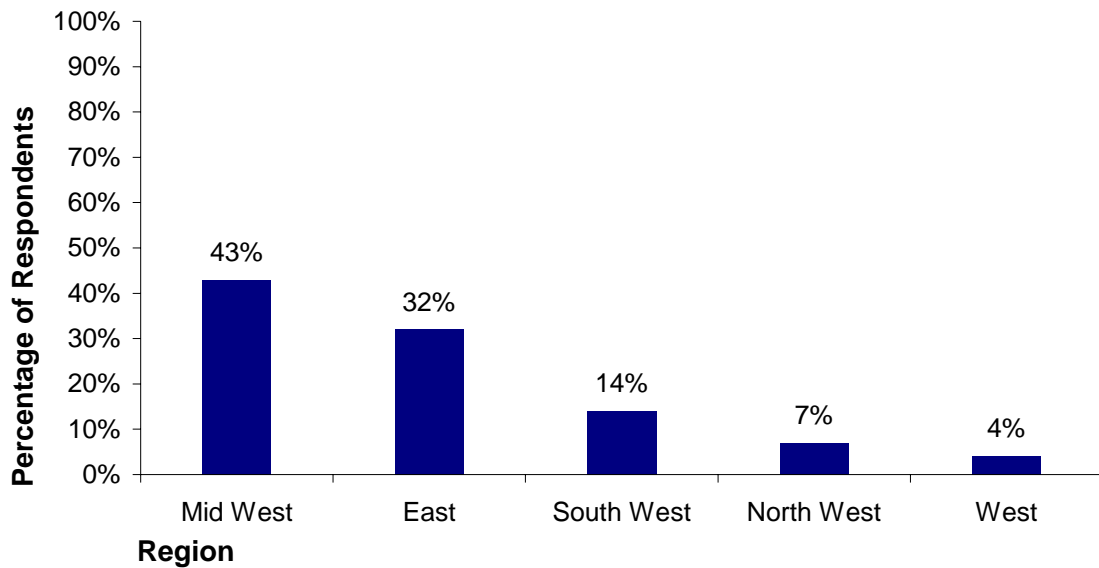


Figure 9: Employment Locations of UL Graduates with Disabilities (Ireland) 1997 – 2003 (n=28)

Geographical location as a factor underlying employment choice appears significantly different for graduates with disabilities. The geographical distribution of graduates with disabilities does not reflect that of the overall UL graduate population as reported in the annual First Destinations Report (UL Careers Service, 2003).

According to this survey, the highest concentration of graduates with disabilities, over 40%, were employed in the mid-west region. This is relatively high when compared to both the overall UL graduate population and other targeted student groups. On average, some 30% of all UL graduates found employment in the mid-west, while 40% moved to the Dublin area. In the case of mature graduates, 27% opted to stay in the mid-west region. This tendency for graduates with disabilities to remain in the mid-west is also reflected in the analysis for the graduating class of 2003.

### Geographical Location 2003

A comparison with the full UL cohort and the total population of Irish graduates in the year 2003 shows that 60% of graduates with disabilities were employed in the mid-west, compared to 31% of the total UL graduate population and 7% of the national graduate population.

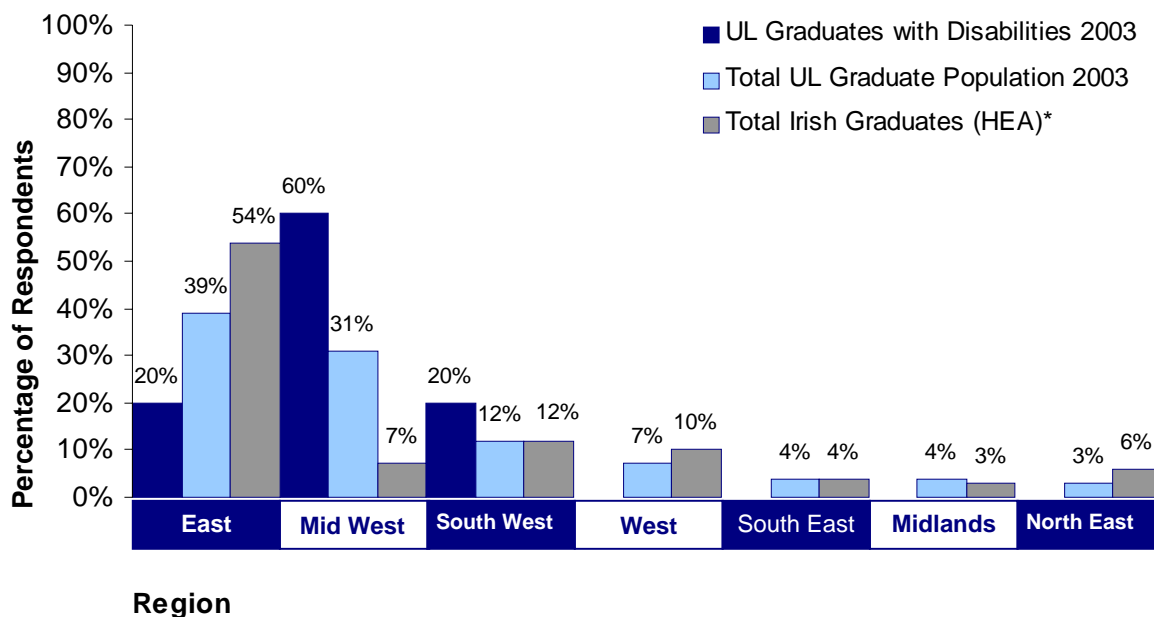


Figure 10: Employment Locations (Ireland) of Graduates with Disabilities compared to the Total UL and HEA Graduate populations, 2003. \* Excluding Northern Ireland, total = 96%.

According to HEA statistics, the east dominates as an employment location for graduates, but only 20% of the graduates surveyed in this report are employed in the east, including Dublin.

The survey looked at some of the issues that influence choice of employment. It is reasonable to assert that access, transport and adapted accommodation are key considerations for many graduates with disabilities. The 'Survey on Social Participation and Disability' conducted by the National Disability Authority (2004), concluded that a quarter of disabled respondents reported having neither access to public transport or regularly driving a car. In this survey, graduates were asked to cite key concerns when making choices in relation to employment, and 24% cited transport or location as a key concern. According to the National Disability Authority (2005), 'people who are out of work can get a mobility allowance, but there is more limited assistance with transport costs for those at work. The gap in employment rates may largely be due to these barriers to employment.'

## ***Section 2: Disability Issues – The Graduate Perspective***

### **Careers Support Service**

The Careers Support Service for students with disabilities has been developed as an integral part of the UL Cooperative Education & Careers Division. In addition to supporting the core careers programme, the Service addresses special needs across all areas of career planning from the point of admission to UL up to securing the first graduate position.

The objective is to provide individualised and customised supports to prepare students for Cooperative Education placement and graduate employment. The Service is in existence since 1999 and is funded through the HEA's Strategic Initiative Scheme. It reflects UL's broader policy of ensuring equality of participation in all aspects of the university experience including the transition from education to the workplace.

The Careers Support Service involves intensive work with individual students. Programmes include the development of an Employer Mentoring Programme, the development of 'Inclusion', a dedicated website ([www.ul.ie/careers/inclusion](http://www.ul.ie/careers/inclusion)), as well as the provision of focused group workshops. All initiatives are geared to preparing students for application and interview procedures, the placement experience and choice of career.

It is difficult to measure the impact of these and other career interventions on the long-term prospects of graduates with disabilities. However, graduate destination data can provide some useful indicators on the effectiveness of tailored supports, and their impact on both the employment pattern and the job-search experiences of graduates with disabilities. This survey considered how students engage with the additional supports available to them through the Careers Service and other key agencies prior to seeking graduate employment.

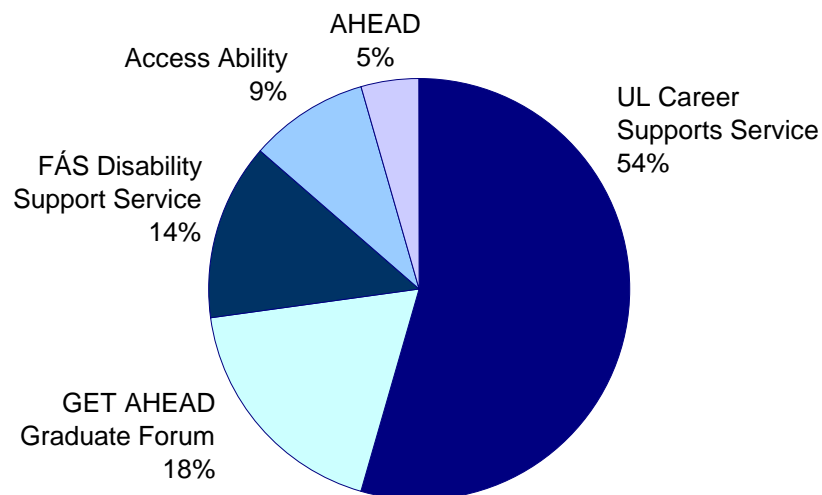


Figure 11: Disability Support Services used while in UL (n=22)

The survey found that during their time in UL, 54% of respondents had used the services of the Careers Support Service, while 14% of graduates had used the services of FÁS Disability Support Service. The use of other external key support services that work to promote equality of participation in the workplace is relatively low.

