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Changing Programme



Changing Programme.
A Step by Step Guide to
Making the Right Decision

Introduction

If you are reading this booklet, you are probably unsure as to whether you should continue with your current programme or consider changing. You are not the first student to be feeling like this, and you won't be the last, so don't worry!

This booklet outlines a four step approach with practical, easy to follow advice to help you make the right choices. After reading the booklet, make sure to make an appointment to speak to somebody in the University. For information about the best person to contact, email: student.support@dcu.ie

There are many reasons why students feel unsettled, especially during their first year in university, these include

- Struggling with the programme content
- Not settling in to life in third level and the new learning environment
- Unsure about career prospects
- Personal issues

Leaving or changing your programme may seem like an easy solution. However, before you make a decision, it is important that you

- Identify the reasons for feeling uncertain
- Gather information
- Consider your options and
- Understand the implications, including the financial consequences

4 Steps...

1. Identify the Problem
2. Gather Information
3. Research your Options
4. Decide on a Plan of Action



Thinking of Changing Programme? The Steps...

1. Identify the Problem

- Programme / Subject Area?
- Career?
- Settling in?
- Personal?
- Financial?
- Disability / Learning difficulties?
- Other?

2. Gather Information

Seek Advice from

- Chairperson
- Year Head
- Peers
- Careers Service
- Student Advice Centre
- Counselling & Personal Development
- Health Service
- Disability & Learning Support
- Access Service
- International Office
- Chaplaincy
- Family & Friends

Explore Careers Options

- Think about where your studies fit in with your career ideas
- Take self-assessment tests
- Use the resources available

3. Research Your Options

- Continue with your programme?
- Change programme (transfer internally)?
- Choose a different programme in another university/IT?
- Take time out (defer the year)?
- Withdraw from the University?

4. Decide on a Plan of Action

- Draft a plan of action
- Do you need to meet with any members of staff?
- Complete any necessary forms
- Have you checked grant/fee implications?

1. Identify the Problem

Think about your current situation and ask yourself what is making you unhappy. Some students have given the following reasons for wanting to change or leave:

Programme/ Subject Area

It is not what you expected.

The content is too easy or too difficult.

You're not interested in the subject area anymore.

You like some of the modules but not others.

Career

You thought your programme would lead towards a certain profession. Now you feel the programme won't deliver on this and think that another programme might be more beneficial.

You have changed your mind about your career ideas and are now wondering what route you should be taking.

New Learning Environment/ Academic Adjustment

Some students might struggle with adapting to the university learning environment. Common challenges include managing your time, coping with coursework, exams and assignments, knowing how much to study.

Are you finding the level of academic writing difficult?



1. Identify the Problem

Settling-In	Are you feeling homesick, finding it hard to make friends? Is DCU too big or too small or far way from home?
Personal	Do you have any personal/family issues that are making your academic progress difficult? Do you feel out of your depth? Are you trying to balance part-time work, family life and studies?
Financial	Are you having problems paying your tuition fees or essential bills, for example, books, rent, childcare? Are you worried about current finances or going into debt?
Disability / Health	Have you a disability (learning difficulty, mental or physical health difficulty) that you have not yet disclosed? Have you short-or long-term health issues that are affecting your studies?

Hopefully you are starting to identify the reasons for your uncertainty. Think carefully about your current situation. Identify the reasons you want to change or leave your programme. This will help you make an informed decision that's right for you. It will also help you to identify the best person to speak to for more advice.

2. Gather Information

Don't make any hasty decisions. There are a number of things you should do before making a final decision. It's really important that you research your options to get as much detailed information as possible.

A

Seek Advice

Talking to a member of staff can help clarify the issues you face. Within DCU, there are a number of people with whom you can speak. These are outlined below.

Academic Issues

Chairperson: Will give you advice on how the programme progresses from First to Final year, s/he will have a good overview of the entire programme. You can speak to individual module lecturers, if you are concerned about specific modules.

Year Co-ordinators / Year Heads: Meet with your Year Co-ordinator or Year Head to discuss your situation. They may be able to help you, even if your issue is not purely academic.

Careers Service: Meet with a Careers Adviser to discuss your options and career plans.

Student Adviser: Drop in and meet with a member of student support staff and discuss your situation with them in confidence. Areas of assistance dealt with include financial, personal and academic issues. They can offer advice and guidance or point you in the right direction to the appropriate person.

Disability & Learning Support Service: Offers a range of services and supports for all students with a disability (mental health or physical), specific learning difficulty or long term medical condition.

