

DCU

Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Mature Student A guide to becoming a mature student at DCU

Applying to DCU as a mature student

This guide details the supports and learning resources which are available within Student Support & Development (SS&D), 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.

A welcome from DCU

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. In addition to which, 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 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 Advisor
maturestudents@dcu.ie

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 and volunteer experience, personal interests, or any other relevant experience.

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.

Non-EU applicants aged 23 years or above, and intending to apply as a mature student, should also apply via the CAO.

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 second level education was through English, this may be considered sufficient proof of competency in English.

If you have questions about whether you qualify for [fees](#) at the EU rate or the non-EU rate, you can check with [DCU Fees Assessment](#).

Only applicants to undergraduate programmes are considered to be mature students. No distinction is made on the basis of age for applicants to postgraduate degrees.

What areas of study are on offer?
DCU offers over 70 undergraduate 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 more 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.

The [DCU website](#) 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. There is also a

dedicated [DCU Mature Students website](#) which has news and information useful throughout your DCU career.

For mature applicants, 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. Some applicants for a mature place at DCU have completed their Leaving Certificate exam but did not get the points required for their preferred course, and some applicants have never completed the Leaving Certificate exam at all.

In the case of mature applicants, 'other' experience can be taken into consideration – this may be work experience, previous studies, or other relevant experience. For some programmes, it may be necessary to meet a specific educational requirement, such as a specific grade in a Leaving Certificate science subject (or the QQI/NFQ equivalent) for science-based programmes, or a higher level Mathematics Leaving Certificate grade (or equivalent) for engineering programmes. This information will be available on the DCU programme page, or email maturestudents@dcu.ie or call 087 061 8141.

What level of commitment is required?

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

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](#) typically 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.

Exams 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.

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 can 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 may be necessary where your classes take place during your working hours.

How do I apply?

Mature candidates for DCU can apply via the [Central Applications Office](#)

(CAO). All documents should be sent to the CAO directly, including your Statement of Interest. The closing date of application is usually February 1st.

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](#)

Making your application

When applying, put effort into your written application and include all relevant personal details relevant to your interest in the programmes you are applying for, and what it is about your background and experiences which makes you a good candidate for those programmes. Pay special attention to

the Statement of Interest which is part of the CAO application.

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.

Support Services and Resources **Student Support & Development (SS&D)**

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 pre- and post-entry stages to applicants and to students.

DCU students benefit from a supportive learning environment that includes personal tutor and peer mentoring systems. DCU students also 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 \(SS&D\)](#) which is staffed by friendly professionals who understand the particular needs and concerns of adult learners.

Mature Student Advisor

The University's Mature Student Advisor is available to offer information and guidance on all aspects of admission as a mature student to DCU. Contact maturestudents@dcu.ie or call 087 0618141 for support.

Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS)

If you are a mature student with a disability, or have a specific learning difficulty of any kind, the [Disability and Learning Support Service \(DLSS\)](#) 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 by SS&D, including writing workshops to help improve academic English writing, and a dedicated orientation programme for international students.

Head Start

The [Head Start Programme](#) is a dedicated on campus and online event designed to support mature students as they transition into higher education. Whether you're returning to study after a break, balancing family and work commitments, or simply looking for guidance, Head Start equips you with the skills and confidence to thrive at university.

This free programme offers Academic Skills Workshops to help you improve essay writing, research, and critical thinking, Time Management & Study Strategies to support you in balancing study with other responsibilities, IT & Library Skills workshops to give you a hands-on experience with essential university tools and resources, and Peer Support & Networking to facilitate connection with fellow mature students and build your support system. Head Start ensures you begin your

Careers Service

The [Careers 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.

The Mature Student Society

DCU students can choose from over 100 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 Creche 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. Students may be able to obtain a subsidy from the

[Student Financial Assistance Fund \(SAF\)](#).

For further queries

Student Advisor (Mature & FE)

T: 087 061 8141

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Dublin 9

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