

**Collins, Dan, 2005, *Retention and Attrition: Can We Support Students to Stay the Course?***

### **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION**

This study was designed to identify some issues that impede students from adjusting to third level education in Ireland. The main objective of the study was to look at the transitional adjustments of students to third level education. The three questions asked were why do some students adjust and others fail to adjust to third level education? What issues contribute to non-completion by first year students? And how can the Institute address and improve retention rates?

The study focused on six academic departments at the Cork Institute of Technology. One hundred and sixty three current registered students participated through questionnaire in this study. The questionnaire covered areas such as living arrangements, family background, choosing course, experience of college, course organisation, sources of financial help and satisfaction with aspects of college.

A number of conclusions and recommendations are presented based on the evidence of the study. Retention efforts must begin at second level that involves the Institute liaising with schools and better informing potential applicants of the demands of third level. Most benefit will be achieved by focusing on the experiences of students in the first year of their studies. There is a need for an extended orientation programme, the development of a Learning Support Unit and the introduction of a staff/peer mentoring programme.