- 18% of graduates had used GET AHEAD, The National Forum for Graduates with Disabilities.
- 9% used Access Ability – a recruitment consultancy for people with disabilities.
- 5% had used AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access & Disability.

This may be due in part to an overall low level of awareness of the support services in existence. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that with the exception of FÁS and the Careers Support Service, the other services are Dublin based, and this presents issues around access and transport for graduates living in the mid-west and other regions of the country.

## Sources of Information for Job Vacancies

Figure 12 shows the range of information sources for job vacancies most commonly used by graduates with disabilities. The most frequently used source of information for finding job vacancies was the Cooperative Education & Careers Division (24%).

## *Towards Equal Outcomes*

This would suggest that enabling students to gain professional work experience at undergraduate level is particularly significant to students for whom access to previous work experience is often limited. A relatively high proportion, 21%, used recruitment consultants, including Access Ability. In this case, it is likely that the first point of contact was through a series of workshops presented jointly by Access Ability and the UL Careers Support Service hosted on the UL campus.

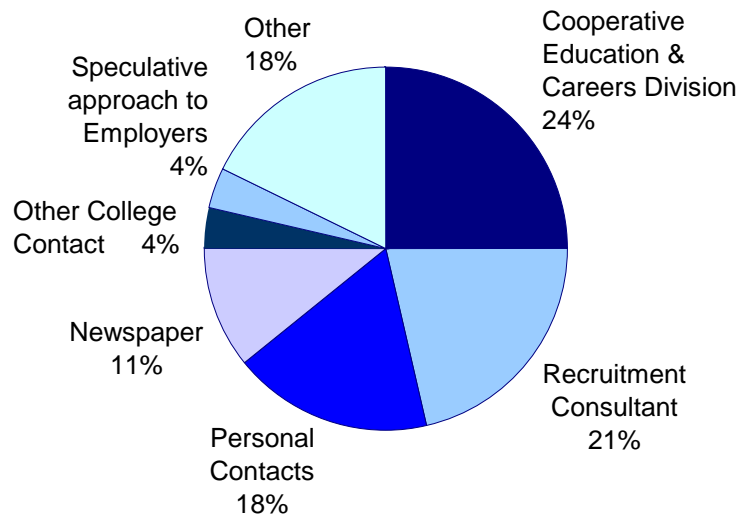


Figure 12: Sources of Information for Job Vacancies (n=28)

Significantly, 18% of graduates secured employment through personal contacts. Personal contacts can have a broad definition. While undoubtedly, it includes family, friends and other relationships, it can also extend to more formal personal networks. The Evaluation Report (Fitzpatrick, 2003) on the experiences of students who participated on the Employer Mentoring Programme provided by the UL Careers Support Service suggests that tailored programmes that enable students with disabilities to build professional networks can translate into graduate employment.

## Disclosure Information

Best practice suggests that choosing to disclose a disability to a potential employer is a matter of individual choice. The survey sought to identify the key concerns experienced by graduates with disabilities when looking for work. Disclosure was one of the most frequently cited, 27%, by graduates.

How and when to disclose, particularly an unseen disability, to a potential employer is the subject of a large amount of discussion between individual graduates and the Careers Support Service. In response, the Careers Support Service runs dedicated workshops on 'Disclosure and Effective Interview Techniques'. GET AHEAD, The National Forum for Graduates with Disabilities, published 'Disclosure – a Practical Guide' (2005), following a number of issues raised around disclosure at the 2004 National Conference for Graduates with Disabilities, hosted by UL Careers Service.

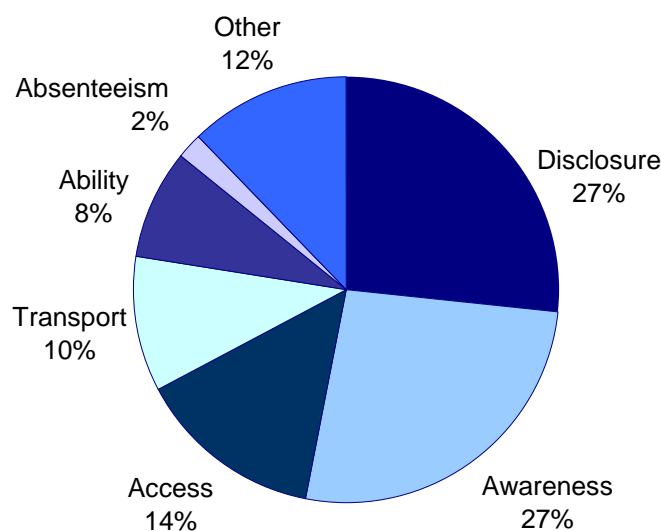


Figure 13: Key Concerns for Graduates with Disabilities When Applying for Work (n=49)

When asked to identify barriers to equal participation in the workplace, 78% of the issues identified were cultural and environmental i.e. access, transport, awareness, disclosure. Few graduates recorded health, stamina or 'ability to do the job' as key concerns.

When asked whether or not they disclosed an illness or a disability to a potential employer, 57% disclosed, 29% did not, and 14% sometimes did.

## Accommodations in the Workplace

Reasonable accommodations in the workplace are understood to be 'effective and practical measures to adapt the employer's place of business including the adaptation of premises and equipment, patterns of working time, distribution of tasks or the provision of training or integration resources. The employer is not obliged to provide any treatment, facility or thing that the person might ordinarily or reasonably provide for him or herself'... 'an employer is obliged to take appropriate measures to enable a person who has a disability to:

- have access to employment
- participate or advance in employment
- undertake training

unless the measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer... In determining whether the measures would impose a disproportionate burden, account is taken of the:

- financial and other costs entailed.
- scale and financial resources of the employer's business.
- possibility of obtaining public funding or other assistance.

(Equality Authority, accessed 2005).

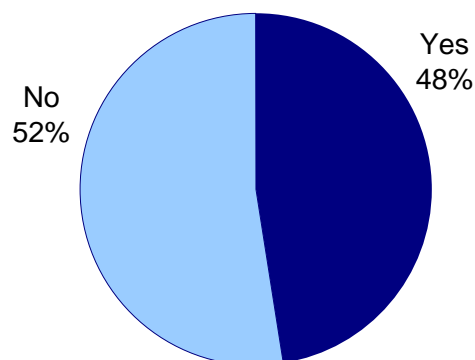


Figure 14: Accommodations Required in the Workplace by UL Graduates with Disabilities (n=21)

In response to the question about frequency and nature of accommodations required in the workplace, this survey found that a slight majority of graduates, 52%, did not require any accommodation in the workplace, while 48% of respondents did.

It is worth noting, however, that all accommodations that were identified fell within a 'nominal cost' definition i.e. they do not appear to impose a disproportionate burden

in respect of financial or other costs entailed. The types of accommodations identified in the survey included:

- Computer magnification.
- Jaws / Assistive technology.
- Extra time regarding deadlines.
- Computer.
- Sturdy back supportive chair.
- Flexible working hours.
- Special chair for my back.
- General access, lift W.C access.
- Stair Handrail.

Other graduate comments included:

“I do not require any special arrangements other than asking people to speak louder and more clearly.”

“Never asked for special arrangement, but employer needs to be aware that I cannot use a telephone, even with a hearing aid, I lip read a lot, so I need face-to-face communication.”

“None, required extra time in training at the start but require none now.”

## **Graduate Awareness of Labour Market Grants**

Employment related supports to help graduates with disabilities gain or retain employment are available through FÁS. Graduates have access to a range of grant-aided schemes to assist them in procuring technologies, disability awareness training, or other assistive supports that may be required to ensure equality of participation at work.

It should be noted that the services provided by the Disability Liaison Office within UL include guidance and training on the range of assistive technologies available to students and graduates with disabilities. Graduates were asked whether or not they were aware of the availability of the following grants:

- Work Place Equipment Adaptation Grant.
- Personal Reader Grant.

## Towards Equal Outcomes

- Supported Employment.
- Employment Support Scheme.
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant.
- Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme.

In addition, they were asked whether, to their knowledge, their employer had applied for any of the above. Graduates were asked also whether their employer had participated in or provided disability awareness training.

