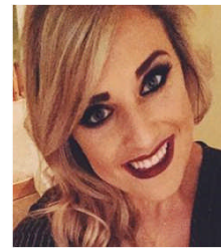




# Determination of what is needed to enhance access and participation for learners with diverse ability levels in agricultural education programmes.

Gráinne Mc Grath<sup>1,2</sup> Karen Keaveney<sup>1</sup> Donna Deegan<sup>2</sup>  
 1.School of Agriculture and Food Science UCD, Belfield, Dublin 4.  
 2.Kildalton Agricultural College, Piltown, Co.Kilkenny.



## Background

The purpose of this research project is to explore the diversity within students participating in agricultural education programmes and to find out what is needed for these students to ensure access and participation in all elements of their chosen course. This thesis will include full time agricultural students with disabilities with a particular focus on students that have a Specific Learning Difficulty.

What factors determine the eligibility of a student having a learning disability and how do they avail of learning supports?

What resources/specific learning supports are currently in place and accessible by agricultural students with diverse abilities to prevent exclusion?

What teaching methods and supports do agricultural lecturers use to enhance access and participation of all students within a diverse classroom?

What new approaches/ policies could be implemented to ensure inclusion of all students in a diverse setting?

## Research Questions

## Project Rationale

- Growing diversity in the student population and an acceleration of students with diverse abilities.
- Little research relating to the issue of diverse abilities within agriculture education programmes
- An online survey was carried out early 2016 investigating the capacity for teaching students with diverse abilities. It revealed ;
  - The staff in 50% of Agricultural Colleges across the country have **not** undergone disability awareness training.
  - 50% of Agricultural Colleges across the country have **not** trained staff on what is available for students with learning disabilities.
- Universities/ IOTs have more developed & advanced support systems for students of diverse needs.

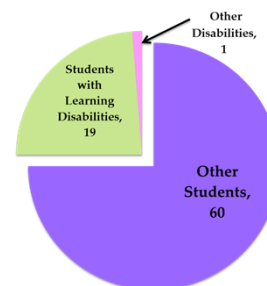
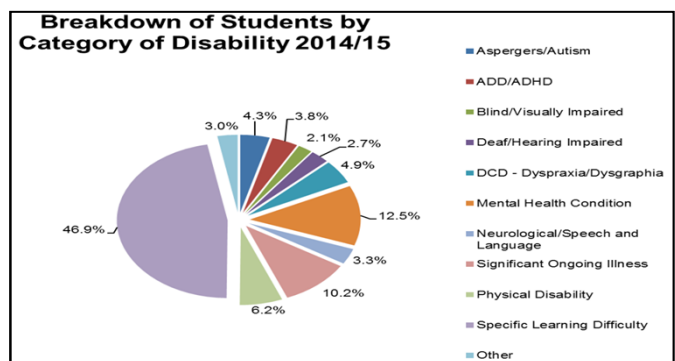
## Aim

To develop beneficial tools/strategies for both students and teachers to aid access and participation of students with diverse abilities to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities for progression.

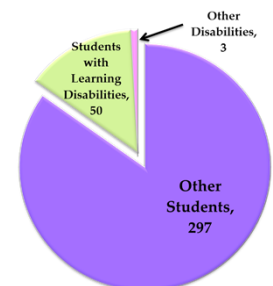
## Objectives

1. Identify and define what is meant by diverse ability within agricultural educational programmes.
2. Recognise the amount of students within the organisation with learning disabilities in order to highlight the necessity of support systems for these students.
3. Discover what resources/ support systems are in place for students with learning disabilities to prevent discrimination.

## Project Rationale



Gurteen Agricultural College



Kildalton Agricultural College

## Methodology

### Sources of Data

#### All 7 colleges

- 6 Agricultural Colleges
- 1 Horticultural College

#### Agricultural Students

Sample of full time education with learning disabilities-

Dyslexia & Dyscalculia

#### Access Officers

In agricultural colleges that are aiding students with diverse abilities.

### Methods of Data Collection

#### Observation

Shadow teachers/lecturers who teach a class with diverse abilities & observe exams and the supports students avail of.

#### Focus groups

- 7 access officers from the colleges
- Lecturers/Teachers from the colleges

#### Interviews

10/12 interviews with students who disclose that they have a learning disability.