



STUDENT HANDBOOK

School
of
Communications



Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

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Updated: September 2024



Dear students,

A very warm welcome to all our students who have just joined – or are re-joining – DCU's School of Communications.

We are a vibrant and dynamic community situated at the heart of the DCU Glasnevin campus. The School of Communications at DCU has an internationally recognised reputation for teaching and research excellence in media, communications and journalism, and our staff includes leading academic scholars and experienced industry professionals. With a tradition stretching back over 40 years, today we are home to almost 1,000 students studying undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, as well as undertaking doctoral research.

This handbook provides you with the basic information needed to navigate your programme and to find the resources that you need in your daily studies. It also has important sections on writing, which is one of the key skills needed to achieve success in your chosen programme. It is important that you familiarise yourself with the information contained in this handbook.

It is also important to check your DCU email daily for messages from lecturers and the School, and to check the online resources available on the DCU's main website and on the School of Communications web page: <https://www.dcu.ie/communications>

Disclaimer: Though every effort has been made to ensure that this document is accurate and up-to-date, it should not be taken as legally binding. All current academic regulations are outlined in the University's Marks & Standards document. In the event of a discrepancy between this handbook and Marks & Standards the latter shall take precedence.



For announcements and to share your own updates,
follow the School on Twitter **@DCU_SoC**



HOW WE'RE ORGANISED

The School of Communications is home to three undergraduate programmes, eight postgraduate programmes, and it also delivers the Media Studies subject of the BA Joint Honours programmes. Each programme (or subject in the case of Media Studies) is overseen by an academic staff member or programme chair. Each programme also has a code, e.g. "MMA" for the BSc in Multimedia, which will be useful for accessing your timetable.

Undergraduate Programmes

Programme	Chair		Room	Phone
BA in Communication Studies (CS)	Dr Roderick Flynn	roderick.flynn@dcu.ie	C128	01-7008355
BA in Journalism (JR)	Dr Dawn Wheatley	dawn.wheatley@dcu.ie	C175	01-7006331
BSc in Multimedia (MMA)	Dr Marcos Dias	marcos.dias@dcu.ie	C153	01-7006961
Media Studies (BAJ)	Dr Eileen Culloty	eileen.culloty@dcu.ie	CA110 2	01-7006994

Postgraduate Programmes

Programme	Chair		Room	Phone
MSc Climate Change	Dr Dave Robbins Dr Declan Fahy	david.robbins@dcu.ie declan.fahy@dcu.ie	C148 C130	01-7006567 01-7006567
MA Documentary Practice	Tom Burke	tom.burke@dcu.ie	C127	01-7005330
MSc in Emerging Media (MSEEM)	Dr Andreas Rauh	andreas.rauh@dcu.ie	C142	01-7008361
MA in Journalism (MAJ)	Dr Dave Robbins	david.robbins@dcu.ie	C148	01-7006567
MA in Political Communication (MAP)	Prof. Mark O'Brien	mark.obrien@dcu.ie	C158	01-7008452
MSc in Public Relations and Strategic Communications (MSCPR)	Madeline Boughton	madeline.boughton@dcu.ie	CA110 8	01-7008650
MSc in Science and Health Communication (MSC)	Dr Declan Fahy	declan.fahy@dcu.ie	C130	01-7007027
MA in Social Media Communications (MSMC)	Dr Tanya Lokot	tanya.lokot@dcu.ie	C160	01-7008595



WHO TO CONTACT

Your point of contact for information or advice depends on the nature of your query.

- For **specific questions relating to a module**, your first port of call is the lecturer that teaches that module, either during/after class where there is on-campus delivery (by asking questions), or by emailing the lecturer to book an appointment. Our lecturers have office hours for appointments posted on their doors. If you are in a tutorial, the tutor might be able to assist you.
- If it is something that **concerns the whole class** (like a clash of assignment deadlines), bring it up with your elected class representatives, rather than having a lot of people contact the lecturer with the same point. For group issues that concern more than one module, the class representatives should speak to the year head, who may then liaise with your programme chair.
- If it is a **personal matter**, students should contact the chair of their programme.