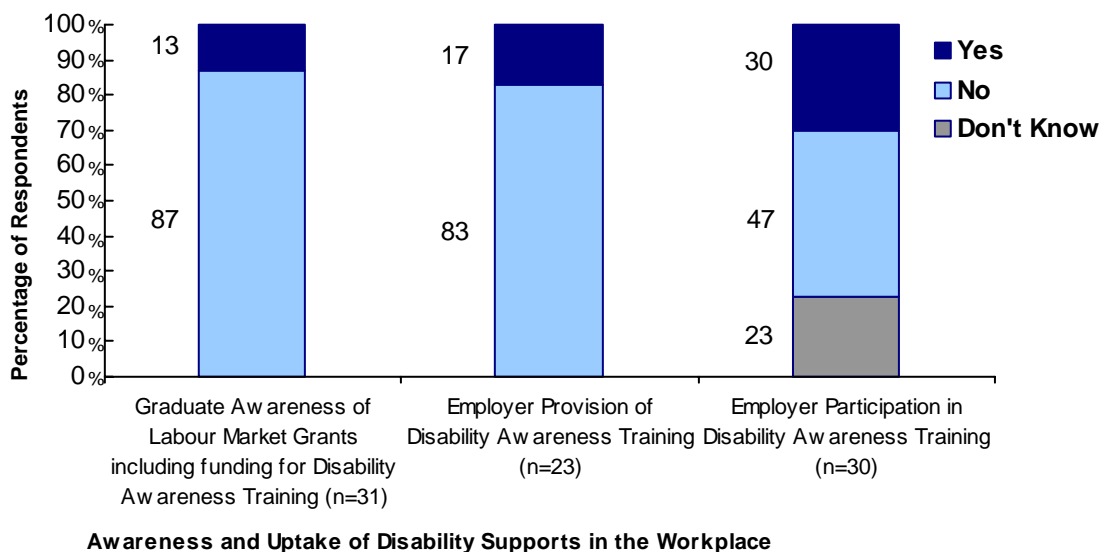


Figure 15: Awareness and Uptake of Disability Supports in the Workplace

Based on their response, the survey reports the following four key findings:

- 87% of graduates with disabilities are unaware of the labour market grants available to them.
- 83% stated that their employer did not provide disability awareness training.
- 47% stated that their employer did not participate in disability awareness training.
- 23% were not aware of their employer participating in disability awareness training.

Low levels of awareness of the supports available are reflected in the Manpower Survey of Companies 2003, 'Working With Disabilities' (Manpower Skills Group, 2003). 'Over half of the companies surveyed were unaware of any grants or support available to them to accommodate employees with disabilities.' For example, only 13% were aware of the Workplace/Equipment Adaptation Grant. The question of employer awareness and usage of state supports available to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace is considered in more detail in Section 3.

## Education and Employment of Graduates with Disabilities

The 'Survey on Social Participation and Disability' report by the National Disability Authority (2004) acknowledges that education "can open more doors for disabled people into the world of work", and 89% of graduates responded positively, when asked whether or not they felt that having a degree made them more employable.

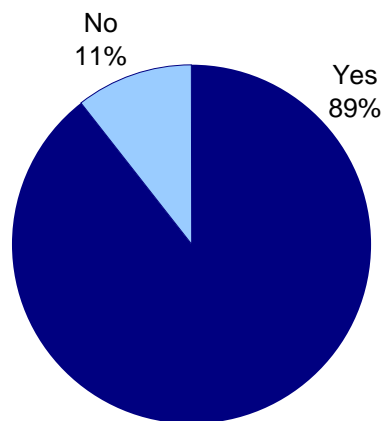


Figure 16: Education and Employability (n=38)

This observation should be made with regard to the relatively low level of participation of students with disabilities at third level. The NDA report 'Disability & Work' (2004) concludes that: "low rates of participation of disabled students at third level have their origins in low rates of participation at second level. A first priority must be to reduce the drop out rate of people with disabilities from second level while continuing to support disabled students at third level."

## ***Section 3: Disability Issues – The Employer Perspective***

The second strand of the project was a survey of employers in the mid-west region. A total of 120 companies was selected, half of whom had previously participated in disability awareness programmes facilitated by the Careers Support Service at UL. The companies included in the sampling frame varied from owner-managed firms to multinationals-across several industrial sectors. The final response rate was 42%.

The survey was conducted by telephone and based on the questionnaire attached in Appendix 2. The questionnaire focused on employer responses to disability provision across three key areas; general access provision, selection and recruitment practices, and levels of disability awareness within organisational cultures. There was particular reference to awareness of resources, supports and training available to promote equal participation in the workplace, and specifically to the level of take-up on funding available through FÁS. The range of state supports listed below are available to individual employees with disabilities and to employers in the private sector. They do not extend to public sector employers.

- Workplace Equipment/ Adaptation Grant.
- Employment Support Scheme.
- Employers PRSI Exemption Scheme.
- Employee Retraining Grant.
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant.
- Personal Reader Grant.
- Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme.

## General Information

**Table 1: Number of people with disabilities employed per number of respondent companies**

No. of Employees with Disabilities	No. of Companies	% of Companies
None	29	58
1-5	9	18
5-10	2	4
10-15	0	0
15-20	2	4
20-40	2	4
Don't know	4	8
No response	2	4
<b>N=50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The survey did not include a breakdown on the retention of staff that may have acquired a disability in the course of their employment. However, 30% of companies confirmed that they currently employ people with disabilities. This is significantly higher than the figure for the Manpower SkillsGroup Survey 'Working with Disabilities' (2003), which concluded that only 9% of companies in the mid-west (Clare, Limerick City, Limerick County, North Tipperary) have employees with disabilities. The UL survey found that:

- Over half of the companies surveyed, 58%, did not employ a person with a disability.
- In total, 66% of companies either did not employ, or were not aware of any person with a disability being employed in their organisation.

**Table 2: Number of Graduates with Disabilities employed per number of respondent companies**

No. of Employed Graduates with Disabilities	No. of Companies	% of Companies
None	15	30
1-5	8	16
5-10	1	2
No Response	20	40
Don't Know	5	10
Very few	1	2
<b>N= 50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The number of third level graduates employed in the respondent companies was relatively low. Only 20% of companies reported that they employed graduates with disabilities. Only one company indicated an employment rate in excess of five graduates.

## **General Access**

Accessibility of the built environment in Ireland for people with disabilities is mainly controlled by Part M of the Building Regulations (2000), 'Access for people with Disabilities'. The underlying philosophy of Part M "is that buildings should be accessible and usable by everyone, including people with disabilities" (Government of Ireland, 2000).

There is wide debate amongst engineers, planners and designers around inclusive environments and universal accessibility. Access to equal participation through employment goes beyond the critical issue of access to the built environment. The accessible workplace incorporates the three main dimensions of physical, sensory and communication/information access (O'Herlihy, cited in Chan & O'Sullivan, 2004). The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has published a CD ROM guide to the integration of disabled people into industrial workplaces. The Guide draws together an enormous volume of information and many guidelines that govern the subject throughout Europe.

The Employment Equality Act (Government of Ireland, 1988), the Equal Status Act (Government of Ireland, 2000) and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Regulations (Government of Ireland, 1993) provide legislative frameworks for organisations to ensure that premises and services comply with minimum accessibility requirements.

Yet, employer responses relating to minimum access provision suggest that there is a lack of clarity on how to implement inclusive procedures. It appears that there is no formal process in place for conducting access audits in the workplace and there is no register of accredited access auditors in Ireland (NDA, 2003). Even in the context of the built environment, there is no statutory responsibility on the part of a building control authority to monitor for compliance with building regulations. According to the National Disability Authority (2005), the inspection rate across building control authorities varies widely.

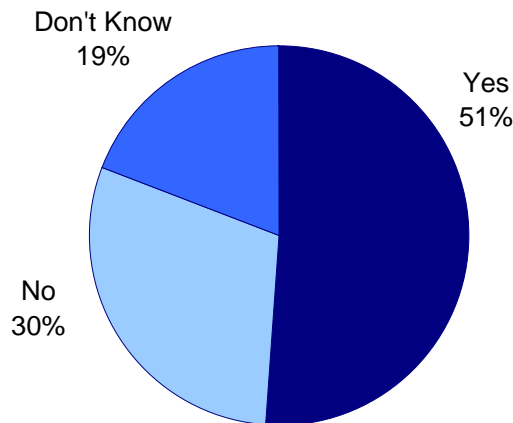


Figure 17: Have you ever conducted an Access Audit of your Building? (n=47)

The survey sought to establish what policies or standards the respondent employers use to address access provision in the workplace. When asked whether they had ever conducted an access audit of their building,

- 51% of respondents said yes.
- 30% said no.
- 19% did not know.

