Meet Cara

An AI powered virtual assistant for students in University of Galway

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University *of* Galway.ie

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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THE 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

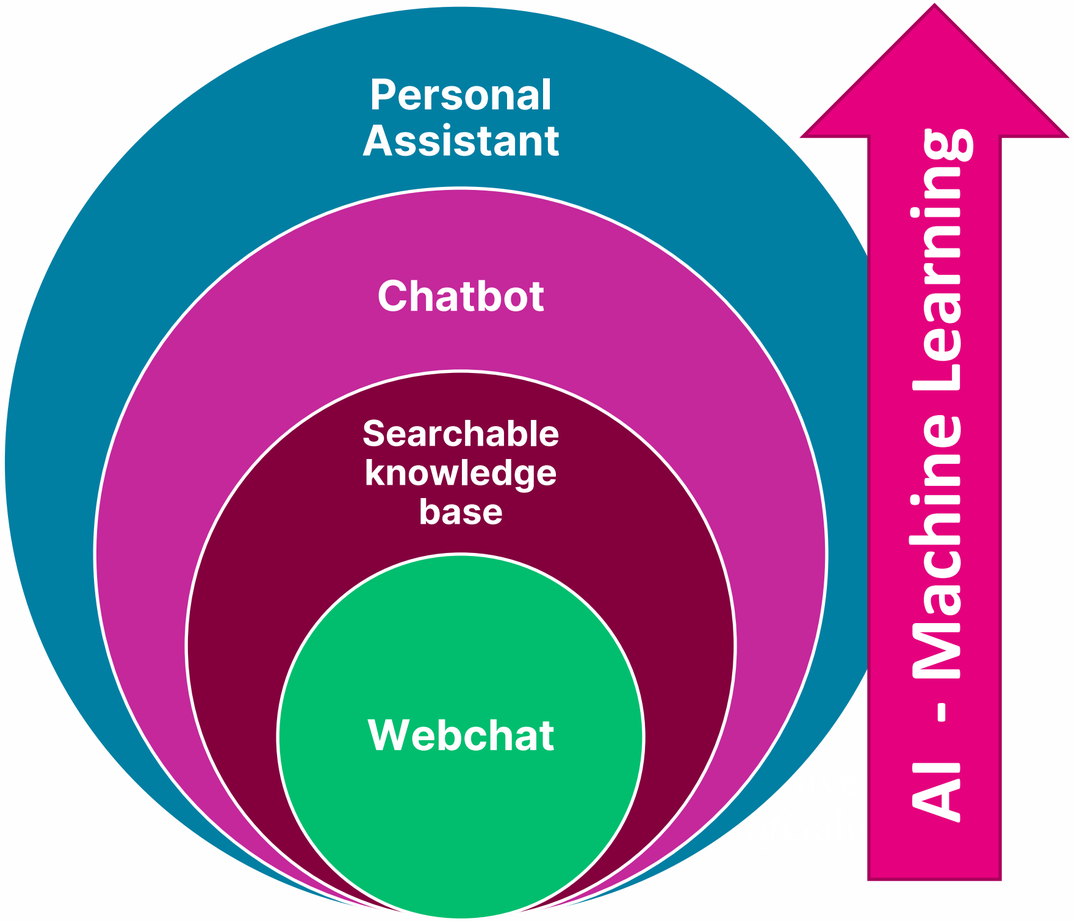
Universal Student Support Centre

"....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?

