

# Safe Arrival Project Toolkit



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## SAP Toolkit

### Introduction:

The Safe Arrival Project (SAP) funded by the European Commission comprises of five European Institutions working together on a framework to reduce student dropouts. The SAP project's main objective addresses European Priority 6, Strategies to Reduce the Number of Dropouts in initial VET that in turn will improve young people's lives. It also works towards the EU Strategy 2020 to reduce dropout to 10%.

The project is based on research from the following references:

- Arnold, C. and Baker, T. (2013) "Becoming NEET: Risks, Rewards and Realities" Stoke: Trentham Books
- Arnold, C and Baker, T (2012) "Transitions from School to Work: applying psychology to NEET" Educational and Child Psychology Vol 29 No3. Leicester: BPS

The project members are:

- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council in the U.K.
- Galway Technical Institute in Ireland
- Partners Hungary Foundation in Hungary
- Xabec in Spain
- Zlinsky Kraj in the Czech Republic

The objectives of the project are to:

- rollout the screening tool across partners through two pilots
- introduce interventions based on research
- devise a user friendly website
- develop further interventions through extension of the use of the tool in Sandwell
- create an e-learning programme on how to use the SAP tool
- develop case studies and materials to enable further dissemination
- fully evaluate the activity

### **What does the SAP tool do?**

The SAP tool is concerned with identifying students who are at potential risk of dropping out and putting in place the necessary early interventions to prevent such drop outs. The SAP tool can be used with any group of students of any age that you wish to work with. By screening your students against the SAP tool questions you will be able to determine which risk factors are most prevalent in your school or institution. Based on your findings, you will establish which students are most at risk of dropping out. This will also provide a basis for putting the necessary supports in place for those students through accurate deployment of available resources.

## Creating a SAP tool

In order to create and use a SAP tool there are 2 stages to complete consisting of 9 steps.

### **STAGE ONE – CREATION OF THE TOOL**

#### **Step 1:**

Form a task group to include a wide section of professionals who work with young people who dropout from vocational schools or courses in your area. Identify a comprehensive list of local risk factors that you think may affect young people.

#### **Step 2:**

Go through your original risk factor list and identify how each factor can be measured. Consider and decide how your organisation will collect this data and identify which factors are inexpensive to collect or held centrally.

#### **Step 3:**

Now consider which factors can be easily collected for a large number of young people. Disregard those that are not feasible and concentrate on those that are readily available and those you feel are most important.

A closed ended questionnaire (for completion by individual students) is a useful tool to determine if a risk factor is present.

For Example:

“Did you choose the correct programme?” - “Yes/No”

**Step 4:**

Identify a sample of 40 young people in Vocational Educational Training (VET) matched against young people who have dropped out of VET. This will enable you to identify the differences between those students who dropped out and those that did not.

**Step 5:**

Collect data on each factor for the required number of young people. Record and collate all answers onto a simple spreadsheet.

Input the data: As stated above, the answer to each question will identify whether or not the risk factor is present. For each student, record a 1 if the risk factor is present and 0 if the risk factor is not present.

For example

*Question 1: Have you experienced financial difficulties this year?*

*If the student answers “yes” – 1 will be entered as this is a risk factor for the student.*

*Question 2: Do you did you choose the correct course?*

*If the student answers “yes” – 0 will be entered as this is not a risk factor for the student.*

### **Step 6:**

The data you have collected now needs to be statistically analysed to provide you with the final localised SAP tool. Please email [john.mcloughlin@gretb.ie](mailto:john.mcloughlin@gretb.ie) for information on how to analyse the data.

This completes the first stage and once completed you will have created your own SAP tool that contains significant risk factors for your young people.

## **STAGE 2 – USING THE TOOL**

The second stage involves implementing your created SAP Tool designed in Stage 1.

### **Step 7: Using the tool with your students**

Conduct research on your students using your identified questions from your SAP Tool.

Collect the SAP tool data - gather data for each student. This may be done through existing information systems or through asking each student individually. If you have an induction process at your institution, this is a very practical way of gaining the data quickly and at the very start of the course.

