PATH 4 Phase 2

Enhancement of course provision in Higher Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Timeframe

1.1. What is the anticipated timeline for decisions on the applications?

The deadline for proposal submissions is **Thursday, 12 October 2023**. The proposals will be evaluated by the external panel, and it is anticipated that decisions will be made by the end of the year, followed by payments to the HEIs.

HEIs awarded funds under Phase 2 will be expected to commence work towards additional provision in Semester 2 of 2023/24 academic year and project implementation fully in place for the 2024/25 academic year.

1.2. Does '*commence work*' mean that additional students will start in September 2024, and the preparation work for that begins in January 2024?

All successful institutions are expected to start the implementation of their approved plan from January 2024 and work towards full provision from September 2024. If Institutions at a more advanced stage of development are successful and awarded fund under PATH 4 Phase 2, they can have students starting a course from January 2024.

2. Intellectual Disability

2.1. Is the term 'Intellectual Disability' exclusive to intellectual disabilities or is it inclusive of intellectual and developmental disabilities?

The focus of PATH 4 Phase 2 is to provide opportunities for students who historically may not have had access to mainstream higher education courses and who may need additional supports. The terminology used in the Call for proposals aims to be inclusive rather than overly definitive to avoid excluding any students who may benefit from the additional provision and supports.

Institutions are encouraged to collaborate with INHEF as they can advise on the types of existing courses and the targeted student population. INHEF uses the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of intellectual disability.

WHO definition of intellectual disability:

"Intellectual disability means a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and to learn and apply new skills (impaired intelligence). This results in a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), and begins before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development.

Disability depends not only on a child's health conditions or impairments but also and crucially on the extent to which environmental factors support the child's full participation and inclusion in society.

The use of the term intellectual disability in the context of the WHO initiative "Better health, better lives" includes children with autism who have intellectual impairments. It also encompasses children who have been placed in institutions because of perceived disabilities or family rejection and who consequently acquire developmental delays and psychological problems."

2.2. Considering the provisions for autistic students during Phase 1, what provisions are expected in Phase 2?

PATH 4 Phase 1 was focused on supporting institutions to embed Universal Design approaches and inclusive practices to **benefit all students**. Autistic students were particularly mentioned in Phase 1 as they are known to greatly benefit from Universal Design practices.

While the Universal Design approaches and practices developed and implemented as part of Phase 1 are complementary and support provision to be proposed as part of this call, Phase 2 is dedicated to supporting students with intellectual disabilities, including students with an intellectual disability who also are autistic.

As set out above, WHO's definition includes people with autism who have intellectual impairments.

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3. Funding

3.1. Is it possible for a single HEI to submit a bid requesting the entirety or a significant portion of the funding?

When submitting proposals HEIs should be aware that PATH 4 Phase 2 **fund is limited to €3m per annum** and when evaluating projects, the external panel will have regard to the need to fund **a diversity of proposals and reach regional balance.** HEIs should be mindful of this when presenting costs for their proposals.

3.2. Will students be able to apply for SUSI grant?

There is no provision for changes to the SUSI Eligibility criteria as part of PATH 4 Phase 2. If students in the programmes to be developed as part of PATH 4 Phase 2 meet the existing eligibility criteria, they can apply for a SUSI grant.

3.3. Section F – Conditions of Funding states that *'funding can be used to provide financial support'*. Do day-to-day expenses mentioned in the phrase "*financial assistance to assist in course costs and day-to-day expenses*" pertain to the operational costs of the programme or are they intended to support the students with their course expenses and daily living expenses?

Funding can be used for the running of the programme and to cover the cost of supports required by students to fully engage in the course. As evidenced by the consultation process and considering the range of students' needs, students may require day-to-day supports such as personal assistants, transport costs, academic support, assistive technology. Please note that in relation to the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) and students' eligibility to access FSD-funded supports, there are currently no proposals to change FSD eligibility requirements.

3.4. There is a list of HEIs who are eligible for PATH funding, but a lot of expertise and specialist knowledge is coming from outside groups, such as advocacy groups. Can the HEI employ services of such outside organisations using the Phase 2 funds?

While HEIs could include the cost associated with engaging with outside services, HEIs should be aware that PATH 4 Phase 2 fund is limited to €3m per annum. When evaluating projects, the external panel will have regard to the need to fund a diversity of proposals and reach regional balance. HEIs should be mindful of this when presenting costs for their proposals as it cannot be guaranteed that the fund will be made available for such costs.

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4. Evaluation Criteria

4.1. Can a HEI deliver a programme from an external agency?

HEIs opting to deliver a programme in partnership with an external agency must clearly demonstrate how the delivery of such programme is aligned and supports the HEI's own strategic mission and objectives. HEIs should also demonstrate the additionality of the proposed programme.

4.2. What is meant by evidence driven approach? Does it mean HEIs will take evidence gathered to date from engagements with stakeholders and primary research conducted so far?

When evaluating the proposals, the panel will examine the factors that have informed the proposed programmes or courses. This could be primary or secondary research on various aspects that may have informed the programme - such as the demand from students for a particular course, how it is going to add value, how is it different from existing provision, what the expected outcome of such programmes might be.

