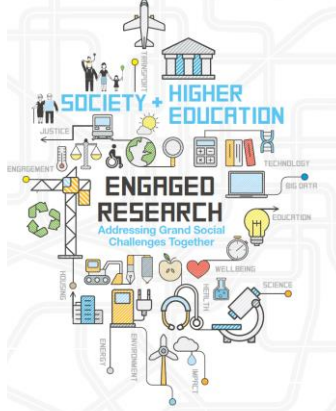




Engaged Research Case Study Template	
Project Title (8 words max)	Designing Launchpad: The design process as an agent of transition for students from under-represented groups entering higher education.
Education	
<p>Project synopsis (100 words max) Please give a very short description of the societal challenge, the action taken, and the intended/ achieved result.</p>	<p>Students from target groups under-represented in higher education often experience distinct challenges that can lead to increased, often unarticulated difficulties, resulting in greater reliance on services and higher dropout rates than the average student.</p> <p>Universities are seeking, more and more, to open access routes and identify ways of encouraging under-represented groups to consider higher education as an option. Maynooth University (MU), through the Maynooth University Access Programme (MAP) and the Launchpad induction programme, has proven very successful in supporting these groups.</p> <p>In this action-orientated programme, MAP students and staff, facilitated by the University’s Department of Design Innovation, worked together to co-understand and co-design the transition of students to higher education through a Design Thinking process. The pilot was a success, both in terms of student engagement and future programme improvement. For students, the design workshops enabled valuable sharing of experiences and allowed them to contribute their ideas based on defined problems. For MAP staff, the research data provided actionable insights into the unarticulated needs and experience of students, reframed their understanding of the problems and provided new tools and collateral for further use. The learning from this process has been integrated into the Launchpad programme and it has since been opened up to a much wider cohort of participants.</p>
Higher Education Institution:	Maynooth University
Engaged Research Partners (civic, civil society organisations, Social enterprises, public or professional service or product users, policy makers, members of the public).	Maynooth University Access Programme (MAP), the Department of Design Innovation Maynooth, HEAR and DARE advisory committee, DEIS linked schools.



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Engagement (research method or activity) (100 words max)

A cohort of over 100 new university students from under-represented groups participated in a large-scale Design Thinking and Co-Design programme to help improve their transition into higher education, and enhance the understanding of student needs by MAP staff. The format adopted was a multi-session programme consisting of data gathering through experience and empathy mapping, data synthesis and affinity diagrams, personas and problem statements, brainstorming workshops and concept creation.

Project outputs and outcomes: (600 words max)

Please describe briefly the target audience and activities that occurred and short terms results.

This information could include:

- who you worked with;
- issue to be addressed
- what actions you took;
- the geographical location;
- any shorter-term outcomes or changes in local situation and circumstances, knowledge and skills attitudes or behaviour, policy, practice, organisational development etc, decision-making.

The outputs are as follows:

- A large amount of rich user data was gathered, from which actionable insights and problem statements were created. These have formed the basis of a number of new and improved MAP initiatives.
- The personas created based on the Co-Design activity are now also being used to guide MAP decision making and initiative development.
- Over 100 students were involved in the project and 20 student leaders were trained in design thinking methods.
- Experience and Empathy maps were found to be excellent probes for improving and promoting communication and interaction amongst student participants and stakeholders.
- A number of journal articles, case studies and conference presentations are being produced to disseminate the learnings.

The outcomes are as follows:

- As a direct result of the study, MAP have integrated design thinking methods and tools into many of their programmes and activities.
- The reframed understanding of student needs has enabled MAP to innovate and improve all services.
- Based on the learnings, the Launchpad programme has been extended to a much wider cohort of students. All MAP incoming students (approximately 300 per



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	<p>year) will experience the improvements and innovations in communication, activities and interactions etc. during future Launchpad orientation programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design is now seen as a strategic component of MAP's offering. • As a result of this initiative, MAP has recorded an increased sense of belonging to Maynooth University, well-established social networks and an awareness of the supports available to MU students. • MAP expect to see retention rates of students from target groups come in line with the University average, with steady progression from year 1 to year 2, as well as a consistent annual interest among current students to volunteer as role models on Launchpad and beyond. • This research offers a potentially promising model of good practice for promoting access for students to other Higher Education Institutions, both in Ireland and farther afield.
<p>Longer term anticipated areas for Impact (Choose from below): Economic Policy & Public Service Societal Engagement Health & Wellbeing Professional services Environmental New knowledge Human Capacity</p>	<p>Health and Well-Being Societal engagement New knowledge</p> <p>Following the success of this initiative, it is anticipated that similar approaches could be extended to the wider incoming student community both in Maynooth University and nationally. Programmes such as this one could have a lasting impact on the health and well-being and engagement of all students. It is also anticipated that increasing the quality of orientation programmes, such as Launchpad, will lead to improvements in the participation rates of students from the target equity groups, as well as improved graduation rates and increased progression to relevant employment. The positive results from this initiative indicate that greater student retention and student experience can be achieved by using design thinking and co-design approaches to engagement.</p>
<p>Funding source:</p>	<p>Maynooth University Access Programme (MAP)</p>
<p>For more information contact:</p>	<p>Dr Trevor Vaughn (Design and Innovation, MU)</p>



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