A linked question asked respondents if they knew what organisation to contact in respect of an access audit, 62% said they knew whom to contact with a further 36% saying they did not. The contact organisations listed by respondents included:

- The Health and Safety Authority.
- Access Ability.
- Workway.
- Ahead.
- Caroline Casey's organisation.
- National Disability Authority.
- Rehab Equality Authority.

The Barcelona Declaration (1995) and aspects of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000) have begun to address the access deficit in public buildings and services. For the private sector, however, there is no standardised audit tool or monitoring system to support accessibility of the workplace for graduates with disabilities. Yet, three-quarters of primary degree holders in Ireland were employed in manufacturing and other non- service industries or in private services and only one-fifth in public services, according to Higher Education Authority statistics (HEA, 2002).

## Towards Equal Outcomes

As of yet, a comparative breakdown on classification by employment sector for graduates with disabilities does not exist, but the overall trend in the 'employment by sector' of the total graduate population suggests that issues around access and workplace inclusion constitute significant barriers to equity in employment in the manufacturing and services sectors for graduates with disabilities.

To develop the theme of accessibility in employment practices, the survey asked if employers carried out an access audit to disability-proof policies and procedures in the context of recruitment and selection. The results indicate that 67% of respondents had not.

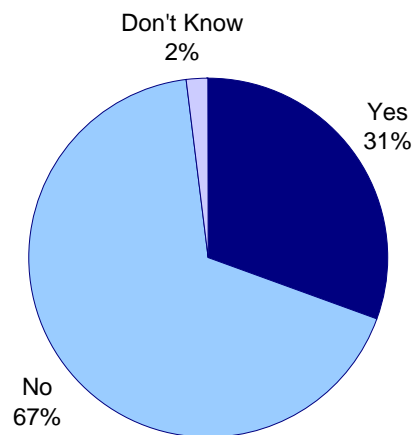


Figure 18: Have you ever conducted an Access Audit of your Company's Recruitment & Selection Procedures? (n=49)

In response to a linked question on employer awareness of organisations that advise or assist in disability proofing recruitment practices, 56% of respondents said they knew what agencies or organisations could advise or assist them, with 44% saying that they did not know.

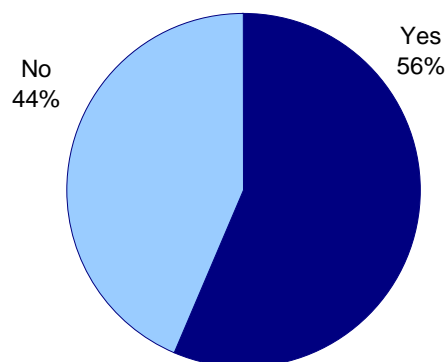


Figure 19: Do you know what agencies or organisations could advise or assist when evaluating your recruitment practices in the context of applicants with disabilities? (n=50)

When asked to specify the appropriate organisations, many employers said they knew that such organisations existed but could not name them. Organisations that were identified included:

- Access Ability.
- Access Office in UL.
- AHEAD.
- Assist Ireland.
- Caroline Casey's Organisation.
- Clare's Supported Employment.
- Dept of Finance Equality Unit.
- FÁS.
- First Employment Service.
- Health and Safety Authority.
- IBEC.
- Institute for the Blind.
- Local Health board.
- Rehab.
- UL Careers Service.
- Vision to Results SQT.
- Workway.
- Work Access.

As with issues of physical access, no formal audit tool, monitoring system or standard benchmark for best practice exists to ensure equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection procedures for graduates with disabilities.

### **Minimum Access Provision**

The Careers Support Service at UL encourages employers to reflect on access in attitude, access in practice, access at work, and access to opportunity when developing best practice in the recruitment and selection of graduates with disabilities.

Provision	Access	No. of Companies	% of Companies
A	Parking with spaces alongside for wheel chairs	31	67
B	Entrances clearly signed	41	85
C	Entrances ramped	33	70
D	Entrances measured for wheelchair access	32	68
E	Regular checks conducted for obstacles	38	81
F	Accessible toilet facilities provided	37	77
G	Access audit of your premises conducted	24	51

*\*Please note: This chart is an amalgamation of a number of charts. Therefore, the total percentages exceed 100%.*

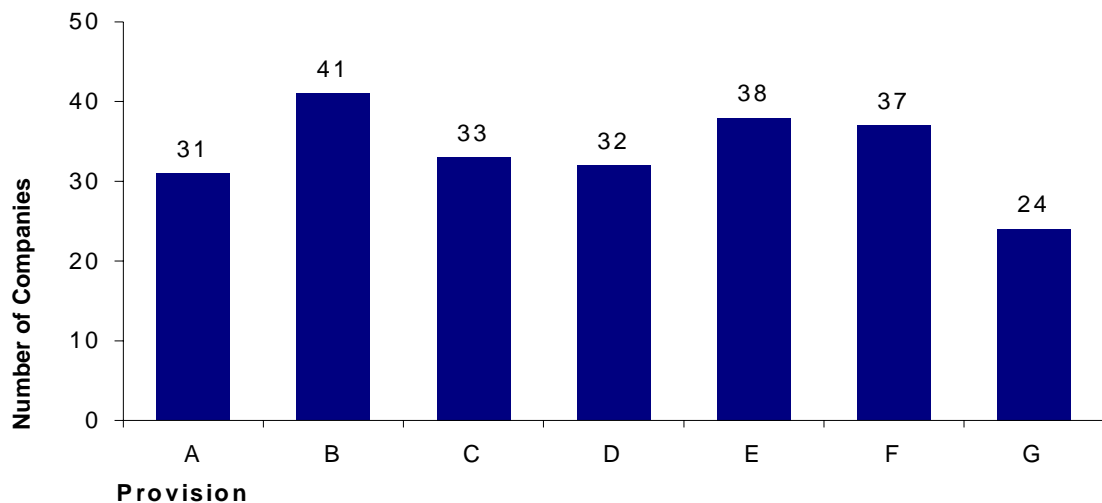


Figure 20: General Access Provision

For the purposes of the employer telephone survey, the questions focused on minimum standards for accessibility. Each company was asked a series of closed questions on minimum access provisions. Figure 20 represents the number and percentages of companies that comply with the listed accommodations. The table denotes the Provisions in the chart.

The survey found that:

- 85% of respondents stated that the entrance to their company is clearly signed.
- 77% have accessible toilet facilities.
- 70% stated that the entrances are ramped.
- 68% of doors are the correct height and width to facilitate wheelchair access.
- 67% of companies provided parking spaces with spaces for wheelchairs alongside.

However, it should be noted that 33% of respondents did not provide parking spaces with spaces for wheelchairs alongside, and 30% of respondents acknowledged that entrances were not ramped, while just over half had ever conducted an access audit to their building. Compliance and standards for conducting disability audits in the workplace are arbitrary.

In the Manpower Skills Group Survey of Companies, 'Working with Disabilities' (2003), 500 companies were asked a series of questions some of which related to employer awareness of grants and supports available to promote the employment of people with disabilities in Ireland. Having reviewed the responses, the survey concluded that: "one-tenth of companies surveyed said that they are implementing or have already implemented changes to facilitate employees with disabilities. The remaining 88% of respondents said that they have not made changes."

## Recruitment & Selection

One of the objectives of the survey was to measure levels of disability awareness across a range of practices and tools employed in the recruitment and selection process.

