



# Meet Cara



An AI powered virtual assistant for students in University of Galway



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# Paul Stapleton Student Services Project Manager

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# Agenda

- The context - What is Cara?
- What can Cara do?
- How we use Cara for student engagement
- Ongoing development

*Ask Cara*



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Awards  
2023

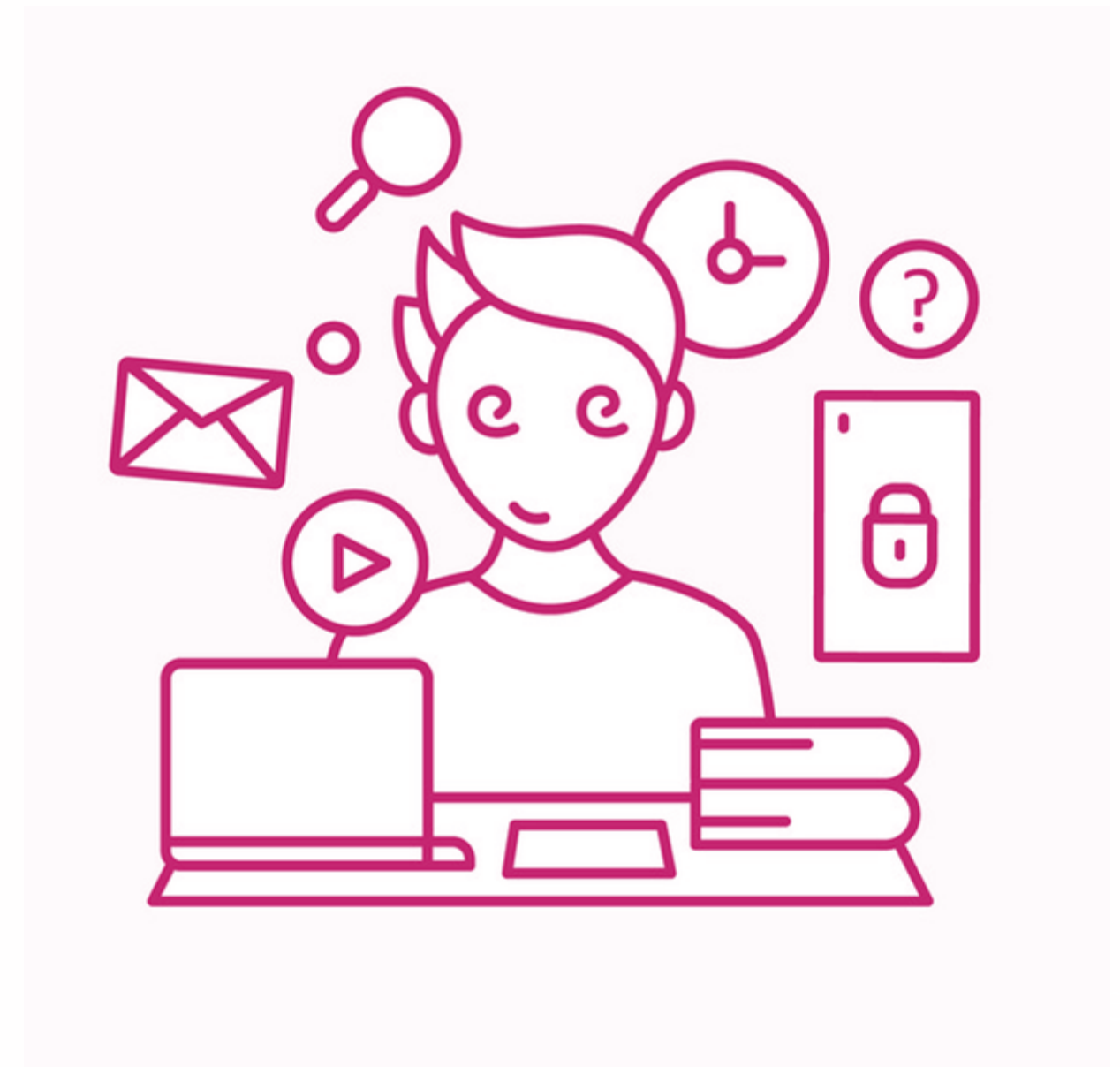
Winner

Technological or Digital  
Innovation of the Year

# Aim: Enhance the student experience – accessing information

## Challenges for students

- Navigating information and identifying the supports they need
- Too much information
- Multiple sources of information
- Complex website
- Complicated by Covid restrictions - remote learning and remote working in 2020 - 2021