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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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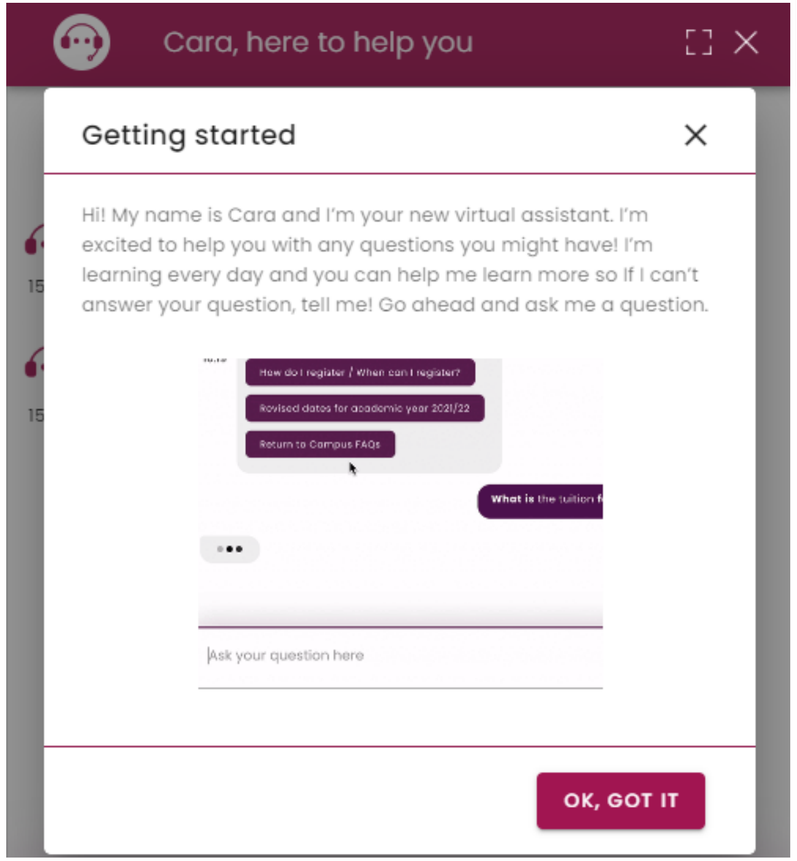
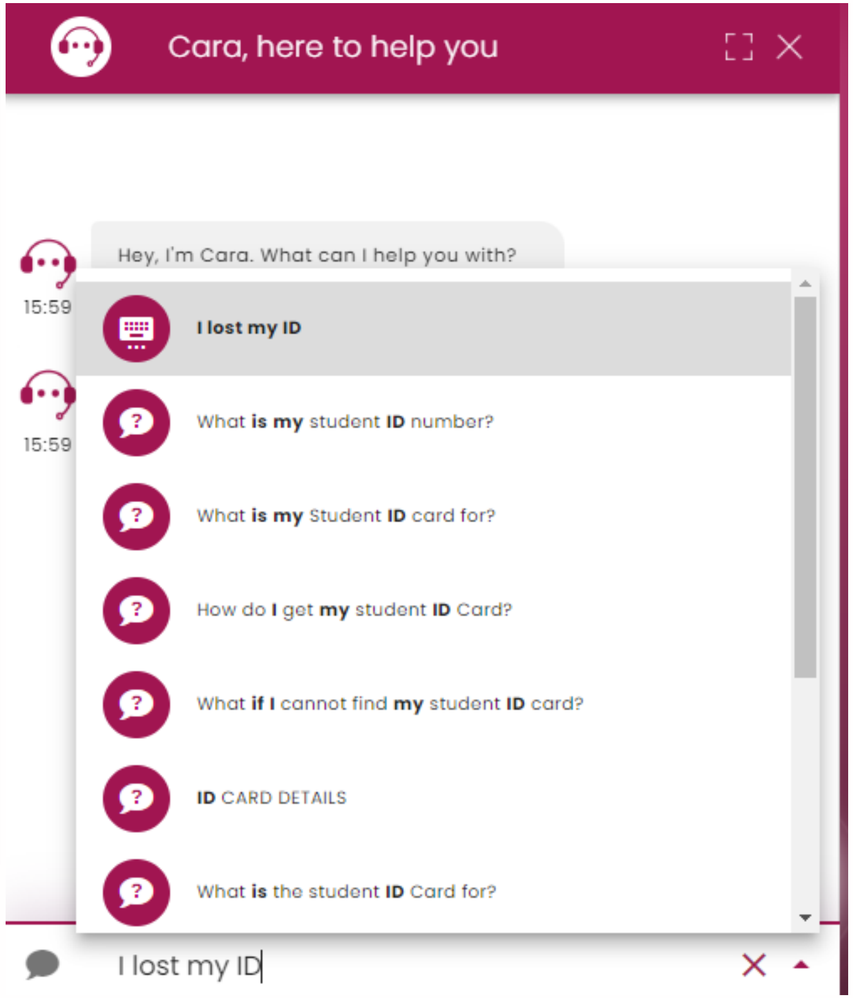
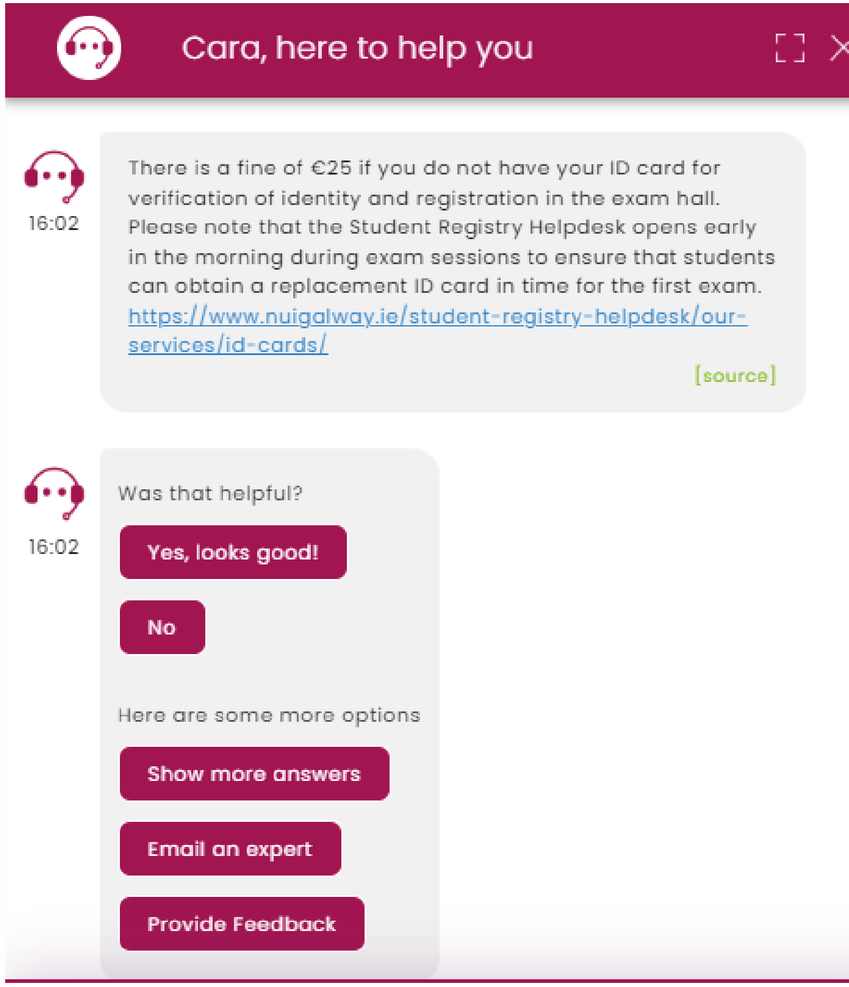
Friendly and conversational