Procedure	Recruitment and Selection	No. of Companies	% of Companies
A	Ensure that the language used in job advertisement is inclusive	46	92
B	Refer to equal opportunities policy in the text of the advertisement	37	74
C	Invite request for any special arrangements that candidates may require at the application stage	21	44
D	Provide application material in alternative formats	14	29
E	Invite requests for any special arrangement that candidates may require at the interview stage	27	57
F	Use aptitude or psychometric testing as part of the selection process	10	20
G	Conduct an access audit of recruitment and selection practices	15	31
H	Agree with positive discrimination in recruitment of people with disabilities	17	35

*\*Please note: This chart is an amalgamation of a number of graphs. Therefore, the total percentages exceed 100%.*

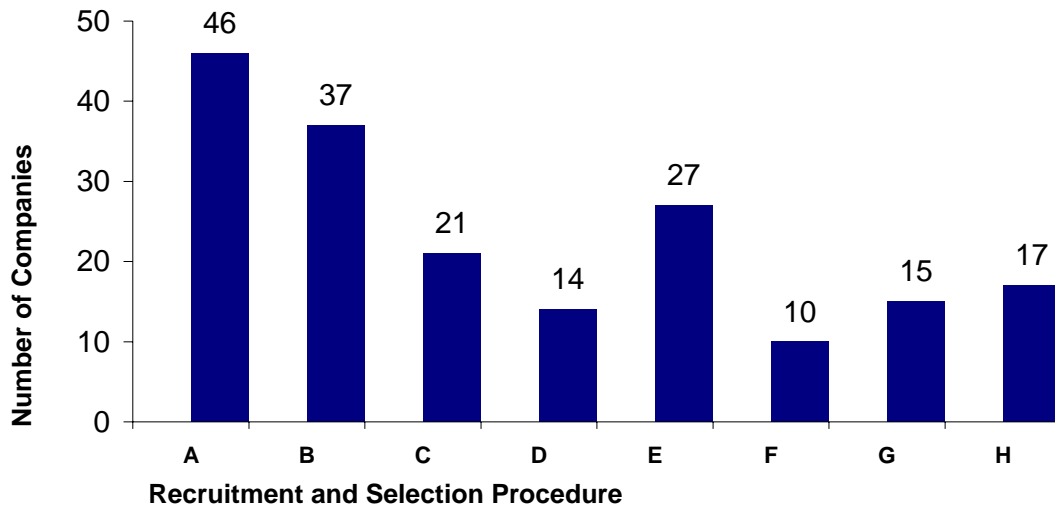


Figure 21: Recruitment and Selection Procedures

The companies were asked if their recruitment and selection practices included the accommodations listed in Figure 21. The table denotes the Recruitment Procedures in the chart, and the figures represent those companies who gave a positive response.

A key concern is that recruitment and selection procedures should reflect best practice in respect of the employment of people with disabilities i.e. job descriptions, candidate specifications, and application procedures should not needlessly exclude an applicant with a disability.

In 2003, the UK based Employers Forum on Disability published 'Solutions at Work; Practical Guides to Managing Disability'. It notes that "not taking the time to ensure that job criteria are grouped into what is 'essential' and what is 'desirable' may exclude candidates that are accomplished in the crucial aspects of the job."

The survey found that:

- 92% indicated that they ensure that the language used in the text of the advertisement does not exclude applicants with disabilities.
- 74% of respondents always refer to an equal opportunities policy in recruitment advertisements.

However, two-thirds of respondents indicated that they have never conducted a disability proofing access audit of their company's recruitment and selection practices. Positive discrimination involves weighting recruitment practices so that disadvantaged or minority groups have fair representation within the workplace. In the context of

selection and recruitment, the term can cover targeted recruitment including practices like advertising through specialist magazines and websites. In the publication 'Equal Opportunity in Recruitment and Selection for Graduates with Disabilities' (AHEAD, 2000) targeted recruitment is taken as an example of positive action in the selection and recruitment process, which seeks to increase the pool of applicants with disabilities who apply for vacancies.

The survey found that:

- 35% of respondents agreed with positive discrimination.
- 29% of respondents who used application forms provide the material in alternative formats i.e. enlarged print, disc tape or Braille.

When asked whether they invited candidates to request any special arrangements at the application stage, 44% of companies do; however, 57% of companies always ask if candidates have any special requirements at the interview stage. Feedback on positive discrimination was interesting. Comments received from respondents who said 'Yes – Always' when asked if they agree with positive discrimination in the recruitment of people with disabilities included:

- Deserves some transition period.
- Believe it's national policy.
- It's good to highlight disability awareness.
- Even things up.
- Not everyone with disabilities have equal suitability.
- If need skill, would positively discriminate.
- Not exclude people from jobs just because of disability.
- Make allowances to get the job done.

Respondents who said 'No' when asked if they agreed with positive discrimination also provided a number of comments:

- Level playing field, don't like to single out people.
- Selection done on merit and suitability for post.
- You should treat everyone equally.
- Everyone should get the same crack of the whip.
- Don't believe in any discrimination.
- Right person for the job.
- Get the best person for the job, be he/she disabled or not.

## *Towards Equal Outcomes*

- Prefer to look at ability, not disability.
- If HR do their job right, they'll pick the right person.

Organisations use a number of selection tools in the assessment process such as application forms, interviews, psychometric tests and references. Good practice in the recruitment process requires that all selection methods are objective, accurate, and job relevant for all candidates. According to 'Equal Opportunity in Recruitment and Selection for Graduates with Disabilities' (AHEAD, 2002), "the issue of accuracy is particularly relevant for candidates with disabilities...psychometric tests which are generally pencil and paper format, require motor dexterity and visual activity that graduates that are mobility or visually impaired may lack. Even with accommodations... the 'accuracy' of psychometric test in measuring the abilities of these candidates is therefore questionable."

A positive finding, therefore, is that only 20% of respondents use psychometric tests as part of the recruitment process.

## Measures of Disability Awareness among Employers in the Mid-West Region

In addition to general access provision and recruitment and selection practices, the employer survey looked at levels of disability awareness amongst employers and their knowledge of the supports, resources and training available to promote equal participation in the workplace. The format for this section of the employer survey included a series of closed questions that focused on the:

- Number of applications made for state funding available to support the employment of graduates with disabilities. There is particular emphasis on the range of disability grants, schemes and allowances available through FÁS.
- Provision of disability awareness training in the workplace.
- Number of disability awareness training/programmes/conferences attended.
- Level of awareness of the supports and services available through key agencies working in the area of graduate employment and disability provision.

The survey found that there is a particularly low rate of application for grants or supports available to companies to accommodate employees with disabilities. Employers were asked firstly, if they were aware of the range of grants and schemes available and secondly whether they had ever made an application under the categories listed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Level of awareness & number of applications for available Grants & Supports (n=50)**

Grants or Supports Available (Number of Respondents = 50)	Companies aware of Grants or Support	Companies who applied for Grants or Support
<b>Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme</b>	10 (20%)	1 (2%)
<b>Job Interview Interpreter Grant</b>	7 (14%)	0 (0%)
<b>Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant</b>	25 (50%)	1 (2%)
<b>Employment Support Scheme</b>	22 (44%)	0 (0%)
<b>Personal Reader Grant</b>	7 (14%)	0 (0%)
<b>Disabled Employee Retention Aid Scheme</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<b>Supported Employment</b>	17 (34%)	1 (2%)
<b>None of these</b>	11 (22%)	0 (0%)

*\*Please note: Companies could select a number of Grants/Services. Therefore, the total percentages exceed 100%.*

## *Towards Equal Outcomes*

Of the 50 companies who responded to the question of whether or not they had ever made an application for support, only 3 had done so.

The Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme provides grants towards the cost of disability awareness training for employees. Disability awareness training that qualifies for grant aid by FÁS is suitable for employers interested in employing or retaining staff with disabilities and/or employers interested in promoting the employment of staff with disabilities (Endeavour, accessed 2005). The scheme can cover up to 90% of training costs in the first year and 80% in subsequent years, it allows for a maximum amount of funding of €20,000 in any one calendar year. Yet, while 20% of respondent companies were aware of the Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme, only 2% had applied for it.

The Workplace/Equipment Adaptation Grant invites employers to make an application for up to €6,350 towards the cost of making the workplace more accessible to a person with a disability. According to the Manpower Survey 'Working with Disabilities' (2003), only 13% of the 500 companies surveyed were aware of the Workplace/Equipment Adaptation Grant.

In this survey, while 50% of the companies were aware of the grant, only 4% had applied for it. The relatively high level of awareness may relate to the fact that a number of the respondents had attended a one-day disability awareness workshop hosted by UL Careers Support Service and facilitated by Access Ability. A number of themes in the workshop looked at assistive technology and the supports available to make the workplace more accessible including the availability of the Workplace/Equipment Adaptation Grant. However, in this instance improved awareness did not impact positively on the number of applications.

The provision of disability awareness training is part of a larger skill set based around people management and organisational culture. In total, 66% of companies either did not employ, or were not aware of any person with a disability being employed in their organisation. There is no way of accounting for employees with hidden or unseen disability who may opt not to disclose to an employer. However, disability awareness training is not a response to the needs of individual employees but rather a tool of best practice in managing diversity in a workplace that has become increasingly complex, both structurally and culturally. The survey found that 67% of companies do not provide disability awareness training to their staff.

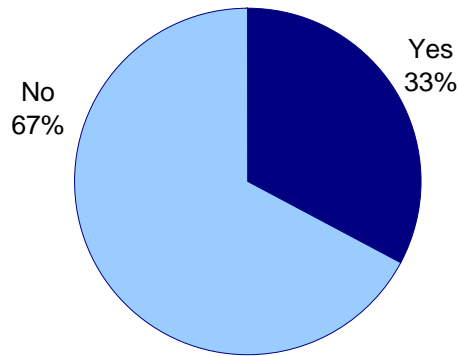


Figure 22: Do you provide Disability Awareness Training for Staff? (n=49)

However, there was a more positive response to the number of companies who had attended disability awareness training provided by the organisations listed in Figure 23. The figures represent those companies who participated in disability awareness training. The table denotes the organisations in the chart.

