**Promoting Gaisce in Third Level**

Gaisce is a personal development programme for 15 – 25 year olds. Many people associate Gaisce with second level schools and perceive it to be a schools based programme only. It is a great programme for Third Level students as it is a way of demonstrating skills and experience outside of an academic environment.

In small, centralised organisations such as schools and youth centres, it is relatively straightforward to contact young people and explain the programme and how it will benefit them. As colleges are large institutions with thousands of people, numerous departments and buildings and can sometimes be spread over a few campuses, it can be very challenging to let students know that Gaisce is an option for them in that college. This sheet contains some suggestions of how to inform students that Gaisce is available to them and highlight the benefits of taking part from a college student’s perspective.

‘Gaisce has been crucial in pushing me towards the areas that I plan on focusing my career in the future’

**Ways of promoting Gaisce in Third Level colleges**

* Have a **Gaisce stand** at specific college events –

Freshers’ Week, Clubs and Societies days, volunteering days etc.

* A Gaisce desk and representative in the area where students are queuing for student cards.
* Highlight Gaisce on college **newspapers, student handbooks or radio station**.
* Support Gaisce participants to set up a **Gaisce Society**.
* Display **Gaisce posters** around college (encouraging them to contact Gaisce).
* Leave Gaisce **leaflets in Career Office/ Students’ Union** etc. (contact Gaisce if you require leaflets).
* Contact your Gaisce Development Officer and ask if he/she is available to attend an open day to promote the programme (attendance depends on their availability).
* **Gaisce Ambassador** – a Gaisce participant could meet their Community Involvement section (or Personal Skill) by taking on the role of Gaisce Ambassador. They dedicate an hour a week for 13/26/52 weeks to promoting Gaisce in the college. They might attend relevant student days, leave leaflets in strategic places, contact newspapers and radio stations re Gaisce and write article or be interviewed, set up and administer Gaisce Facebook group for college, liaise with groups within the college that may have volunteering opportunities for Gaisce participants and share them, link in with Gaisce etc. If PALs agree, then these activities would meet Gaisce requirements.
* Inform the Careers Office, student engagement officers, Student’s Union, chaplain and Sports Officers that Gaisce is available in the college and let them know they can refer people who are interested in taking part to you.

**Benefits of taking part in Gaisce**

Involvement in Gaisce is really beneficial for Third Level students and some of the benefits of participation include:

* Great addition to any Curriculum Vitae.
* Demonstrates an ability to commit to activities for a specific period.
* Shows a willingness to take on additional responsibilities voluntarily.
* Proves that participant can work independently and can also work as part of a team.
* Demonstrates that participant is open to engaging in activities that may be outside their comfort zone and are confident to challenge themselves.
* Shows resilience and perseverance.
* During an interview, Gaisce activities are an opportunity to talk about skills such as team work and various scenarios and provides examples that are not limited to their academic course.
* Highlights that participant is determined and able.
* Activities can be an opportunity to show great time management, organisational skills and a strong work ethic.
* Involvement in a range of personal, physical and volunteering activities allows participant to recognise their strengths and also areas they need to work on.
* Demonstrates an appetite to learn and the ability to progress.
* Provides students with opportunity to explore areas/subjects they are interested in to determine if they want to pursue it as a career.

**Promoting and Running Gaisce in Third Level**

1. **Dublin City University**

Joanna Ozarowska is Manager of DCU in the Community and became a Gaisce PAL in 2016/2017. She outlines where Gaisce fits in DCU and how the programme is promoted within the college:

‘In DCU, there are currently two PALs that facilitate and support DCU students who wish to pursue Gaisce Awards; one works in the Disability Office and I am the Manager of DCU in the Community. DCU in the Community acts as a bridge between the university and the community.

Gaisce at DCU fits into the tradition of DCU student engagement both on and off campus. With over 120 clubs and societies and robust volunteering support structures, pursuing own interests and passions for personal development is a core part of DCU student life and experience. The ability to offer DCU students an opportunity to undertake Gaisce challenges is also very much in line with DCU engagement strategy and the university’s aim to be a social change agent and to contribute to the development of local, regional and global communities. Finally, Gaisce at DCU can be considered an additional vehicle for our university’s students to demonstrate the attainment of DCU graduate attributes – a framework that emphasises the development of future active leaders and globally engaged graduates.

As a proportion of current DCU students completed Bronze or Silver Awards during their secondary education, it is only fit that they are provided an opportunity to pursue further Gaisce awards while at university.

**Gaisce Awards at DCU are promoted in a number of ways**:

* **Orientation Week – Student Experience Talks**: a short talk on student volunteering is scheduled where speakers highlight that there are registered PALs at DCU should any new DCU students like to pursue Gaisce. These talks reach approx. 4,000 incoming DCU students.
* **DCU Volunteer Handbook** – distributed to all new incoming DCU students in Orientation Packs, and available in Students’ Union Offices and Student Advice Centre – Gaisce and relevant PAL contacts are highlighted in the Handbook.
* **DCU Volunteer Fair** – Gaisce staff are invited to participate in DCU Volunteer Fair held annually during Clubs & Societies Week in September/October
* DCU is open to other forms of promoting Gaisce at our university, e.g. the set-up of a **Gaisce Society.’**
1. **NUI Galway**

Lorraine Tansey is the Student Volunteer Coordinator, is coordinator of ALIVE, NUI Galway's student volunteering programme and has also been a Gaisce PAL for more than 10 years. Lorraine highlights how NUI Galway runs the Gaisce programme.

**‘Background:** The Gaisce Award was initially student-led with groups of students coming together annually since 2006 through the Gaisce Society to plan adventure trips, fundraisers, recruitment events and support for achieving the award. The Society approached staff at NUI Galway to be PALs - as the student population turns-over rapidly, it was an important feature of sustainability to have a staff member in place each year to support applications.

**Rationale:** NUI Galway is committed to not only academic excellence for students, but also developmental opportunities. According to NUI Galway’s Vision 2020, a learning environment that enhances student interaction and engagement and enriches their leadership potential, is an important priority.

**Approaches:** To support student engagement and awards, the University has a dedicated volunteering programme (ALIVE) and staff member. Through the ALIVE office, there are a number of resources to enable Gaisce on campus including:

* A **dedicated workshop space** in the Student Common Room for Gaisce participants to gain support and meet individually or as a group.
* Both **students and staff are invited to be PALs**.
* A significant number of Gold participants avail of the **university resources** to complete their Gaisce requirements, for example:
	+ Their physical element is supported through the Clubs and Sports unit with a wide variety of free activities.
	+ Their skill, adventure and residential elements are supported through a dedicated Societies office that provides:
		- Opportunities to participate and learn through societies.
		- Opportunities to lead a student society with resources to support their society work including: membership management, financial support, and training.
		- Opportunities to connect with society trips, programmes, and projects.
	+ Their community element is supported through the ALIVE community partnerships with schools, charities and hospitals at studentvolunteer.ie/nuigalway.

**Connecting with school based Gaisce participants:** At NUI Galway we have a commitment to community engagement and for five years we have had a group of students, through their academic work in the Bachelor of Commerce, support a Gaisce Bronze and Silver Award Ceremony for local Galway schools both on campus and in the schools, connecting with parents, teachers, youth workers and pupils. NUI Galway students learn extensively about the award, plan a successful event, and develop their communication and marketing experience while connecting with the next generation. The students gain academic credit for this community-based module and the event inspires Bronze and Silver recipients to continue on their Gaisce journey for Gold.