



Mature Student Guide

An informative guide to becoming a mature student in DCU.



Dublin City University
Student Support & Development

Welcome to DCU



This guide details the supports and learning resources which are available within Student Support and Development, which provide you with the information to make an informed decision about returning to third level education. You may be motivated by the chance to embark on a new challenge or a new career or to progress further your existing career or qualifications. Whatever your own motivation, experience or background is, mature students are very much valued and welcomed into Dublin City University.

Dublin City University is Ireland's youngest, most forward-looking university. DCU has an active mature student body, across the Glasnevin and St Patrick's campuses. There are a full range of programmes in the areas of Education, Business, Humanities and Social Sciences, Engineering and Computing, and Science and Health.

DCU recognises that mature students have a wealth of knowledge and experience with which they make a valuable contribution to student life. Mature students add enormously to campus life and make a significant contribution towards the learning experience of all students. Many mature students perform well above average in their studies, as they are highly motivated and can draw effectively on their accumulated learning and life experience to date.

At DCU we work in partnership with students to enable them to reach their full potential. We concentrate on giving our students a rounded university experience that combines excellent tuition with a strong emphasis on practical work, along with an environment that supports students throughout their university experience. Mature students in particular benefit from the excellent support network that includes dedicated workshops and guidance.

We are dedicated to the promotion of lifelong learning and are continually working towards widening entry routes in order to increase the opportunities available to adult learners.

As you embark on a new learning adventure, I wish you the very best in realising your educational and career goals, and I look forward to meeting you at Dublin City University.

Mature Student Officer

Studying as a mature student in DCU

→ What is a “mature student”?

To be considered as a mature student, you must be aged 23 years, or above, on or before 1 January in the year of entry. Mature applicants are assessed on lifelong learning to date, which can consist of studies, work experience, personal interests, or any other relevant experience.

Non-EU applicants aged 23 years, or above, are primarily considered as international applicants (and should apply accordingly), but lifelong learning is also taken into consideration for such candidates.

Classification as a “mature student” applies only to studies up to honours degree level (i.e. undergraduate study). No distinction is made on the basis of age for postgraduate study.





What areas of study are on offer?

DCU offers over 70 programmes in the areas of Education, Business, Engineering and Computing, Science and Health, Humanities and Social sciences. While a small number of courses are part-time or offered at Certificate or Diploma level, the majority are full-time honours degree-level courses.

Among the areas of study typically most popular with mature applicants at DCU are Nursing, Sports Science and Health, Athletic Therapy and Training, Communication Studies, International Relations, Education and Training, and Multimedia. However, mature applicants are invited to apply to any of DCU's undergraduate programmes.

Where can I get information on courses?

The DCU Undergraduate Prospectus gives details of all courses offered at DCU. It also provides information on many aspects of student life at the University. Copies can be requested from the Registry Office at tel: (01) 700 5338 or email: registry@dcu.ie.

The DCU website (www.dcu.ie) is also an excellent source of information. Here, for example, you will find descriptions of subjects offered on each programme and results of recent graduate employment surveys. A dedicated webpage is available at www.dcu.ie/students/mature/index.shtml

Further information for international mature applicants can be found at www.dcu.ie/international. Please consult these pages if you are an international applicant.



What are the entry requirements?

Applying as a mature candidate has advantages, as it means that you do not compete with Leaving Certificate students for places at DCU. Indeed, mature applicants in some cases do not need to have taken the Leaving Certificate.

In the case of mature candidates, “other” experience, apart from experience in examinations, can be taken into consideration – this may be work experience, previous studies, or other such relevant experience. For some programmes it may be necessary to meet specific educational requirements, such as Leaving Certificate Science for Science-based programmes or Higher Level Mathematics leaving certificate for Engineering programmes. You can contact our Mature Student Officer on (01) 700 6987 for further details.

When applying as a mature candidate, it is also possible to be considered under a number of different categories. For example, you can apply as a standard Central Applications Office (CAO) applicant (assessed solely on the basis of leaving certificate results) or under the FETAC Links programme; simply tick the appropriate box on your CAO application form. The DCU Undergraduate Prospectus outlines entry requirements sought from each of these categories of applicant.

If you are not a native English speaker and are applying as a mature student, you will be required to provide evidence of your English language competency before

registering for your programme. If your education at Second Level was through English, this may be considered sufficient proof of competency in English. Details of specific certification sought are available in our Undergraduate Prospectus or on the International Office’s webpages at www.dcu.ie/international.

In all cases, the University will look for evidence of your motivation and ability to make the most of your opportunity to study at DCU.

How long does it take to complete a programme?

The exact duration differs from programme to programme. Full-time degree programmes at DCU typically take 3–4 years to complete. Certificate courses usually take 1 year and Diploma courses 2 years.

