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PRESS RELEASE

City of Dublin ETB Shares its Adoption of the ALTITUDE Charter

City of Dublin ETB has today publicly declared its support for and adoption of ALTITUDE – the National Charter for Universal Design (UD) in Tertiary Education – and joined today's national call to action for institutions and agencies to work towards a more universally designed tertiary education system.

City of Dublin ETB strongly believes that 'inclusion is everyone's business', and that all staff have an important role to play in creating an inclusive learning environment which enables all of our learners to thrive. Universal design is central to our efforts to make this a reality, and by adopting the ALTITUDE Charter, we have committed to work collaboratively across our ETB to embed a UD approach more firmly in our practices and processes in the years ahead, building on the existing good work already achieved in recent years.

Commenting on the institution's adoption of ALTITUDE, Blake Hodgkinson, Director of FET of City of Dublin ETB welcomed this landmark development:

"The increasing diversity among our staff and students is a major asset to City of Dublin ETB. Universal design plays a crucial role in our strategic initiatives to address their needs. It's essential for everyone to collaborate and contribute to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone has equal opportunities to succeed. Adopting a universal design approach can help us achieve this goal.

We wholeheartedly support this vital cross-sector effort and will continue to advance the actions and objectives set forth in the ALTITUDE Charter in the coming years."

Prior to declaring our adoption of the ALTITUDE Charter and our public support for the national call to action today, City of Dublin ETB established a Universal Design/ALTITUDE steering committee based on the model of committee membership/leadership proposed within the Charter. This standing committee will now collaborate in the years ahead to progress the actions and goals outlined within the Charter.

About the ALTITUDE Charter

The learner population in tertiary education is becoming increasingly diverse, and students' lives are also increasingly complex. The responsibility on educational institutions to provide equitable access for all is now strongly embedded in Irish legislation, and national tertiary

education strategies contain more specific goals to implement a Universal Design approach, (SOLAS, 2020; Higher Education Authority, 2022).

Watch the ALTITUDE promo video [here](#).

The aim is to move towards a system where 'Inclusion is Everyone's Business', where all staff play their part in delivering an inclusive educational experience.

Universal Design, or UD for short, offers us an evidence-based approach to engender this mindset, and is increasingly seen as a central tenet of our response to rising diversity, (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, 2022). But how can we embed a UD approach in our institutions?

That's where ALTITUDE – the National Charter for Universal Design in Tertiary Education - comes in to play.



Funded by the HEA under PATH 4, the ALTITUDE Project was an extensive cross sectoral collaboration involving six national agencies, fifteen higher education (HE) institutions and six Education and Training Board (ETB) representatives, nominated by Directors of FET to represent the Further Education and Training sector. The Charter was launched in Spring 2024, alongside an accompanying technical report and implementation toolkit.

The vision of the project looks to a future in tertiary education where 'all learners are transformatively included through universal design in education', deriving the name ALTITUDE. It seeks to move us in that direction by supporting HEIs and ETBs to make sustainable progress towards systemically embedding a UD approach.... - one which places human diversity at the heart of tertiary education design, and fosters student success for all learners.

The ALTITUDE Charter, and the associated toolkit and technical report, build on significant existing work on UD in the Irish tertiary education landscape (Kelly & Padden, 2018), and through these outputs, provides a clear roadmap for institutions to make progress.

Drawing from national and international literature, the Charter recommends key strategic enablers, which institutions should put in place over time to support the sustainable implementation of UD, and proposes collaborative action to work towards goals under 4 key pillars of our institutions:

- Learning, Teaching & Assessment;
- Supports, Services & Social Engagement;
- the Physical Environment;
- and the Digital Environment

Institutions who adopt it will over time benefit from:

- a more unified language of and commitment to a universal design approach in their institution
- a greater culture of shared responsibility for UD, access, and inclusion, operationalising the 'Inclusion is Everyone's Business' mindset.
- a more effective and learner centred approach to compliance with national legislation and policy
- and most importantly, the iterative development of programmes, services, and environments that enable equitable opportunities for all learners to thrive and be successful.

The cross-sectoral development of the ALTITUDE Charter represents a landmark moment for the tertiary education sector, signalling its intent to place human diversity at the heart of its design and delivery.

[Go to the Charter webpage and download the Charter, Toolkit and Technical Report.](#)



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