Predicts the question



Offers follow-up options



What can Cara do?

Tell Cara

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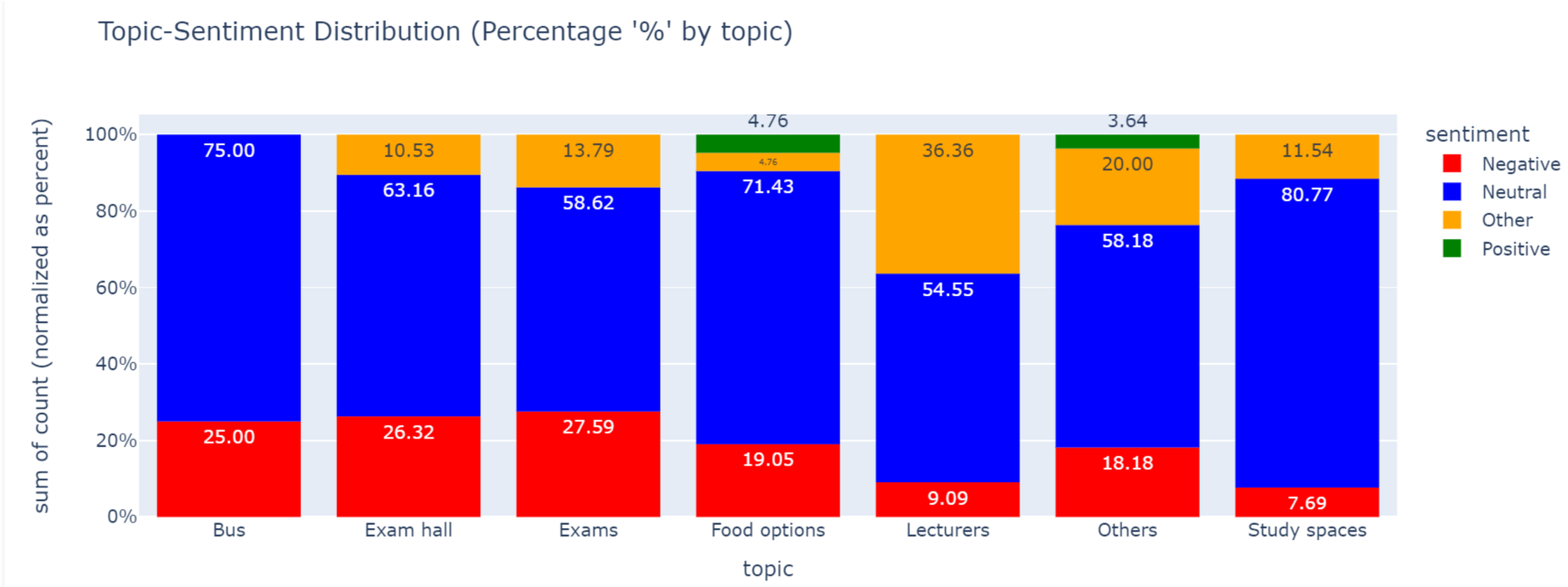
... ask questions on day-to-day student life