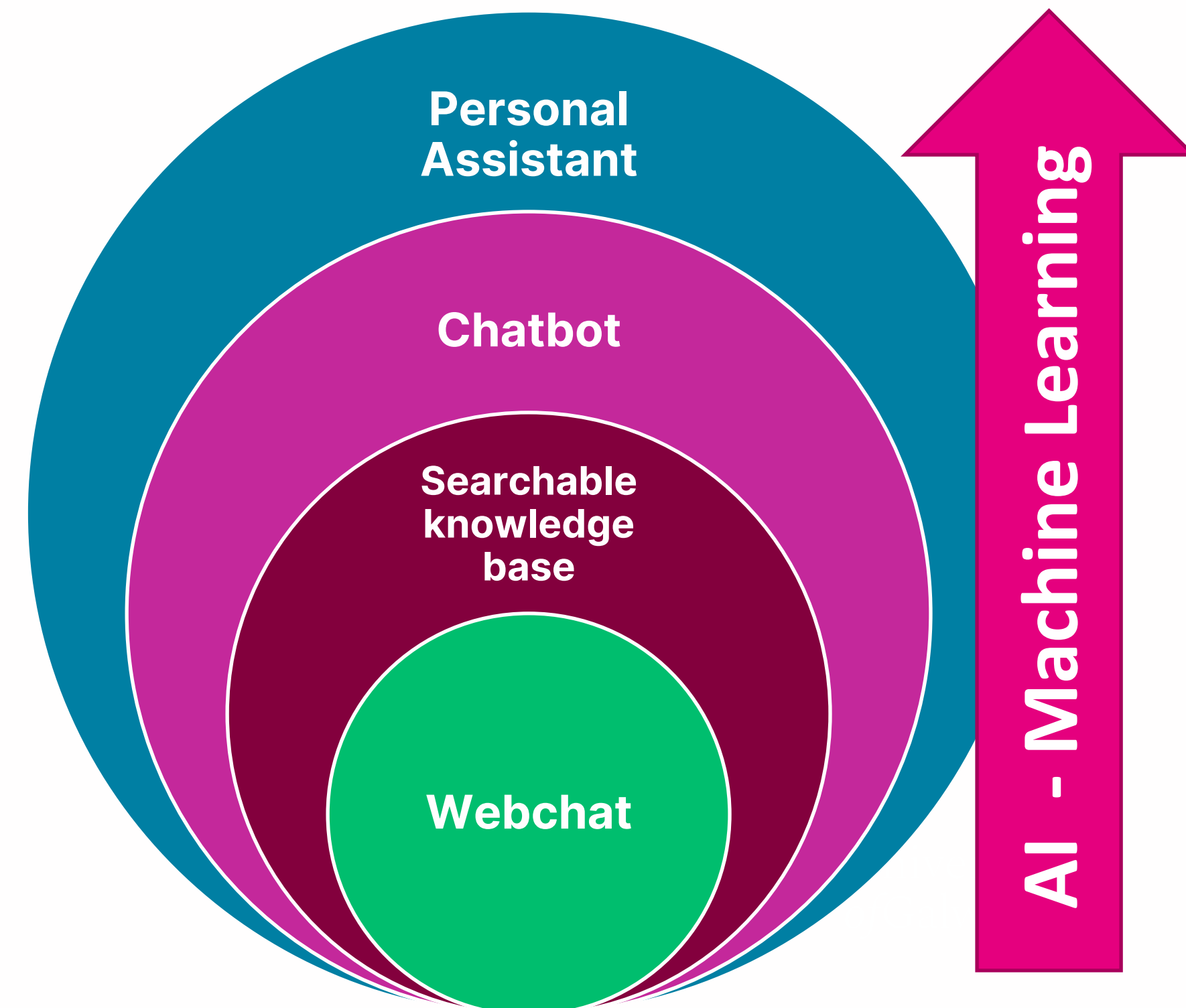
# Universal Student Support Centre

“...centralise student support services in one hub and facilitate our students’ journey in their learning and development”