Input the data onto a simple spreadsheet as you completed in Stage 1 – creating the tool (Step 5)

### Step 8: Sort the data

Sort the Total Risk Factor Score from highest to lowest. This will then rank each young person in order of their risk factor score and those who are most at risk of dropout will be at the top of the list.

You now need to determine from the data displayed, which students are most in need of intervention and put the necessary supports in place where applicable.

As a guideline you may want to split the data as follows:

- 3 Risk factors, most at risk - greatest intervention
- 2 Risk factors, less at risk - intermediate intervention
- Remainder, low risk – make students aware of available supports

Name	Risk Factor 1	Risk Factor 2	Risk Factor 3	Total Risk Factor Score
Student 2	1	1	1	3
Student 5	1	0	1	2
Student 1	0	1	1	2
Student 4	1	0	0	1
Student 3	0	0	1	1
Student 10	0	0	0	0
Student 7	0	0	0	0
Student 8	0	0	0	0
Student 9	0	0	0	0
Student 6	0	0	0	0

### **Step 9: Interventions**

Once you have determined your intervention levels – you will need to consider what interventions will make up each category.

## **Interventions**

### **Background:**

The main emphasis on the interventions is based on psychological principles including Chaos theory. This helps illustrate the multiple sources of instability in young people's lives and we should consider the additive nature of this instability across the several risk factors. Consequently, this will increase the risk of dropping out.

The original study showed a positive impact on truancy based on an intervention of a senior member of staff simply saying good morning to high risk students every morning they attended school. (Arnold, Emery, Hughes & Travell (1995) "Predicting and preventing poor attendance in an urban comprehensive school: a computer-assisted approach" Pastoral Care in Education Vol 13 No.4 (1995) p24-28.) This small intervention reduced the truancy rate by approximately 50%.

Further research found a study from The University of Melbourne (Discussion Paper from May 2008) that looked at Effective Intervention Strategies for Students at Risk of Early

Leaving. This concluded that a series of targeted interventions underpinned by a school-wide commitment was key in improving retention.

The targeted initiatives included student-focused strategies such as:

- mentoring
- early and more intensive pathways and careers planning
- careers guidance managed by appropriately qualified staff
- outreach
- case management
- targeted assistance for skill development among low achievers

They also included school-wide strategies:

- team-based approaches to teaching, learning and pastoral care
- early intervention to support literacy and numeracy skills growth
- project-based and applied approaches to learning
- broad curriculum provision with strong VET options
- high expectations on attendance and behaviour

The schools with the greatest success in improving student retention combine a range of these strategies, working to develop a whole staff commitment to engaging students, and

constantly refining approaches as student and parent needs shift.

### **SAP Intervention Examples:**

From our studies and our own research talking to young people it seems that personal attention is very meaningful.

So when looking at what interventions to put in place, here are some examples of what have been shown to have an impact:

- Allocate a dedicated person to each high risk student; this may be done through a tutor or another member of staff. This person should build a relationship with the student to promote trust. This may highlight any potential issues before they escalate. This element has been found by all partners to be a foundation to build successful interventions.
- Keep in regular contact with students by their preferred contact method, i.e. by text, phone or in person to monitor how things are going.
- Provide a tailored package of support – this may include detailed and early careers guidance/planning. Talk to students about what support they feel they need as well as what you can offer. Our partner PHF in Hungary introduced a workshop to help with this - the goal of the workshop was to identify the already existing measurements that prevent drop out and also to introduce new ones to increase efficiency in prevention.

- Distribute personalised invites to any careers/institution events.
- Allocate peer mentors – this could be a slightly older person to act as a role model and support at a peer level. As the project develops, previous students that have been identified as high risk may also act as peer mentors to the next cohort.
- Offer advocacy services where required.

When developing your intervention strategy, it is important to talk to students about what support you can offer and what they feel their needs are. Be careful not to make the student feel as though they have been singled out and that they are different to their peers. Make sure they are aware that it is just additional support that is aimed at helping them.

## **Case Study**

### **Galway Technical Institute**

At GTI we produced our own SAP Tool which was implemented throughout the college.

