We are delighted that your son/daughter has been admitted to DCU, and we hope and trust that s/he will find University life to be inspiring and fulfilling over the coming years.

We make every effort to ensure that our new students fully understand the system at the University and that they know how to access the numerous academic resources and personal and professional supports that are available at the University.

We also appreciate that parents may find this phase in their children’s life to be somewhat unfamiliar, and we know that they may sometimes be concerned about their welfare in this new environment. You will no doubt appreciate that our relationship is with the student and that we cannot communicate with third parties, including parents, about them, without the student’s consent. We would, however, like you to be reassured that the University makes every effort to fully understand the system at the University and that they know how to access the numerous academic resources and personal and professional supports that are available at the University.

A New Learning Environment

Studying at university is a totally fresh experience in the learning environment which students will have become accustomed to in secondary school. The new learning environment at DCU is based on a student-centred system which accords young people a competence in research and self-directed learning, and that they can access the numerous academic resources and personal and professional supports that are available at the University.

At university, however, students enter into a new learning environment where they, for the first time, in a practical sense, may have to face challenges which they may have not encountered outside of the classroom. They will be working and engaging with groups of students from different backgrounds, they will be expected to take on new responsibilities, and they will be required to develop new skills.

Students will be encouraged and equipped in developing skills in planning and organizing their time, where they will find presentation and organization skills and, usually, self-confidence. These are skills which graduates of a third-level institution will have developed to a certain extent. This ‘negotiation’ is a system which assists pupils develop a competence in research and self-directed learning, and that they can access the numerous academic resources and personal and professional supports that are available at the University.

A key characteristic of studying at DCU, which is constantly highlighted by our students and graduates, is that our system allows you to provide the support which they need at this time. A brief introduction into life at DCU is designed to help familiarize you with the University environment, with a view to giving you the information that will let you help your son or daughter, especially during the first few weeks at university. A little insight into the system may allow you to support the supply which they need at this time.

Student Support Ethos at DCU

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Although many students make the transition to university life with ease, it may be worth taking note of some of the key milestones in First Year, which will give an indication of how your son/daughter is progressing.

**Key Milestones**

**Choice of Programme**

It is not unusual for a student to find that, despite having accepted his/her first choice of programme, the programme does not match his/her expectations. This will usually become clear very early on and it is crucial that action is taken immediately, as there may be time for alternative options to be considered. Students are strongly encouraged to start the following September without incurring a very significant financial penalty. If they decide to return to DCU in September 2017, they must have submitted withdrawal documentation before 22nd May 2017 at the latest (with the exception of those students who have started their course). Students will be charged fees between €4,000 and €12,000 for the year. If a student does not wish to continue with a programme, s/he must de-register by 27 January 2017 in order to avoid a substantial financial penalty. If a student does not wish to continue with a programme, s/he must de-register by 27 January 2017 in order to avoid a substantial financial penalty.

**Integration / Making Friends**

The second most frequently cited factor for a student not successfully completing his/her first year in university is simply not making friends and integrating into university life. Just imagine what it is like to be walking around a campus with approximately 16,000 other students – and feeling you don’t know anybody! Don’t underestimate the importance of your son/daughter getting to know a few people and taking part in some of the Club and Society life, which is very vibrant at DCU. It is possible to balance studies and social activities – and crucial to get this balance right from the outset.

**Semester One Examination Results**

Many programmes offer continuous assessment throughout the semester, which will help the student gauge how s/he is coping with the subject area. Not all modules (courses) are suitable for continuous assessment, however, and will consist of an end of Semester examination only. Semester One results are the first official indication of how students are faring academically. It is not unusual for First Year students to fail an examination or assessment. It is not an unusual situation, and students are encouraged to get feedback on their performance. Students should contact their lecturers to make an appointment to meet and discuss their examination papers and/or assignments. 27 January 2017 is another key date to be aware of – if a student does not wish to continue with a programme, s/he must de-register by this date in order to avoid a substantial financial penalty.

**Student Support Services**

The University recognise the importance of supporting students through their academic, extra-curricular and personal lives and offers a vast array of student support services which are available to all students, whether they be from Ireland or internationally. Students are always encouraged to speak to their Class Representative, Year Head, personal tutor or Chairperson. Students can also seek support from the following services, which are fully confidential:

- **Access Service**
- **Careers Service**
- **Counselling & Personal Development Service**
- **Disability & Learning Support Service**
- **Financial Assistance Service**
- **Student Health**
- **Chaplaincy**
- **International Office**
- **Media Learning Centre**
- **Sports Development Service**
- **Student Advisory Service**

If students mail student.support@dcu.ie, they will be assisted with any query – academic, personal or financial. Further information regarding the student support services available at DCU can be found at www.dcu.ie/students/index.shtml.

We hope that this information will help your son/daughter during the initial period at university. It is important that both you and the student understand that the University is bound by confidentiality and, under the Third Party Policy, is unable to discuss any issue related to a student with anyone except the student him/herself, unless expressly stated by the student.

-produced by Student Support Development Dublin City University 01 700 7165 student.support@dcu.ie

Dublin City University  Student Support Development