When do courses start?

The DCU Academic Calendar runs each year from September until the last week in April. DCU operates on a semesterised basis, with two semesters (or terms) in each academic year. Each semester lasts twelve weeks – twelve teaching weeks followed by two study weeks and a period of examinations.



What level of commitment is required?

Studying for a third level qualification is a major commitment. Full-time students can expect to have on average between 18–25 contact hours a week, consisting of a combination of lectures, tutorials and practical classes.

These can be scheduled for any time between 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. In addition you will be required to do supplementary reading and project work so it is important to factor this in also. Indicative timetables and a copy of the academic calendar can be found on our website at www4.dcu.ie/timetabling/ac-16_17.shtml.

Part-time study typically involves about 8–10 contact hours per week, but don't forget to also factor in time that you will need for travel, study and assignments. Classes for part-time programmes usually take place on weekday evenings and/or on Saturdays. In some cases, students attend classes for a half or a full day at a time. This mode of delivery may suit those currently in employment seeking part-time study. Support from your employer would be required where day-time release to attend lectures is required.

What if I can't commit to attending lectures?

The Open Education Unit based at DCU, offers programmes of study that are delivered by means of distance education.

Distance education uses correspondence texts, supplemented by the Internet and audio-visual media, to teach those who do not wish or who are unable to attend conventional full-time or part-time programmes. Students can therefore work at their own pace and at times best suited to them. Information on programmes delivered by The Open Education Unit is available online at www.dcu.ie/nidl/open-education/unit.shtml or tel: (01) 700 5924 to request a brochure. Applications should be made directly to The Open Education Unit.

Applying to DCU as a mature candidate



How do I apply?

Full-Time and Part time EU Applicants: Application by mature EU candidates for full-time study is through the Central Applications Office (CAO). Application forms and copies of the CAO handbook can be obtained from the CAO (see contact details below). Applications can also be submitted online at www.cao.ie.

Central Applications Office (CAO) Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway Tel: (091) 509800.

The closing date for receipt of applications is 1st February in the year of entry. For information on making a late application please consult our website at:

www.dcu.ie/registry/mature

Transfer Applicants or Advanced Entry: Mature candidates who hold third level qualifications, and who wish to apply for advanced entry to a related DCU course, should apply as transfer applicants by 1st July in the year of entry. Applicants should apply directly to the University using the Undergraduate Studies Direct Application form. Copies of the application form can be requested from the Registry Office at tel: (01) 700 5338 or download a copy at www.dcu.ie/registry/mature.

Non-EU Applicants: Non-EU mature candidates should apply directly to DCU by the 1st July in the year of entry. Please note, however, that programmes are competitive and places are allocated on a continual basis. Students should apply early in order to avoid disappointment. Non-EU applicants to Nursing programmes should apply through the Central Applications Office (see above) by 1st February.

If you are unsure whether you are classified as an EU or non-EU applicant for fees purposes, consult our self-assessment facility at www.dcu.ie/international/eu_status.shtml. Advice is also available from the International Office staff at tel: (01) 700 7411 or email: international.office@dcu.ie.



What happens after I have applied?

DCU shortlists mature candidates for interview for most courses. The interview allows admissions staff to discuss your application in greater detail and to make a final assessment on your suitability for the course. The interview is a two-way process, as it provides an opportunity for you to “sell yourself” and to assess if this is the right programme and university for you.

Interviews typically take place in late April/May/June and official offers are made through the CAO in early July. If you attend for interview but do not secure a place, the Programme Chairs or members of your interview panel will be happy to give you feedback on your interview and application. This can be useful if you wish to reapply.

→ **Please note, mature applicants to Nursing programmes are assessed by An Bord Altranais by means of written assessment and interview, and are ranked for entry to DCU. For further information please consult An Bord Altranais website www.nursingcareers.ie.**



When applying, put effort into your written application and include all relevant personal details here – you might not get the chance to discuss things further if you are not called for interview – paying particular attention to the ‘Statement of Interest’ should really help this process.

How can I maximise my chances of securing a place at DCU?

In order to make the most of your application, it is important to put time into researching DCU and your chosen programme(s) thoroughly. Check the guideline entry requirements for your programme(s) of interest, as this will give you an idea of what is typically required to be in with a realistic chance of securing a place. If you lack knowledge or skills in any particular area, consider enrolling on a relevant Post Leaving Certificate, FETAC, Adult Education or University Foundation course. Alternatively, you might consider taking one or more subjects in the Leaving Certificate; in addition to enhancing your prospects of securing a place, this may help you to successfully progress in your studies after entering DCU.