## On Campus – Student Enquiry Centre first stop shop

- **Enhance student experience/health and wellbeing**
- Physical location/s
- Drop in and email queries
- Student Adviser hub
- Align with other help desks - referrals
- Information management
- Focus on student needs/support for student life - identify trends

## Virtual – Universal Student Support Centre



# What can Cara do?



Ask Cara



**Tell  
Cara**

**Reach  
out**

*... answer questions on day-to-day student life*

- Accessible on web (and WhatsApp)
- Option to transfer to a staff member
- Featured questions based on student journey

*...tell Student Services about day-to-day student life*

- Sentiment analysis – positive, negative, etc
- Summary reports

*...directed to Services - observable*

- E.g. Student campaigns around services for repeat exams

# Ask Cara – web version

Ask Cara



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Friendly and conversational

Predicts the question

Offers follow-up options

Cara, here to help you

### Getting started

Hi! My name is Cara and I'm your new virtual assistant. I'm excited to help you with any questions you might have! I'm learning every day and you can help me learn more so if I can't answer your question, tell me! Go ahead and ask me a question.

- How do I register / When can I register?
- Revised dates for academic year 2021/22
- Return to Campus FAQs
- What is the tuition fee?

Ask your question here

OK, GOT IT

Cara, here to help you

Hey, I'm Cara. What can I help you with?

15:59 I lost my ID

15:59 What is my student ID number?

15:59 What is my Student ID card for?

How do I get my student ID Card?

What if I cannot find my student ID card?

ID CARD DETAILS

What is the student ID Card for?

I lost my ID

Cara, here to help you

16:02 There is a fine of €25 if you do not have your ID card for verification of identity and registration in the exam hall. Please note that the Student Registry Helpdesk opens early in the morning during exam sessions to ensure that students can obtain a replacement ID card in time for the first exam. <https://www.nuigalway.ie/student-registry-helpdesk/our-services/id-cards/> [source]

16:02 Was that helpful?

Yes, looks good!