Key	Organisation	No. of Companies	% of Companies
A	UL Careers Support Service	20	40%
B	GET AHEAD Graduate Forum	12	24%
C	Access Ability	9	18%
D	The Aisling Foundation	9	18%
E	FÁS Disability Support Service	6	12%
F	AHEAD	5	10%
G	Workway	5	10%

*\*Please note: This chart is an amalgamation of a number of graphs. Therefore, the total percentages exceed 100%.*

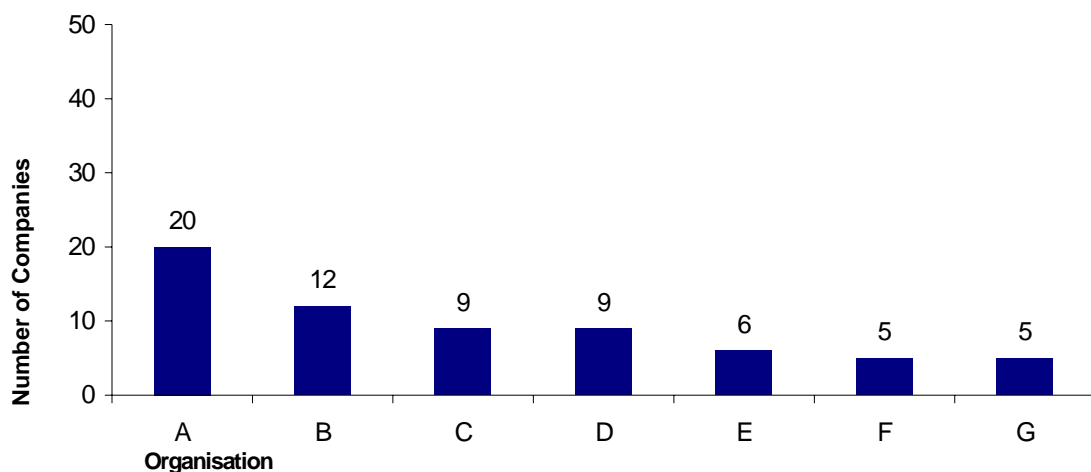


Figure 23: Number of Companies who participated in External Disability Awareness Training

## *Towards Equal Outcomes*

- 40% had attended disability awareness programs provided by the University of Limerick Careers Support Service.
- 24% had attended training provided by GET AHEAD, the National Forum for Graduates with Disabilities.
- 18% had attended training provided by Access Ability, a disability management consultancy company initially funded by the European Equal Initiative.
- 12% had attended training provided by FÁS Disability Support Service.

The Careers Support Service, supported by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Strategic Initiatives Scheme delivered a series of conferences, seminars and workshops on themes relating to best practice in the employment of graduates and students with disabilities. This disability awareness training is provided to public and private sector employees in the mid-west region. In providing this training, the Careers Service subscribes to the 'business case' for disability:

Whether it's in the lab or the marketplace, competitive advantage in a business like ours ultimately rests on innovation. To succeed, we must bring together talented and committed people with diverse perspectives – people who can challenge one another's thinking, people who collectively approach problems from multiple points of view. We will continue, therefore to cast the widest net in our search for talent – because it is the smart thing to do - *Merck Pharmaceuticals* (AHEAD, 2000).

## ***Section 4: Careers Services for Students with Disabilities at the University of Limerick***

The Careers Service in UL is part of the Cooperative Education & Careers Division (CECD), which is the primary contact point for:

- Students and graduates interested in planning and developing their careers.
- Students interested in work placements.
- Employers interested in student placements and graduate recruitment.
- University Departments interested in the career development of students and in developing working relationships with employers.

The primary objective of CECD is to facilitate the career development of UL students as an integral part of their academic programme. The Careers Service is fully integrated with the Cooperative Education programme. This ensures that students, the University, and employers have a single contact point for both undergraduate placements and graduate opportunities.

The mission of the Careers Service is to support students and recent graduates from diverse backgrounds to develop and implement effective career plans. The Careers Service also supports the University in providing opportunities for students to develop the skills and attributes required to manage their careers throughout their lives.

In 1999, the UL Careers Service developed a customised **Careers Support Service for Students with Disabilities** supported by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Strategic Initiatives Scheme. The theme of the careers strand was the 'Access to the World of Work Programme.' The Service addresses the individual and diverse needs of students with disabilities when developing and implementing effective career plans. It reflects the University's strategic commitment to ensuring that traditionally under-represented groups are supported toward equal participation in all aspects of University life including the transition to employment.

There were 250 students registered with the Disability Liaison Services at the University (academic year 2004 / 5). Increased diversity in the student body calls for a more flexible provision of career advisory services, using a variety of delivery mechanisms, and adapting content and format to the needs and interests of students with disabilities. Specific supports include individual career advisory sessions and

tailored group workshops that address disability related career issues such as Disclosure, Effective Applications, and the Pro-Active Job-Search. The key elements of the customised service include:

- **Individual Career Advisory Sessions** with a specialist careers advisor in preparation for Cooperative Education placement, career planning and the job-search process. These include Individual CV reviews, practice interview and feedback sessions and tailored workshops on effective applications and positive disclosure.
- **An Employer Mentoring Programme**, which matches students with disabilities to employers in the relevant career area. The programme enables students to gain useful insights into career areas and, most importantly, to build useful professional networks.
- **Disability Awareness Training** conferences, workshops and seminars on themes relating to best practice in the employment of students and graduates with disabilities are provided to public and private sector employers in the mid-west region. Disability awareness training is also provided to the staff of the Cooperative Education & Careers Division (CECD).
- **Accessible Website**, [www.ul.ie/careers/inclusion](http://www.ul.ie/careers/inclusion), is a dedicated strand of the UL careers website that addresses the career related needs of students with disabilities. The website hosts employer pages on topics related to recruitment, employment and retention of students and graduates with disabilities. The design of the website reflects the specific needs of students with disabilities using audio and visual features to support the text.
- **External Partnerships** are developed with employer groups and with regional and national groups who have expertise in disability provision. Many of the interventions developed to support career planning for students with disabilities are framed in consultation.

## **Conclusion & Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

The overall findings of this survey challenge the perception that graduates with disabilities are more likely than non-disabled graduates to be unemployed. The results show that 74% of UL graduates with disabilities (1997-2003) were in employment when surveyed in 2005. This compares very favourably with the employment statistics for all Irish graduates, and it should encourage prospective students who are considering the option of higher education.

Given that the focus of the report is on the transition from third level education to employment, the findings of the survey highlight the positive role of targeted careers supports services in improving the employability of graduates with disabilities. Since the introduction of a customised careers service in UL in 1999, 54% of the graduates surveyed had used this service. This is in sharp contrast with the very low level of interaction with external agencies working to promote employment for graduates with disabilities. The services are largely centralised in Dublin and, in the context of access, are perceived as remote by UL graduates.

Initially, the response rate to the survey was extremely low and required repeated approaches to individual graduates. The impression was of poor, if not reluctant, sense of group identity. 'Disabled students appear to be particularly unwilling to be identified when it comes to career assistance (Morey et al, 2003). Questions that focused on disclosing a disability or on the need for accommodations at work received a particularly low response rate. Only 5% of UL graduates with disabilities have interacted with the National Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD). The new forum for graduates with disabilities, established by AHEAD, is now working to represent the national interests of this group of graduates.

Networking between services is informal and arbitrary and contributes to the low level of awareness among graduates with disabilities on the range of available services and supports. It is acknowledged that achieving equity of access to higher education for non-traditional student groups requires clear information on routes of access and progression. Similarly, equity of access to the job-search process requires clear signposting of opportunities, services, resources and supports.

The survey also examined salary levels, but the sample was not large enough to make valid comparisons on the earning potentials of graduates with disabilities and the total graduate population. There was some evidence, however, that the average salary levels of graduates with disabilities were somewhat lower than those of the total UL graduate population. A national survey would permit a more informed debate on earning levels and career progression of graduates with disabilities.

The geographical distribution of the employment location of graduates with disabilities was significantly different than that of the total UL graduate population and the national graduate population. The key concerns experienced by these graduates in the job-search process related to access and transport, and very few had any concerns about their ability to do the job.

Fewer than half of the graduates surveyed required adaptations or accommodations in the workplace and significantly, all the accommodations required fell within the definition of 'nominal cost'. Yet, disclosing a disability to a potential employer continues to be a primary consideration when looking for work. This dichotomy is supported by low levels of awareness on the part of both graduates and employers on the range of specialist support services and the extent of state supports available to promote equality of participation in the workplace.