Important:

If possible, continue to attend all lectures, tutorials, lab work, and group meetings until you make your final decision. You may decide that your programme is right at a later stage and therefore should not miss out on any of your lectures and have to try to catch up later.



2. Gather Information

Student Learning: Meet with Student Learning for guidance on the academic skills supports available to you.

International Office: Offers specialised support to international students.

Peers: Talk to the Students' Union or more senior students ahead of you. They will be able to chat about how the programme progresses and maybe even offer some hints and tips.

Personal Issues

Counselling & Personal Development: Seek professional support, input and counselling assistance if you are experiencing personal, family, social, and/or mental health issues that are hindering your academic life.

Health: Do you need medical advice or assistance? The nurses and doctors in the Student Health Centre may be of assistance to you.

Chaplaincy Services: There are Chaplains always willing to listen and speak with anyone who may feel a need to talk privately. There is a Quiet Room in the Inter Faith Centre (Glasnevin Campus) which is a lovely space for meditation and reflection.

Family and friends: May also be a useful sounding board as they know and understand you best.

B

Explore Career Options

Another way to gather information is to think about where your studies fit in with your career ideas. If you are unsure about options with your programme your careers adviser is available to talk them through with you. It's also useful to read the online prospectus and research the careers that may interest you. The following resources will help you.

www.dcu.ie/study (DCU Prospectus) The DCU online prospectus will provide you with information about all undergraduate degree programmes at DCU

What Motivates You and What Careers are You Interested in?

Take the 'what motivates you?' and 'what careers are you interested in?' assessments to identify those things that matter to you most, and to understand more about your interests and the kinds of work that may be suitable for you. Go to 'My Modules' in Loop and select Careers Service. Scroll down to the section called 'Profiling for Success'.

3. Research Your Options



You have a number of options to consider:

- A Continue with your programme
- B Change programme (Transfer internally to another programme within DCU)
- C Choose a different Programme in another University
- D Take Time Out (Defer the year)
- E Withdraw from the University

3. Research Your Options



A

Continue with your Programme

There may be good reasons for continuing with your programme:

Continuing with your programme

There are elements you enjoy.

If you are a First Year student, there may be modules that you have to take, to get a broad grounding in that area. There may also be modules that you find too difficult or too easy. Look at the Academic Structures of your programme in order to see how it progresses through the years: www.dcu.ie/registry/module_programme.shtml

Perhaps you can specialise in a particular area later, allowing you to tailor the programme to suit your interests.

It may be possible to change to a different area at postgraduate level by undertaking a 'conversion course'. A conversion course is a taught postgraduate programme that allows graduates to 'convert' to a new discipline, for example Business, IT etc.

B

Change Programme (Transfer internally to another programme within DCU)

You may want to stay in DCU. It may be possible to transfer internally to another programme within the University:

Questions to ask yourself include

Do you know what you want to study?

Do you know about the programme content and specialisms?

Is there a work placement on the programme?

What are the career areas upon completion of the programme?

Are there any fee implications?

Are you transferring for the right reasons?

Things to do include

Be sure to research the programme thoroughly.

Research the modules and specialisms.

Meet with the Programme Chairperson, Careers Advisers and/or the Student Advice Centre.

Sit in on some lectures (ask lecturers' permission) and talk to students on the programme.

Gather as much information as possible before making a decision.

Students with a disability should contact the Disability & Learning Support Office.

Students who entered via an Access/HEAR route should contact the Access Service.

Procedure

There are **criteria, procedures and cut-off dates for transferring internally**. Be sure to read the documentation. There may also be fee implications.

If you are a student applying for a transfer into 1st Year of another programme in DCU, you must complete the Form at: www.dcu.ie/registry/application_forms.shtml

If you are a student applying for a transfer to a year other than Year 1, you must complete the R10 form at: www.dcu.ie/registry/application_forms.shtml

For information about fees implications, speak to the **Fees staff** and go to www.dcu.ie/fees/index.shtml

As well as an internal transfer, it may be possible to apply via the CAO for another programme in DCU (in the following year). As students enter DCU through different pathways—for example, CAO or direct entry—you need to clarify what the application process would be for you in this case. Check with the Registry to clarify the correct application procedure.

3. Research Your Options

C

Choose a Different Programme in another Institution

You may decide that you want to study at another university or IT:

Questions to ask yourself include

What type of programme am I interested in?

Where do I want to study?

What are the career prospects with the programme?

Are there any fee implications?

Is there travel involved or do I need to get accommodation?