When applying, put effort into your written application and include all relevant personal details here – you might not get the chance to discuss things further if you are not called for interview – paying particular attention to the ‘Statement of Interest’ should really help this process. You can also request an appointment to discuss your application with the Mature Student Officer at tel: (01) 700 6987.

Support Services and Resources



DCU students benefit from a supportive learning environment that includes personal tutor and peer mentoring systems.

The University's Mature Student Officer is available to offer information and guidance on all aspects of admission as a mature student to DCU. Contact tel: (01) 700 6987 if you have any queries or would like to arrange an appointment to meet or view the campus.

DCU recognises that mature students often face economic, educational or social barriers when returning to or continuing with education. We have therefore developed a range of supports which aims to reduce these barriers. Support is available at the pre and post-entry stages to both applicants and students.

DCU students benefit from a supportive learning environment that includes personal tutor and peer mentoring systems. A range of confidential support services is available to students through Student Support & Development which is staffed by friendly professionals who understand the particular needs and concerns of adult learners.

If you are a mature student with a disability, or have a specific learning difficulty of any kind, the Disability and Learning Support Service can offer specialised support and equipment. It is very important that you make contact with the Disability Service as soon as you have received an offer of a place in order to ensure that any relevant supports can be put in place immediately. Funding is available for the relevant supports from the European Social Fund for Students with Disabilities.

Non-EU mature students can avail of the many services offered by the International Office. These include academic English language support classes, international workshops, regular coffee meetings, and a dedicated orientation programme for international students.

DCU students
choose from
clubs and societies
to help balance
with social life

nts can
m over 120
societies
ance study
outings.



Supports specifically for mature students are available and continue to be developed at DCU. **These include:**

Open Evening for Mature

Applicants DCU's Mature Student Open Evening is an informal information session designed to provide you with an opportunity to find out all you need to know about studying at DCU. Here, you can learn all about courses on offer, get practical tips on how to apply, meet with lecturers from each Faculty, and hear from current mature students regarding their experiences of university life.

Mature Student Academic

Writing Week This is a week long preparatory course delivered in early September for new mature students, the aim of which is to help smooth your transition to university life in DCU. During the Writing Week the student attends workshops on writing academic papers, citing and referencing, best use of technology and resources from the learning support unit, and study skills. It is also an excellent opportunity to meet with other new mature students in advance of the start of semester.

Careers Advisor DCU's Careers and Appointment Service has a dedicated careers advisor who understands the particular concerns faced by, and opportunities presented to, mature graduates when

selecting career paths and entering the workforce. Alongside one-to-one careers advisory meetings, targeted seminars and workshops are offered to all mature students.

Mature Student Society DCU students can choose from over 120 clubs and societies to help them meet new people, develop their interests, integrate into university life, and to help balance study with play. The Mature Student Society is run by students themselves and so its success depends on the participation of all mature students. The Society is a great resource through which mature students can meet peers from other courses, exchange ideas, form study groups, or simply relax over a cup of coffee.

On-Campus Crèche Facilities

For students with young families, DCU's on-campus crèche provides a professional day-care service for infants and young children. Early application is advised. Full-time students without a working partner, who are using the crèche on a full-time basis, can obtain a subsidy from the University's Financial Assistance Service.



Summary of Post-entry Supports available

Academic Writing Week

One to one personal support

Disability, Learning and Academic support

Professional support from Careers Service

Financial support – information and guidance on SUSI, BTEA and SAF

Mature Student Society

Clubs and Societies

Motivation Workshops

Pathways to Success Workshop

Maths Learning Centre

Technology Support – Loop, ISS and Library

On campus crèche facilities

Financing



Entering university as a mature learner opens up a whole new horizon of opportunities. To make this journey as beneficial as possible, you must come fully prepared for this new life. One of the major changes will involve your finances.

It is important to consider what impact being a student will have on your living expenses and how you will fund any increase in costs that may arise.

Will I have to pay fees?

Under the Government's Free Fees Initiative, university tuition fees are covered by the Department of Education and Science for full-time, undergraduate, non-repeat European Union students who have been ordinarily resident in an EU member state for at least three of the last five years. Non-EU nationals who have been granted refugee status, and who have been ordinarily resident in an EU member state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry into the University, may also qualify. Such students pay only a registration fee.

What if I already went to college?

Students who are undertaking a second undergraduate course at third level will not qualify for "Free Fees". This applies regardless of whether or not the student completed the course of study. However, there are two exceptions to this rule:

- 1 Students who hold a National Certificate or Diploma, and who are progressing to a directly related degree programme, may be eligible.
- 2 Where a student did not complete his/her first programme of study, and is now returning to study after a break of five years or more, he/she is classified as a "Second Chance Student". Subject to fulfilling the other general Free Fees criteria above, he/she may be entitled to "fee tuition" for degree programmes.