While employers are conscious of their obligations under equality legislation, the absence of standardised benchmarks on physical, sensory and communication access impedes the development of models of best practice for disability provision at work. This is true in respect of both the physical workplace and of recruitment and selection practices particularly in the private sector.

The absence of comparable performance indicators makes models of disability provision arbitrary and contributes to low levels of disability awareness amongst employers. The effect is to undermine the development of 'disability confident' employment practices. This may in part account for the extremely low level of take-up of state supports available through FÁS to promote the employment of people with disabilities.

## **Recommendations**

The development of tailored careers services in the higher education sector addresses the needs of students with disabilities in making effective transitions from third level education to employment. However, a clearly identifiable continuum of post third level services needs to be provided to ensure equality of opportunity in career progression and to address non-work barriers like transport, accommodation, and disability awareness training in the workplace. .

Graduates themselves need to become active self-advocates for equality of participation in the workplace. A key recommendation is that graduates with disabilities become more proactive as trainers in disability awareness.

There is a clear need for a national survey which would provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of graduate employment covering disability type, occupational classification, sectors of employment, and salary levels. This would inform and influence a much wider debate on employment patterns and career progression of graduates with disabilities. Successive OECD 'Education at a Glance' (HEA, 2004) reports highlight the link between educational achievement and earning potential. A national survey allowing for comparisons between salary levels of graduates with disabilities and the total national graduate population could provide some valid indicators of career progression and employment entry levels.

In the case of the UL survey, the size of the sample was not sufficiently large to reach valid conclusions under each category of disability, nor did it allow for an analysis of employment destinations by occupational classification. A national survey would also allow for analysis of employment patterns of graduates with 'unseen' disability.

The approach to promoting disability awareness on the range of grants and supports available to employers needs to be reviewed. Demarcation between public and private sector applicants undermines the relevance of certain schemes in promoting employment opportunities for graduates with disabilities.

Disability awareness training should not be perceived as a response to the needs of individual employees or potential employees but rather as a tool of best practice in managing diversity in the workplace.

## *Towards Equal Outcomes*

In the short-term, tailored graduate internship schemes that integrate funding with assistive technology supports and disability awareness training would provide a practical translation into the workplace of all aspects of best practice in disability provision. Developing regional networks that integrate existing services to promote and support such schemes is the model of the Employer Mentoring Programme, developed by UL Careers Service and detailed in Section 4 of this report. GET AHEAD, the National Forum for Graduates with Disabilities, is currently developing a number of such internship programmes on a pilot basis.

In the long-term, accessibility to both the physical workplace and, in the broadest context of recruitment, employment, training, progression etc. needs to be integrated into formal quality exercises. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (1999) recommends that: “systematic recordings of accessibility performance through comparable auditing techniques is also required to determine key indicators or benchmarks. Benchmarking forums could mean that an enterprise could look at these indicators as models in adopting best practice as accepted by other industry leaders. Health and safety practices, fair employment policies and good accessible working conditions should not be compromised by narrow cost efficiencies.” Providing benchmark standards for disability proofing accessibility would allow for the development of models of best practice in recruitment, selection and employment practice.

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Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire – Graduates with Disabilities



Cooperative Education & Careers Division



University of Limerick

Survey of Graduates with Disabilities

Your cooperation in completing the following questionnaire is much appreciated

All responses are entirely confidential

Please answer ALL questions that are appropriate to your current situation

Section 1: PRESENT EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Q.1. Which of the following gives the best description of your present situation?

(Please tick only one)

- In employment (Permanent or temporary) including employment schemes (please answer Section 2, Section 6 and Section 7)
In further study or training (please answer Section 3, Section 6 and Section 7)
Seeking employment (please answer Section 4, Section 6 and Section 7)
Not available for employment or study (please answer Section 5, Section 6 and Section 7)

Section 2. CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

Q.2. Are you currently working full time or part time? FullTime PartTime

Q.3. If working full time, how many hours per week?

- 30 or less 31-35 hours 36-40 hours over 40 hours per week

Q.4.a. What is your present Job Title? .....

Q.4.b. Briefly describe your main duties

.....

Q.4.c. Organisation or company where you are employed:

Name:

Address:

.....

Q.4.d. Location of employment (in Ireland please give county, if overseas please give country).

.....

Q.4.e. Business/Activity of your employer:.....

Q.4.f. Present Salary (per annum)

- up to €8,999 €9,000-€12,999 €13,000-€16,999 €17,000-20,999
€21,000-€24,999 €25,000-€28,999 €29,000-€32,999 €33,000 and over

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Q.5. Was the course you took relevant to the job you are now doing?

Very relevant                  Relevant                  Unsure                  Irrelevant                  Most irrelevant

Q.6.a. If working part time how many hours per week?

5 or less    6-12 hours    13-19 hours    over 20 hours per week

Q.6.b. If working part time, please specify your reason (please tick all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In education or training              | <input type="checkbox"/> I consider this a full time job       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring for children/others            | <input type="checkbox"/> Stamina related illness or disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disability                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Available transport/parking           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want but can't find a full time job | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Assistant not available      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have another job                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Access needs                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not want a full time job         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                |

.....

Q.7. Has your choice of employment been influenced by any of the following? (tick all that apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Available Transport              | <input type="checkbox"/> Support network       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Available Adapted Accommodation  | <input type="checkbox"/> General access        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable Adapted Accommodation | <input type="checkbox"/> Geographical location |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)           | .....  |

Q.8.a. Is there any disability related reason why you remain in this job?

Yes                  No

Q.8.b. Please explain your answer to Q.8.a

.....  
.....

Q.9.a. Briefly outline any special arrangements that you require in the workplace including assistive technology, general access and flexible working hours

.....  
.....

Q.9.b. Are these needs met?

Always                  Most of the time                  Sometimes                  Rarely                  Never

Q.10. Are you aware of labour market grants and services available to graduates with disabilities?

Yes                  No

Q.11. Have you applied for any of the following? (please tick all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work Place Equipment Adaptation Grant | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment Support Scheme       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Reader Grant                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Job Interview Interpreter Grant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supported Employment                  |  |

Q.12. Has your employer applied for the following? (please tick all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work Place Equipment Adaptation Grant | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment Support Scheme       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Reader Grant                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Job Interview Interpreter Grant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supported Employment                  |  |

Q.13. Does your employer participate in disability awareness training programs?

Yes No

Q.14. Does your employer provide disability awareness training for your work colleagues?

Yes No

Q.15. As a graduate with a disability, can you list three key issues that concerned you when applying for work

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

Q.16. Can you identify employers that are positive to disability?

Yes No

Q.17. How did you hear about your current job?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Education & Careers Division | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper advert       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coop Placement                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment consultant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other College contact                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speculative approach to employers        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
|   | .....   |

Q.18. Which of the following services have you used?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> UL Careers Support Service     | <input type="checkbox"/> Get Ahead Graduate Forum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FÁS Disability Support Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Ahead                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility                  |   |

Q.19. While attending UL, did you participate in the Employer Mentoring Program for Students with Disabilities?

Yes No

Q.20. Are you aware of additional career supports for students with disabilities at UL?

Yes No

Q.21. Did you participate in any of the additional career programs for students with disabilities while at UL?

Yes No

Q.22. Which of the Careers services listed below did you use while in UL?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appointment with Careers Advisor / Coop Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice Aptitude Tests   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch-time Quick Query Service (EO 005)         | <input type="checkbox"/> UL Careers Website <a href="http://www.ul.ie/careers">www.ul.ie/careers</a> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Careers Fair                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Email messages about career events  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative Careers and Volunteering Fair       | <input type="checkbox"/> Careers by Degrees booklet  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate Study Fair                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Careers Guide for Final Year students                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employer Presentations                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Careers Notice Board  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CV Review                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Vacancy Details   |

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Section 3. CURRENT FURTHER STUDY OR TRAINING

If you are currently pursuing further study or if you have completed a post graduate course since graduating, please complete this section

Q.23. College/Institute: .....

Q.24. Location (if outside Ireland): .....

Q.25. Full title of course: .....

Q.26. Course attendance required                      Full Time                      Part Time

---

Section 4. SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

If you are currently seeking employment please complete this section

Q.27. Have you any definite prospects of a full time job in the near future?  
Yes                      No

Q.28. Have you been employed at any time since completing your course?  
Yes                      No

Q.29. Approximately how many jobs did you apply for? .....

Q.30. Approximately how many interviews did you attend? .....