Things to do include

Contact the relevant university or IT to enquire about their application procedures and allow plenty of time to make your application.

Attend Open Days and visit the campus.

Research the programme.

Be sure to seek advice about fee implications and grants before changing.

If you wish to apply to a different programme in another institution for the next academic year, you will need to apply through the CAO and withdraw from DCU before the 'cut-off' date in October. See Academic Calendar for relevant dates: www.dcu.ie/timetabling/ac_18_19.shtml. There will be fee implications, so make sure to speak to the Fees Office or mail Fees at fees@dcu.ie.

D

Take Time Out (Defer the Year)

You may not want to leave or change your programme but decide to take a year out. Should you wish to defer the year, you must complete the 'Application for Deferral of Academic Year Form', available at www.dcu.ie/registry/application_forms.shtml and ask your Chairperson to sign it. Be sure to watch the cut-off dates for deferral. This must be completed before the end of October.

It is advisable to speak to your Chairperson or a member of the Student Support team 'in person' if this option is being taken.

Please note that you cannot defer a full semester, although it may be possible to defer single semester examinations on specific grounds (normally medical). There may be cost implications, however. Speak to the Fees Office to ensure you are clear about the costs before making any decisions.



3. Research Your Options

E

Withdraw from the University

Use your time effectively. If you defer the year, it's best to have a plan of action. You could, for example, develop your skills and experience by getting some part-time work or undertaking voluntary work. Go to www.dcu.ie/careers for more information on CV preparation and networking.

In some cases, for various reasons, some students do not complete their programme. You may be feeling disappointed, angry, upset or lacking in confidence. However, as a result of your time in DCU, you have gained academic experience and developed skills. This is a positive aspect that you can take with you.

Questions to ask yourself include

Am I withdrawing for the right reasons?

Do I know the fee implications?

Have I a plan of action for the year?

Things to do include

Before making a decision to withdraw, speak to a member of staff to discuss your options. You could, for example, speak to a Student Adviser in the Student Advice Centre / Student Services (student.support@dcu.ie) or a Careers Adviser (careers@dcu.ie). You may need advice and guidance on what to do next or the impact that withdrawing will have on your fees in the future, should you wish to return to university.

Make sure you have a plan of action for the year and research application procedures and deadline dates, if relevant.

If in accommodation, check if you owe any money or if you need to pay any bills.

Meet with (or mail) your current Programme Chairperson to let them know you are withdrawing.

Withdrawal Process

In order to withdraw, log into your Student Apps (My Details i-enabler) and withdraw using the link. For information about the implication on your fees in the future, make sure to consult the fees pages at www.dcu.ie/fees/repeat.shtml and also speak to the Fees Office directly.

International students should make contact with the International Office should you wish to officially withdraw from the University, as this impacts on your immigration rights and status.

4. Decide on a Plan of Action

Having examined your reasons for feeling uncertain about your programme, researched your options in detail and sought advice, you are now in a position to make an informed choice about your next steps.

Things to Do

Draft a plan of action - what do you need to do over the next few weeks?

Do you need to complete any forms?

Do you need to meet with any members of staff?

Have you checked out grant/fee implications?

Make sure not to miss any important cut-off dates.

Over to You...



Write down the actions you are going to take as a result of reading this booklet.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Thinking about changing or leaving your programme requires careful consideration. This guide sets out some of the main considerations and options you should take into account. Clarity of thought is essential and it is strongly advised to talk to a member of staff within DCU, including the units within Student Support & Development. There may well be options which you have not yet considered / are not aware of, so please do not make any hasty decisions.



Useful Contacts

After reading this booklet, make sure to make an appointment to speak to somebody in the University. For information about the best person to contact, email: student.support@dcu.ie

Student Advice Centre	T 700 7165 E student.support@dcu.ie www.dcu.ie/students/advice/index.shtml
Careers Service	T 700 5163 E careers@dcu.ie www.dcu.ie/careers
Fees Office	T (01) 700 8836 E fees@dcu.ie www.dcu.ie/finance/fees/index.shtml
Registry Office	T 700 5338 E registry@dcu.ie www.dcu.ie/registry/index.shtml

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Student Support & Development

Learning
Counselling
Experience
Access
Disability
Advice
Opportunities
Health
Spirituality



Log on www.dcu.ie/students
Email student.support@dcu.ie
Call (01) 700 7165
Drop in Student Advice Centre
DCU Glasnevin Campus
Henry Grattan Building

(01) 884 2004
Student Advice Centre
St. Patrick's Campus
Ground Floor (Block C)
Room 101