Staff members liaised to identify possible risk factors associated with dropouts. Examples:

- Financial difficulties
- Employment outside of college
- Course & career choice

- Transportation issues
- Rental issues
- Health
- Family commitments
- Being on Social Welfare
- Member of minority group

Each of these was assessed by means of a personal interview.

15 possible factors were investigated

1. Have you experienced financial difficulties this year? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. Did you choose the correct programme? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. Did you find the course difficult? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
4. Were you employed during the course? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
5. Were you living in rented accommodation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
6. Did you know anyone else when you enrolled? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
7. Had you a clear career goal in mind when enrolling on your programme? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
8. Are you in receipt of state benefits? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
9. Do transportation issues including cost, impact on your attendance? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

10. Are you a member of any ethnic / minority group? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
11. Are you a non-EU National? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
12. Have you suffered significant health difficulties this year? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
13. Has personal trauma impacted on participation in your course? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
14. Do you have a learning difficulty or disability? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
15. Do you have any family commitments, including caring which impede your participation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

All data was obtained and was entered into an excel spreadsheet to be analysed. The significant factors were found to be:

- Not having a clear career goal
- Not choosing the correct course
- High transportation costs

In September 2014, 735 of our students were surveyed to establish if they presented any of the above risk factors.

The necessary interventions were put in place for students presenting some level of risk. This included:

- Liaising with class teachers
- Independent, impartial information, advice and career guidance support
- Support to make a positive transition where required
- Advocacy services between student and college

## Resources

### Action Plan

In order to undertake creating your own SAP tool it is good practice to plan out the process so you can clearly see what you are trying to achieve and to anticipate any potential issues. This toolkit includes a blank action plan for you to complete alongside the steps outlined in the booklet.

### SAP website – [www.safearrivalproject.com](http://www.safearrivalproject.com)

This includes background information on the safe arrival project including information on all partners' involved and detailed information on the development of the project throughout its duration. Additional resources include a SAP practitioner guide and research articles.

### E-learning video

The nine steps are also individually outlined with additional handy hints on how to practically achieve each step through an e-learning guide. The link for the e-learning video is available on the Safe Arrival Project website.



## **Student Evaluations of SAP Project**

### **Student No. 1 - John**

We were in class when two teachers came in to us asking us to complete a questionnaire. I was surprised by the immediacy of its relevance to all of us who were there and in particular by the phrase 'Had I chosen the correct course?' This was a tricky one for me as I was still uncertain about my course choice at GTI – Nursing Studies. However I learned very quickly that I could speak with someone within the next week who would help me decide if I had or not and thanks to that single question being highlighted for me, I know I made the right choice and am now enjoying a nursing degree programme in London.

### **Student No. 2 - Martin**

As a mature student coming back to education after 12 years, I found this SAP project to be most engaging with learners right from the very start of the year. I travelled 30KM every day to college and found it challenging to meet 9am starts sometimes depending on weather and traffic. However I spoke to my tutors about this and found their support and understanding to be a very significant factor in my completing the course. I also availed of the project support system in GTI which really helped me catch up on missed work and assignments. I passed all modules thanks to the individual attention given to me through these learning supports.

### **Student No. 3 - Mary**

I ticked all the boxes in this survey as they all applied to me. I felt embarrassed by this at the beginning but I thought if I don't say anything I will not be heard. So I went about searching for help with my projects after school and whenever I could be met. To this day I know it is because of the belief my teachers had in me that I would succeed. I gained huge confidence in myself as a person and it was all down to the care and attention my teachers gave me. I felt very privileged that this SAP project helped me so much.

### **Student No. 4 - Anne**

The way the teacher explained the SAP project to us made every one of us feel we could be supported in our work and helped along the way if things got difficult. I had challenges in school and was not very confident with writing and certainly doing all the projects on my course. At one point I felt like leaving. I spoke to a counsellor who convinced me not only could I finish but that I would be an excellent beauty therapist. I attended project support classes every week and this was so helpful for me. When things got really serious I also had someone to talk to and this made all the difference.



For project information, please contact John McLoughlin at Galway Technical Institute by email [john.mcloughlin@gretb.ie](mailto:john.mcloughlin@gretb.ie) or phone 091 581342. You can also visit [www.safearrivalproject.com](http://www.safearrivalproject.com)

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