#Iwish Discovery

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



What can Cara do?

Reach out

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... connect students with supports available

How are you getting on?

I'm doing great

I need advice

I have a bit of a problem

I'm in a crisis

Cara dashboard

>45% out of hours

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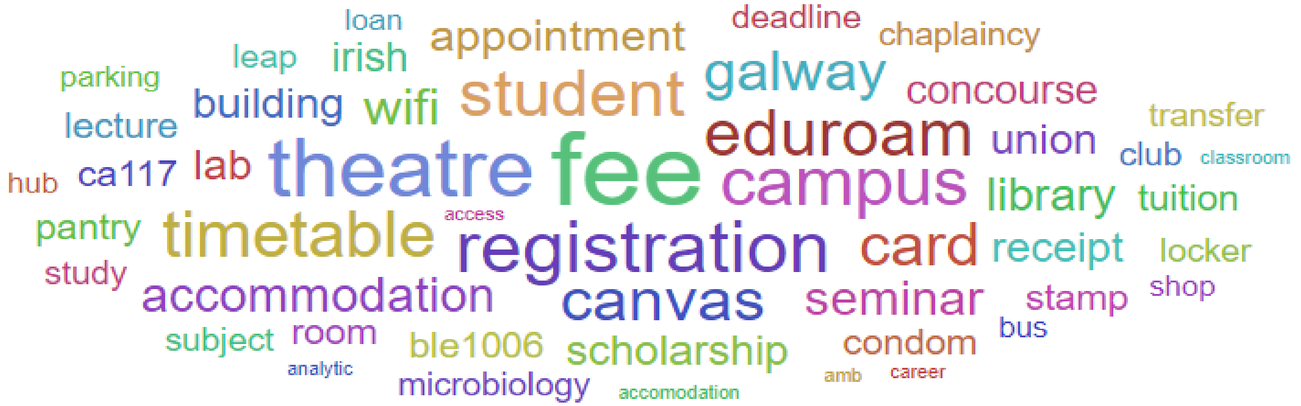
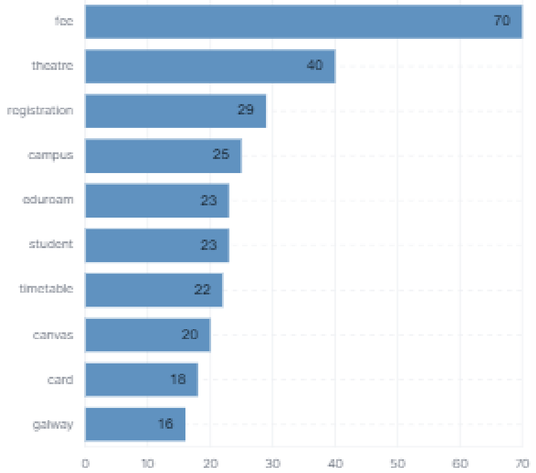
Last 7 days | Refresh

Trending keywords





863
Queries Asked

593
Generated Answers

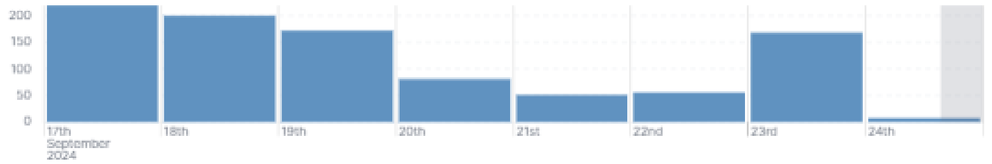
270
Knowledge Base Answer

309
"I don't have a direct answer"

7
Transferred to Expert

Query Volume by Hour

Query Volume by Day



A year of Cara

19,914	10,963	7,662	2,024	260
Queries Asked	Generated Answers	Knowledge Base Answer	"I don't have a direct answer"	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*

Questions?

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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