5. Course Structure and Specifications

5.1. Should the courses be full-time or part-time? Are short courses/modules permitted?

There are no specifications as for the type of courses institutions should include as part of their proposals. Through meaningful engagement and based on the needs identified, HEIs should decide what best suits the students with intellectual disabilities they aim to be providing for.

5.2. How many cohorts can be enrolled, how long can a programme last? If an institution is considering a two-year programme, should it plan two intakes (2024/25 and 2025/26); or a single intake that spans two years (2024 to 2026)?

There are no specifications as for the duration of a programme or the number of cohorts and students. Through meaningful engagement, HEIs should decide on the model of provision based on the specific needs of the students.

5.3. What is the NQF level of award anticipated that participants will achieve? How are HEI's managing to award at less than Level 6?

HEIs have the flexibility to offer courses at different levels and the NQF level of award may vary depending on the specific needs of the cohort the institution is aiming to provide for. It is important for HEIs to demonstrate a strategic approach in their proposals, showcasing how the proposed course aligns with their overall institutional strategy.

Institutions are encouraged to collaborate with each other and share their expertise across all aspects of course provision for students with intellectual disabilities.

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6. Sustainability

6.1. Section D of Evaluation Criteria states: *HEIs should also demonstrate how its provision can be sustainably funded and continued following the completion of the three-year pilot phase.*

How can HEIs address the sustainability requirement? Will funding be provided past the pilot, in particular for programmes that span beyond the pilot? Is there a particular funding model that HEIs can integrate in their proposal?

PATH 4 Phase 2 is a three-year pilot and one of its purposes is to support future evidence-informed policy considerations in respect of the successful participation of students with intellectual disabilities in higher education. This also includes establishing an evidence base for a full and holistic cost of provision for students with intellectual disabilities.

Institutions are expected to demonstrate how these programmes align and support their strategic mission and objectives, as well as identify all the factors that need to be considered and put in place to allow for provision for students with intellectual disabilities to be embedded and mainstreamed in the future. Additionally, if HEIs have prior experience of partnerships and collaborating with other sectors, any efforts towards future sustainability can be demonstrated as part of their proposals.

The HEA and DFHERIS acknowledge the concerns from the sector regarding securing future funding and enrolling students beyond September 2026. However, no commitments can be made beyond the pilot phase of PATH 4 Phase 2 at this point.

6.2. Will there be networking opportunities at a sectoral level to offer capacity building and support across the network?

As part of the delivery of PATH 4 Phase 2, the HEA will be planning Community of Practice and Sharing of Good Practice events. Institutions are encouraged to collaborate with each other and with INHEF as they provide networking and sharing of practices opportunities.

7. Universal Design

7.1. Are HEIs required to demonstrate how Universal Design principles and practices are integrated into the development of the courses and the design of the physical and digital environments to support the cohort of prospective students under this phase? Is it possible to incorporate what has not been achieved in Phase 1, partially due to a tight timeframe, into Phase 2 to demonstrate additionality?

PATH 4 Phase 2 proposal should demonstrate how Universal Design principles and practices, including those developed and implemented as part of PATH 4 Phase 1, will support additional provision for students with intellectual disabilities.

Differently from Phase 1 which supported the embedding of Universal Design approaches and inclusive practices, the focus of PATH 4 Phase 2 is to enhance course provision for students with

intellectual disabilities. While supporting additional provision for students with intellectual disabilities, Phase 1 activities are not to be funded as part of this call.

7.2. Implementation of Universal Design under Phase 1 gave staff experience of the UDL application, but not necessarily experience of working in a classroom setting with students with intellectual disabilities. Is it possible to use funding within Phase 2 to continue to enhance that capacity building and staff training?

While more work might be needed in terms of the capacity building under Phase 1, this work can continue in parallel with the provisions being proposed under Phase 2. When developing their proposals, HEIs should be aware that PATH 4 Phase 2 fund is limited to €3m per annum and that additionality is key in terms of selection criteria.

Please note that additionality can be demonstrated through, but is not limited to, the provision of additional places, additional opportunities to engage with mainstream higher education, additional workplace opportunities, enhanced student experience, etc.

8. Disability Services and Supports

8.1. If students take up a place on these programmes, can they defer a HSE funded place in day services or NLN?

Will students be able to maintain links with disability service for other services – SLT, OT, Physio, Psychology etc?

Will flexible funding from HSE enable students to attend college, but also receive some services from disability services if needed?

From discussions with relevant colleagues, it the HEA's understanding that there is a process available where HSE places can be deferred to attend similar courses.

PATH 4 Phase 2 Funding can be used to provide disability supports for students and HEIs should outline and cost the required supports as part their proposals. It is not the purpose of PATH 4 Phase 2 to address issues faced by students with intellectual disabilities which are beyond the remit of the higher education sector including the assessments and supports provided by other state bodies and agencies.

8.2. We would like our placement students /graduates on internships to be paid for their work. How many hours are they permitted to work without affecting their disability allowance?

HEIs should liaise with the Department of Social Protection. It is not the purpose of PATH 4 Phase 2 to address issues faced by students with intellectual disabilities which are beyond the remit of the higher education sector including the assessments and supports provided by other state bodies and agencies.

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