If you have already completed a course at another third level college, you should include a copy of an academic transcript (i.e results) with your application. If you have withdrawn from a programme without completing it, you should enclose a certificate of attendance showing the relevant dates of entry and withdrawal. This will help to ascertain your eligibility for Free Fees.

The DCU Finance Office publishes updated fees on an annual basis and a fees booklet can be requested at tel: (01) 700 5875 or email: fees@dcu.ie. Details are also posted on the DCU website at http://www.dcu.ie/fees/fees_booklet_2016-17.shtml.



What kind of financial supports are available?

There are only two main external sources of finance (if eligible) that go some way towards helping mature students sustain themselves through the academic year: Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) Student Grant Scheme.

Back to Education Allowance

The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is a scheme for mature students who are in receipt of certain forms of Social Welfare Allowance. Participants receive a standard rate of payment, which is not means tested, and an annual allowance towards the cost of studies. In addition, you may keep any secondary benefits you have under the Supplementary Allowance Scheme. Participants in the BTEA scheme may combine this with a maintenance grant under the Higher Education Grants Scheme (see above). Contact your local Social Welfare office for details or consult the Department of Social and Family Affairs at tel: (01) 704 3000 or visit www.welfare.ie.

DCU Student Assistance Fund

The DCU Student Assistance Fund is operated by the University's Financial Assistance Service. It is aimed at tackling educational disadvantage by providing assistance to DCU

students who may require additional financial support to enable them to benefit fully from their education. The Fund is open to full-time students, with special consideration given to undergraduate students with financial difficulties. Financial support granted by the Fund cannot be used for fee purposes. For details, visit www.dcu.ie/students/finance or tel: (01) 700 6059.

Tax Relief on Tuition Fees

Tax relief at the standard rate of tax can be claimed on tuition fees paid for certain full-time and part-time undergraduate courses of at least 2 years' duration. The relief can be claimed on fees up to a maximum of €5,000 per academic year. For further details, contact the Revenue Commissioners at tel: 1890 333 425 (Dublin) or visit www.revenue.ie.

Additional information for mature students

Accommodation For mature students who wish to live on campus, DCU has apartments available for approximately 1,100 students. Apply online at <http://www.dcuaccommodation.ie/> and contact Campus Residences Ltd. (email: campus.residences@dcu.ie) at the time of applying, indicating your preference.

Sports Scholarships Mature candidates who are talented athletes can apply for the Elite Sportsperson Entry Scheme and the University's Sports Scholarships scheme. Information and application forms are available online at www.dcu.ie/students/sports/scholarships.shtml or from the Registry office at tel: (01) 700 5338 or email: registry@dcu.ie.

Finally, please remember to consider all aspects of your return to education. Have you researched sources of financial support? Have you the support of friends and family? Have you looked into transport links? Are you aware of any periods of work placement or study overseas that your chosen course includes? With careful preparation in advance of applying, followed by plenty of work and dedication once you get here, there is no reason why you cannot match the tremendous achievements of many other mature students who went before you!

Where can I find out more?

DCU Open Days provide prospective students with an excellent opportunity to find out about programmes, view the DCU campus, and meet with students and lecturers from each University department. The Open Days take place in November each year.

DCU's Mature Student Open Evenings are a more targeted event that addresses issues of particular concern to mature applicants. These include how to apply, support services available, sources of financial support, and career prospects for mature graduates.

Both events are advertised on our website and in local and national press.

If you have any general queries regarding study as a mature student at DCU, please contact the Mature Student Officer, at tel: (01) 700 6987.

Useful Contacts

Mature student office	T 01 700 6987 CG78, Henry Grattan Building, Glasnevin Campus
Student advice centre	T 01 700 7165 E student.support@dcu.ie Henry Grattan Building, Glasnevin Campus
Registry Office	T 01 700 5338 E registry@dcu.ie Henry Grattan Building, Glasnevin Campus
Careers office	T 01 700 5163 Henry Grattan Building, Glasnevin Campus
International office	T 01 700 7411 E international.office@dcu.ie
Self-assessment facility	W www.dcu.ie/international/eu_status.shtml
Fees office	T 01 700 8836 E fees@dcu.ie
Central applications office (CAO)	T 091 509 800 W http://www.cao.ie/index.php
SUSI	T 01 700 5163 E support@susi.ie W https://susi.ie/home
DCU open education unit	T 01 700 5317 W http://www4.dcu.ie/nidl/open-education/unit.shtml

DCU Student Support & Development

Counselling

INTRA

Access

Sport

Disability

Advice

Careers

Health

Spirituality