No

Here are some more options

Show more answers

Email an expert

Provide Feedback

# What can Cara do?

Tell  
Cara

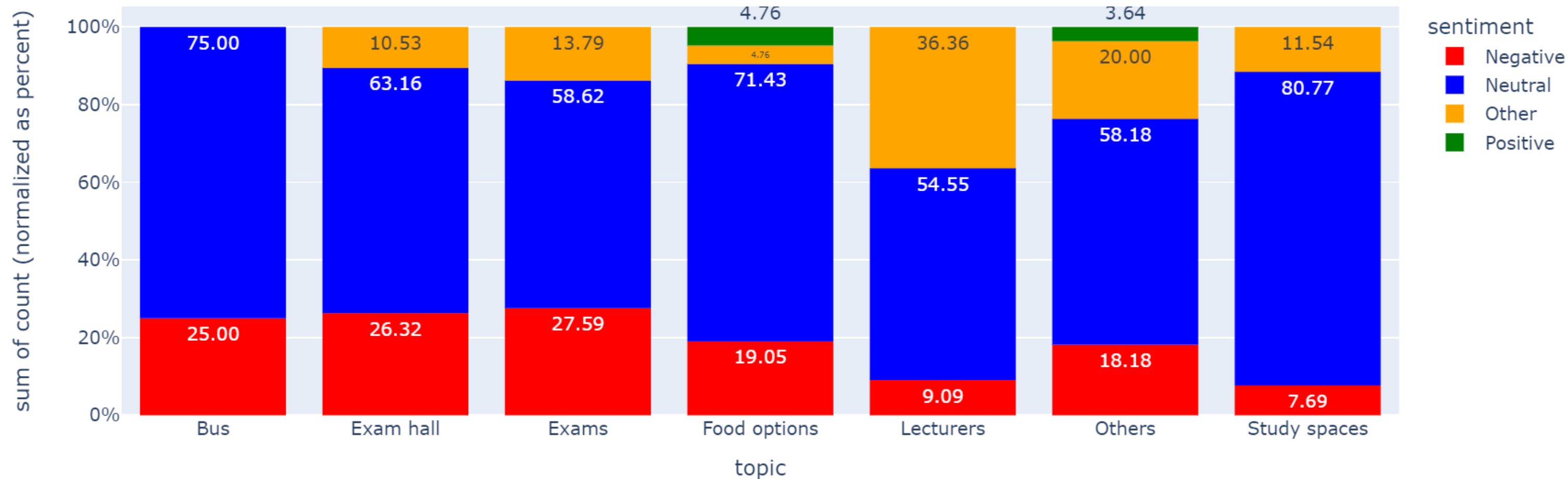


... ask questions on day-to-day student life

## #Iwish Discovery

You can use this section to navigate through the collected feedback during #Iwish campaign.

Topic-Sentiment Distribution (Percentage '%' by topic)





# What can Cara do?

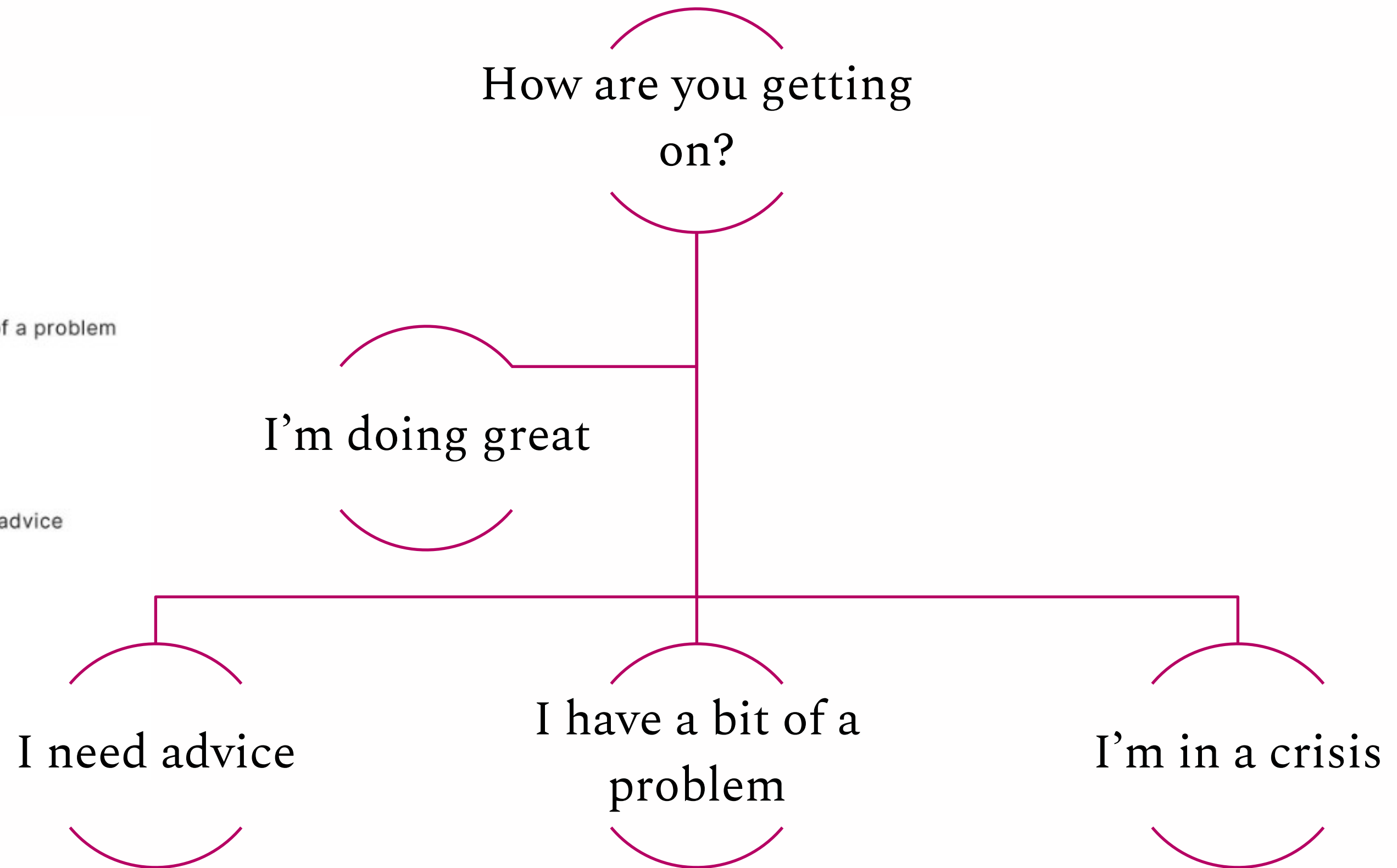
*... connect students with supports available*

