

**Dear Parent / Guardian,**

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 wide range of academic resources and personal and professional supports that are available at the University.

We also appreciate that parents may find this new phase in their child'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, without the student's consent. We would, however, like you to be reassured that the University makes every effort to fully support students through their academic, personal and professional development.

This brief introduction into life at DCU is designed to help familiarise 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 provide the support which they need at this time.

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→ We have addressed this Guide to 'parents or guardians' but the information may be of interest to partners / friends or anyone who may be in a position to support you, as a student, during your time at the University. Please pass it on to them!



## A New Learning Environment

Studying at university is a totally different experience to the learning environment which students will have become accustomed to at secondary school. The range of subjects which they study at school, the rigid structure and curriculum which is set nationally, the close monitoring of homework and classwork, all form part of a system which assists pupils develop a competence in so many areas which are fundamental to their lives – at a particular point in their lives.

At university, however, students enter into a new learning environment where they focus in far greater depth on one particular discipline, may have fewer contact hours in a classroom setting and are expected to take part in much more intensive independent study and research outside of the classroom. They will be working with groups of students from diverse backgrounds, they will be encouraged to form their own opinions through debate, in-class discussions and additional readings – and will grow in confidence and expertise in their chosen area. Students will be encouraged and supported in developing skills and competencies as varied as teamwork, time management, self-confidence, research methodologies, presentation and organisation skills and, crucially, self-directed learning. These are skills which give graduates of a third level institution a notable competitive edge in their future careers.

In order for the students to reach their own – and the University's – aspirations for them, they must be given the freedom to develop themselves academically, personally and professionally through their years at DCU – and take full responsibility for their own learning. Some students take to this new learning environment very quickly and easily, others find the 'freedom' challenging initially but most, over time, develop these skills and embrace this new type of learning. Either way, the student him/herself must be permitted to negotiate the new territory as an individual and in his/her own way. This 'negotiation' is part of the learning experience which brings about the uniqueness of a third level education.



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### **Student Support Ethos at DCU**

A key characteristic of studying at DCU, which is consistently highlighted by our students and graduates, is the ease with which students can access academic and student support staff, should they require assistance or guidance with their studies. Students are very much encouraged to make contact with staff, seek assistance early, and familiarize themselves with the many developmental opportunities available to them, which will help them in this transition from second to third level education. Members of staff are highly dedicated and committed individuals, who will ensure that students are given every opportunity to excel during their time at DCU.



## Orientation Week for First Year Undergraduate Students (11–15 September 2017)

The Orientation period is designed to help students settle into their new surroundings, admit them into the University - and ensure that they feel somewhat at ease before starting their chosen academic programme the following week.

During this period, students receive a comprehensive induction programme - both from the central Student Support Units and the School within their Faculty. They will receive various important publications from the University, which will provide them with information about their new environment – and set them on the right track prior to commencing lectures.

- **The A-Z of Life at DCU, which explains 'everything there is to know about DCU' and which is a really useful reference during their first year at university (online)**
- **A First Year Student Diary and Planner, which includes important submission dates / cut-off dates etc. – this keeps the students on-track, as they become acquainted with the new system**

Students will also receive information about the **Clubs & Societies** at DCU, which outlines all of the social and personal developmental opportunities available to the student and which are a key part of university life.

During Orientation Week students will have their first meeting with the Chairperson of their academic programme, who will discuss the overall aim of the programme and introduce the students to some of the Faculty members. They will receive information about the academic structure of their programme, information about timetables, details about their Personal Tutor or Year Head in the relevant School and Reading/Book Lists.





→ Although many students make the transition to university life with ease, it may be worthwhile 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 received 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 ways of transferring internally or, if this is not an option, at least keeping the door open for a fresh start the following September without incurring a very substantial financial penalty. A key date to remember is **October 31 2017**. This is the date by which students must have submitted relevant documentation, should they be seeking a withdrawal from the University. After this date, they will be liable for fees (between €4,000 and €12,000 for the year), should they return to university in September 2018 or thereafter.

### 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 through 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 crucial, however, that they speak to their lecturers to get feedback on their performance. Students should contact their lecturers by email to make an appointment to meet and discuss their examination papers and/or assignments as soon as the results are published.

→ **January 26 2018 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 avail of 'half free fees' should s/he return to third level education in the future.**

## Student Support Services

The University recognises the importance of supporting students through their academic lives and offers a vast array of student support services where they can avail of advice or guidance in personal, professional or academic matters. Students are always encouraged to speak to their Chairperson, lecturers, Personal Tutor or Year Head – but can also avail of the following services. All new students receive details about these services during their Orientation period:



Access Service

Careers Service

Counselling & Personal  
Development Service

Disability & Learning Support Service

Financial Assistance Service

Learning Support Service

Student Health

Inter Faith Centre

International Office

Maths Learning Centre

Sports Development Service

Student Advice Centre

If students mail [student.support@dcu.ie](mailto: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](http://www.dcu.ie/students)

The full academic calendar for the year 2017/2018 is available at: [www4.dcu.ie/timetabling/ac\\_17\\_18.shtml](http://www4.dcu.ie/timetabling/ac_17_18.shtml).

We hope that this information will help you support your son/daughter during the initial period at university. It is important that both you and the student understands 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.

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# A brief guide to life at Dublin City University For Parents and Guardians



**SS&D**  
Student Support  
and Development