

## 6. Characteristics of disadvantaged students

### A selection of students participants

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#### 6.1 Eligibility criteria

The criteria that students must meet to participate in the Narrative Mediation Path (NMP) are listed below in order of importance. The Consortium identified two essential criteria related to academic performance (students who are delayed in passing exams and/or with low average mark), one criterion of selection (personal factors), and one preferential criterion (high potential of the student) to be followed in order to select the students.

At the beginning of the project, the eligibility criteria established that students enrolled at the end of the first year/in the transition from the first to second year and currently in their second year, were the INSTALL target group.

After the end of the first cycle of the NMP, the Consortium decided to enlarge these criteria. In order to accommodate the greatest number of requests from students, the eligibility criteria established that the students to be targeted can also be those enrolled in the second and third year of a university degree or students repeating a year.

##### *Essential criteria of academic performance*

a) Students who are delayed in passing exams **and/or** (eg., this category takes into account both students who are delayed (late) in taking (sitting) their exams, or, students who have not passed (failed) an exam, etc.).

This criterion has been implemented differently in the different universities involved in the project:

Italy Federico II	The course has been targeted at students who, during the previous university years, had obtained only 50% or less of the total credits (each university year provides students with 60 credits. The total number of credits for the three year degree course is 180 credits).
Spain US	The course has been targeted at students who, during the previous university years, had obtained only 50% or less of the total credits (each university year provides students with 60 credits. The total number of credits for the three year degree course is 180 credits).
Denmark AU	The course has been targeted at students who, during the previous university years, had obtained only 50% or less of the total credits (each university year provides students with 60 credits. The total number of credits for the three year degree course is 180 credits).
Ireland NUIM	The course will be targeted at students who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Passed at least one module by compensation;</li> <li>- Failed at least one exam in January or May and repeated it in August (and then passed).</li> </ul>
Romania NSPSA	The course has been targeted at students who, during the previous university years, had obtained only 50% or less of the total credits (each university year provides students with 60 credits. The total number of credits for the three year degree course is 180 credits).

b) *And/or* students who have a low average mark (low academic performance)

This criterion is operationalized differently in the different universities involved in the project:

<p>Italy Federico II</p>	<p>Students who have a range of marks between 18 and 22, which is a low average mark. (The minimum mark to pass an exam is 18. The student will fail if they achieve less than 18 marks. The maximum possible mark is 30).</p>
<p>Spain US</p>	<p>Students who have a range of marks between 5.0 and 6.9, which is a low average mark. (The minimum mark to pass an exam is 5. The student will fail if they achieve less than 5 marks. The maximum possible mark is 10).</p>
<p>Denmark AU</p>	<p>Students who have a range of marks between 2.0 and 3.9 which is a low average mark. (The minimum mark to pass an exam is 2. The student will fail if they achieve less than 2 marks. The maximum possible mark is 12).</p>
<p>Ireland NUIM</p>	<p>NUI Maynooth students are awarded according to the following scale:          (1st) First Class Honours 70-100%          (2:1) Second Class Honours Grade I 60-69%          (2:2) Second Class Honours Grade II 50-59%          (3rd) Third Class Honours 45-49%          (Pass) Pass 40-44%          Any mark below 40% is considered a 'Fail.'          It is possible for a student to Pass by Compensation where they have scored less than 40% in a module, but have achieved higher grades in other modules within the same subject.          A student who fails a subject (or subjects) must repeat and pass the failed components before they can progress into their next year of study.          In order to pass a subject a student must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pass all required modules in the subject.</li> <li>• Obtain 40% on aggregate in the subject.</li> <li>• Pass modules to a credit value of at least half the credit value of the subject.</li> <li>• Not fall below 25% in any module.</li> </ul>

Romania NSPAS	Students who have a range of marks between 5.0 and 6.9, which is a low average mark. (The minimum mark to pass an exam is 5. The student will fail if they achieve less than 5 marks. The maximum possible mark is 10).
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### *Criteria of Selection*

Criteria relating to the personal background of the student (non-traditional/ disadvantaged students).

This selection criteria will be used as “necessary qualifying criteria” which students must meet in order to access the NMP programme (eg., in case of a competition between students for access) priority must be given to students who have at least one or more characteristics of non-traditional/ disadvantaged students as described in the international literature:

- Low income
- Living far from his/her parents’ home
- Living in rural places
- Low mark diploma
- Ethnic minority
- Full time, part-time, occasionally worker
- With family responsibilities (single parent, supporting children, orphan)
- Disabled
- Older than 25
- From a family with a low level of education
- First generation university student.

*Preferential criterion* (not essential): evidence of the high potential of the student.

This criterion refers to the fact that the student should have good basic skills and good potentialities that will allow him/her to use the NMP in an effective manner.

This criterion is operationalized as follows:

- The student must have obtained at least one high mark in an exam, during his/her degree career.
- The student must have obtained a good mark at the Diploma, before enrolling in university.
- Each Country involved in the project will adapt this criterion to own context.

In conclusion, the Consortium considers that the students to be selected must be left behind or/and have low average marks (criteria of academic performance) in the second and third year of university degree, or be repeating a year. In case of competition to be accepted to the NMP, the priority is given to students who belong, at least, to one of the categories of non-traditional/disadvantaged students identified (criteria of selection related to the personal story) and to students enrolled to the second year of university degree course.