**Reach out**



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## SUPPORT WHEEL





# A year of Cara

19,914

Queries Asked

10,963

Generated Answers

7,662

Knowledge Base Answer

2,024

"I don't have a direct answer"

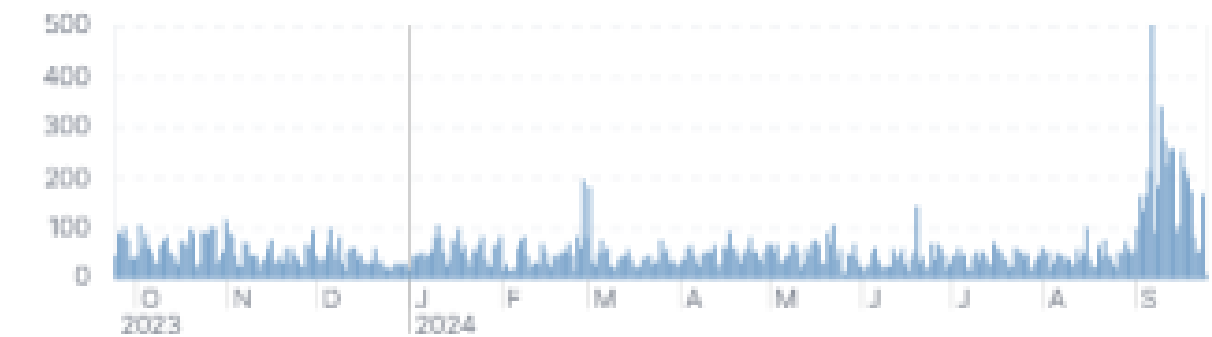
260

Transferred to Expert

Query Volume by Hour



Query Volume by Day



Top Asked Questions

Questions	Count	Last asked
Where can I find my timetable?	420	23:08 - 22/09/2024
I am hoping to start in the University of Galway in September and I have a question	365	14:07 - 28/08/2024
Find private sector Accommodation	298	06:44 - 02/09/2024
Registration Help (2024)	280	21:40 - 19/09/2024
Looking for the campus challenge code?	237	13:32 - 17/09/2024
Fees (2023)	145	17:56 - 11/01/2024
How can I transfer to another full-time undergraduate programme within NUI...	139	18:05 - 17/05/2024
Where can I find my exam results? (2024)	127	00:54 - 08/09/2024
How do I pay my fees?	118	12:12 - 22/05/2024
How do I log onto Eduroam?	116	16:27 - 23/09/2024

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# Ongoing development

- Continuous improvement through machine learning
- Introduction of generative AI/Retrieval Augmented Generation approach - using University of Galway data only
- Integration with student records system
- Personalised Cara – anonymous to confidential option





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Thank *you*



# Key Learning

- Technology has advanced since we started!
- Procurement Process
- Funding – needed a plan beyond the initial proof of concept
- Maintain the steering group
- Invest more time in bringing other services on board
- Development took more time than we anticipated