Q.31a. When seeking employment do you disclose an illness or disability to an employer?  
Yes                      No                      Sometimes

Q.31.b. If yes to Q31a, when do you disclose?  
At application stage      At interview stage                      At offer stage

Q.32. If you are currently seeking employment but are restricted by any of the following factors, please rank on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most restrictive and 1 being not restrictive) (please circle rating, same rating may be applied to more than one factor)

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Rating</i>
	<i>Not Restrictive ----- Most Restrictive</i>
Available transport	1 ----2 ----3 ---- 4 ----5
Available adapted accommodation	1 ----2 ----3 ---- 4 ----5
Affordable adapted accommodation	1 ----2 ----3 ---- 4 ----5
Restricted geographical location	1 ----2 ----3 ---- 4 ----5
Physical access	1 ----2 ----3 ---- 4 ----5
Availability of Personal Assistant	1 ----2 ----3 ---- 4 ----5

Q. 33. If there is another reason why you think that you have not yet secured employment, please specify:

.....  
.....

---

Section 4. NOT AVAILABLE FOR EMPLOYMENT

If you are not currently available for employment please answer the following question:

Q. 34. What is your main reason for not seeking work? (tick your main reason)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I believe no suitable work available     | <input type="checkbox"/> Affordability of adapted accommodation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have already found work, but not started | <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of adapted accommodation  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Awaiting outcome of other possibilities  | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Assistant not available       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorating health                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring for children/others             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted geographical location         | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical access to the workplace       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Period of respite                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of transport                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                 |

.....  
 .....

Section 6: EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Q.35. Please complete the following based on any employment you have held since graduation other than your current job.

(Please record the most recent jobs held since you graduated from UL starting with the most recent and prior to your present job if you are currently in employment. Do not count promotions or changes in responsibilities while working for the same employer as job changes)

	<u>Most Recent Job</u>	<u>Previous Job</u>
a) Name of Job		
b) Type of work		
c) Main activity		
d) Location of job		
e) Was this job permanent or temporary?		
f) When did you start the job?		
g) When did you finish the job?		
h) What was the main reason that you left?		
i) Was there any disability related reason why your employment ended?		
j) Was there any disability related reason why you left your job?		

Section 7: YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE JOB SEARCH

*Towards Equal Outcomes*

To be completed by all respondents

In this section we would like you to think about how you, as a graduate with a disability, found the job search process. We have given a list of open-ended questions, which we hope you will answer to help us to provide current and future students with an up to date and realistic picture of the labour market with regards to graduates with disabilities. We also request that you provide us with some personal classification information which shall remain confidential.

Q.36. As a graduate with a disability, how did you find the job search process as a whole?

.....  
.....

Q.37. Did you encounter any discrimination during the job search process? If so, please tell us what type of discrimination you experienced and how you dealt with it

.....  
.....

Q.38a. Do you feel that having a degree has made you more employable?

Yes                      No

Q.38b. Please explain .....

.....

Q.39. Do you have any advice or tips for current students with disabilities in UL with regard to career planning?

.....  
.....

Q.40. Do you have any advice or tips for current students with disabilities in UL with regard to the job-hunting process?

.....  
.....

Q.41. Would you be willing to meet with current students with disabilities in UL to talk about your experience of the job search process?

Yes                      No

Q42. Would you be willing to take part in a telephone interview with a careers advisor on your experience as a graduate with a disability in the Irish job market? (We would like to collect some case studies of UL graduates for the benefit of other students. Obviously, all names and personal details would be changed and all interviews would be confidential. If you are willing to take part in an interview we will contact you shortly to arrange a suitable time to telephone you.)

Yes                      No

Q43. In your opinion, is there any other way that the Careers Service can help students with disabilities prepare for employment?

.....  
.....

Q.44. Any final comments?

.....  
.....

---

Please complete your personal details as follows:

NAME (optional): .....

GENDER:     Male                Female

**DETAILS OF UL QUALIFICATION:**

Degree/Diploma Course Title	Main Subjects/Options	Year of Graduation

**PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF YOUR DISABILITY:**

.....  
.....

Thank you very much for participating in this survey

**Appendix 2: Survey Questionnaire – Employers**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

(completed before telephone survey commences)

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sector: \_\_\_\_\_

Good morning/afternoon,

I am conducting a survey with employers in the mid west region on behalf of the University of Limerick and FÁS. I am wondering if I could have just ten minutes of your time to discuss issues on employing graduates with disabilities in your company? All responses will be treated confidentially.

**GENERAL**

1. How many people are currently employed by your company? Insert number:.....
2. Approximately how many people with disabilities are currently employed by your company? (pls circle)  
None   1   2   3   4   5-10   11-15   16-20   More than 20
3. Of the people with disabilities employed by your company, how many of these are third level graduates? (pls circle)  
None   1   2   3   4   5-10   11-15   16-20   More than 20
4. Do you use the UL Careers Service to advertise your graduate vacancies?  
 Yes    No    Occasionally    Don't know
5. Do you use FÁS to advertise your graduate vacancies last year?  
 Yes    No    Occasionally    Don't know

**RECRUITMENT & SELECTION**

6. When placing a recruitment advertisement, does your company refer explicitly to an equal opportunities policy in all advertisements?  
 Yes-Always    Sometimes    No    Don't know
7. Do you ensure that the language used in the text of advertisements does not exclude applicants with disabilities?  
 Yes-Always    Sometimes    No    Don't know
8. Do you agree with positive discrimination in recruitment of people with disabilities?  
 Yes-Always    Sometimes    No    Don't know  
Please explain why you agree/not with positive discrimination  
.....  
.....  
.....
9. Are application forms for vacancies in your company available in alternative formats?  
 Yes    No

10. Do you ask candidates to request any special arrangements that he or she may require at application stage?

- Yes-Always       Sometimes       No       Don't know

11. Do you ask candidates to request any special arrangements that he or she may require at the interview stage?

- Yes-Always       Sometimes       No       Don't know

12a. Do you use aptitude or psychometric tests as part of the recruitment process?

- Yes-Always       Sometimes       No       Don't know

12b. If yes, what amendments to these tests do you make for candidates with disabilities?

.....  
.....  
.....

13. Have you ever conducted an access audit of your company's recruitment & selection practices?

- Yes       No

14. Do you know what agencies or organisations could advise or assist with evaluating your recruitment practices in the context of applicants with disabilities?

- Yes (pls specify agency/organisation/s).....  
 No

### ACCESS

15. Does your company provide parking with spaces for wheelchairs alongside?

- Yes       No

16. Are entrances to your company clearly signed?

- Yes       No

17. Are entrances to your company ramped?

- Yes       No

18. Are doors the correct height and width for wheelchair access?

- Yes       No       Don't know

19. Are regular checks for obstructions conducted?

- Yes       No       Don't know

20. Are there accessible toilet facilities?

- Yes       No       Don't know

21. Have you ever conducted an access audit of your building?

- Yes       No       Don't know

22. Would you know what organisation to contact in respect of an access audit?

- a. Yes (pls specify agency/organisation/s).....  
b. No

**DISABILITY AWARENESS**

23. Do you provide Disability Awareness Training for staff?  
 YES  NO

24. Are you aware that the Careers Service at the University of Limerick offers a support service to employers on disability issues?  
 YES  NO

25. I'm going to call out a number of services provided by organisations. Are you aware of the services provided by any of the following organisations?

- FÁS Disability Support Service
- Access Ability
- The Aisling Foundation
- Get Ahead Graduate Forum\*
- Ahead\*
- Workway

Other (pls specify)

.....  
.....

\*Ahead, Association of Higher Education Access & Disability

\*Get Ahead, The National Forum for graduates with Disability

26. Have you participated in any training programs or attended conferences or briefing sessions provided by any of the following?

- UL Careers Support Service
- FÁS Disability Support Service
- Access Ability
- The Aisling Foundation
- Get Ahead Graduate Forum\*
- Ahead\*
- Workway

If yes please specify:

.....  
.....

27. Are you aware of any of the following Grants and Schemes available through FÁS?

- Work Place Equipment Adaptation Grant
- Personal Reader Grant
- Supported Employment
- Disabled Employee Retention Aid Scheme
- Employment Support Scheme
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant
- Disability Awareness training Support Scheme

28. Have you applied for any of the following Grants and Schemes available through FÁS?

- Work Place Equipment Adaptation Grant
- Personal Reader Grant
- Supported Employment
- Employment Support Scheme
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant
- Disability Awareness training Support Scheme
- Disabled Employee Retention Aid Scheme

29. Would you like to receive information on future disability awareness training events?  
 YES  NO

30. Would you like to receive an email inviting further comment on the issues raised in this survey? If yes, please provide an email address .....

**Careers Service  
Cooperative Education & Careers Division  
University of Limerick  
Limerick**

***[www.ul.ie/careers](http://www.ul.ie/careers)***