## **6.2 Ways of disseminating the route offered to students. Local context: NUI Maynooth**

NUI Maynooth holds exams at the end of semester one each year in January. These exams must finish before semester two can begin (in early February). Exams also take place at the end of semester two, usually beginning mid May. Although students do receive provisional results from their January exams, these results are not final or official. Full official exam results will be released to all students by the last week in June, which include their January and May exams. At this point we can begin to identify which students have failed their exams and therefore need to sit repeat exams in August. With regard to this project, the timing of the training event in Naples in June will occur around the same time as NUI Maynooth students are issued with their results.

The NUI Maynooth Academic Advisory Office (AAO) will issue an invitation to all students who have failed an exam to call into the AAO and discuss the events of their year with one of the academic advisors. This invitation will be delivered by post to the student's listed home address and will be dispatched after the exam results are issued to students.

The purpose of this meeting between students and academic advisors is to identify difficulties or challenges that the student has encountered that have had an impact on their academic progress during the year and then refer the students to relevant support services in the university where necessary. For example, this meeting is a great opportunity for the students to ask any questions they may have about the repeat exams scheduled for August. Additionally, in the course of this meeting the academic advisors can check to see which students are eligible for participation in this programme. The academic advisors can inform the student about the programme, its benefits to them, and ask if the student would like to participate in the programme.

This interaction between the academic advisor and student will be the primary and likely the most effective method of recruiting students onto the INSTALL programme. Experience shows that students respond better to information that is relayed to them on a one-to-one basis, as they tend to place greater value on the information as opposed to a more removed form of communication such as an email.

Students will voluntarily attend a meeting with an academic advisor, and will be informed that the programme will run in the coming semester. Students will be asked if they have seen the poster advertised in the waiting room as they enter the Academic Advisory Office, and informed that a Facebook page has been set up to provide information about the INSTALL programme.

At this early point it is important that all students who visit the office are asked if they have seen the poster advertising the programme so as not to single out any particular student and pressur-

ize them into joining the programme. Therefore, all students who visit the Academic Advisory Office during the summer time period will be asked if they saw the advertisement for the INSTALL programme. If a student has seen the poster, they will have a chance to ask the advisor for further information. If they have not seen the poster, the advisor can highlight the information contained in the poster and ask the student if he or she might be interested in joining the programme. Either way, the advisor can highlight the intended benefits of the programme for students and the entry criteria. Students will be advised that an information meeting will take place once term starts, where they can attend to find out more about the INSTALL programme. After attending this meeting they will be further informed about the nature of the programme and will be better placed to make an informed decision about whether to apply or not.

#### Information Meeting

An information meeting will take place for interested students early in the first semester. This brief event will provide all potential applicants with a full description of the programme and provide them with an opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification on issues that concern them. This practice of holding an information meeting has been trialed before in NUI Maynooth and tends to help applicants understand the programme to which they are applying. It gives them a better understanding of what they will encounter on the programme, what the benefits may be and what responsibilities they will hold as group members of the programme. Interested students will be informed about the format of the programme, including start and end dates, times and venues. This meeting will be advertised through the Academic Advisory Office once term begins, just as the current posters are being advertised. The NUI Maynooth INSTALL Facebook page will carry details of the information meeting also. If necessary, a reminder email can be sent to students who indicated their interest during their meeting with the academic advisor during the summer inviting them to attend the information meeting.

*INSTALL posters*

The INSTALL project partners agreed on a template and content for the posters to be used to advertise the programme. The posters include an attractive background image, headed with the INSTALL project logo. A slogan introduces the poster which is designed to grab the attention of students targeted by this programme; “Was your first year more difficult than you expected it to be?” The slogan clearly focuses on the first year experience, and appeals to students who found that their early expectations of how difficult first year at university would be have been challenged. These students might realize that their expectations of first year were slightly incorrect. This should capture the attention of the target group.

A brief description of the programme is included in the main body of the text on the poster which strikes a balance between providing factual information about the programme and highlighting the main benefits of the programme to students. The language of this text is causal, non-technical and directed towards students. The selection criteria are made very clear and are listed in bullet point format. The poster finishes by listing contact details of the Academic Advisory Office in NUI Maynooth where interested students can request further information.

The official project serial number, funding disclaimer and logos of the funding organizations are listed along the bottom of the poster. All five logos of the INSTALL partner institutions are listed down the right hand side. The poster will be displayed in a prominent position on campus to achieve maximum exposure among the target student body. In NUI Maynooth, the poster will be displayed in the waiting room of the Academic Advisory Office, outside the Academic Advisory Office, on the Student’s Union notice board, and on the main notice board in the very busy Arts Block building.

*Facebook page*

Each INSTALL project partner has established a local Facebook page to disseminate information about the project local to students



and to contacts in their dissemination database. The partner Facebook pages have been linked to each other. Relevant news articles, videos, documentaries, comments, pictures and other articles can be easily shared through this medium to bring the subject to life. As always, comment boxes are available on each Facebook page where students and INSTALL staff can post ideas, comments, thoughts, relevant information or feedback. Each institution can link its Facebook page to additional or relevant services in its own university and therefore increase visibility among staff and students.

*Dedicated email address*

Each partner institution has established a dedicated email address to manage communications with external bodies and particularly with students who (i) wish to find out about the programme; (ii) are on the programme. The dedicated email address is particularly useful for keeping track of email contacts specifically relating to the INSTALL project. It is convenient to keep a record of all communications in the one place for future reference.