A good general resource for information is the Student Advice Centre: <https://www.dcu.ie/advice>

THIRD PARTY CONTACT

Contact between lecturers and third parties – e.g. parents / guardians is governed by the university's 'Contact with Third Parties' policy.

Upon registering with the university, each student enters into a contact with the university and the relationship that exists is between the student and the university – regardless of the fact that parents / guardians may have paid fees. Therefore should any issues arise the university will deal solely with the student unless the student gives prior written permission for the university to divulge any and all information to parents / guardians. In other words, the student is required to waive their right to confidentiality.

Note that in the case of emergency the university may contact parents / guardians without any written permission being required from the student.

Should your parents / guardians wish to contact the university about an issue they must initiate the contact through the Student Support Office: E: student.support@dcu.ie



USING EMAIL

Email will be one of the most important means of communication outside of your classes. You are expected to use e-mail in a **professional manner** and refrain from any comments which could be regarded as disrespectful or offensive. Emails can be easily misunderstood and, therefore, it is important to ensure that the message conveys the intended tone (i.e. professional, friendly, courteous). Think of your correspondence over e-mail as practice for the work environment after university. It is important that you follow these guidelines:

- Before mailing, think about whether you can find what you need on Loop, on the DCU website, or by asking a question in class. Don't send the same request for information to more than one person at once;
- Always use your @mail.dcu.ie account for DCU business;
- Insert a relevant subject line, including your programme and/or the module name.
- Begin the e-mail with a salutation (e.g. Dear Michelle, or Dear Professor/Dr Byrne ...).
- In the body of the e-mail, state who you are (e.g. student in the relevant module); explain the purpose of your e-mail, make a polite request, thank the receiver and sign off properly (e.g. Kind regards, Best wishes);
- Adopt a friendly and personable tone. Do not write anything that you would not be happy for everyone to see or that you would not say to the recipient's face;
- Proof-read your e-mail before you send it. Do not give the impression that you do not wish to take the time to write properly;
- Do not use text abbreviations such as 'b4', 'gr8' etc. in an email and avoid slang.

Do not expect an instant or very quick response to your email, especially if it is not that urgent. Lecturers will respond to you when they get the chance so be patient before sending follow-up emails. Remember that lecturers are not expected to answer your emails outside of working hours or during holiday periods.



REGISTERING AND CHANGING MODULES

Some of your modules are “core”/compulsory – which means you must take them – while others are optional (also known as electives). During each year of your programme, you will be required to undertake the compulsory modules and a number of elective modules. You need to register your choice of modules for both semesters at the beginning of the academic year in September.

You may change your choice of elective modules during Week 1 of Semester 1 and Week 1 of Semester 2. This can be done **through your portal page**. Note that some production modules may not allow a change of mind. Also, bear in mind that lecturers are not able to make special arrangements for you if skip or miss classes. It is your responsibility to catch up with the material and any class requirements during the weeks missed.

MAKING SENSE OF YOUR TIMETABLE

You can find your timetable at <https://opentimetable.dcu.ie/>.

Search for “programme of study” on the left, and enter your programme code (see table on page 4).

Most on-campus lectures take place in the Henry Grattan building. This building has an identifier code of “GLA.C” (the GLA prefix refers to the Glasnevin campus where all your classes are based). A code beginning with CG means that the room is on the ground floor, C1 means it is on the first floor, and so on. C2 means it is on the second floor.



The image shows the DCU Open Timetable interface. The main view displays a weekly schedule for Week - 1, starting from 08:00 to 22:00, Monday to Friday. A search filter is set to 'Programmes of Study' with 'cs' selected. A specific module, CM206[1]L1/01, is highlighted in a red box on the timetable, with a red arrow pointing to a detailed view of this module. The detailed view shows the following information:

- Module code:** CM206[1]L1/01
- Building/room:** GLACG86
- Practical:** CM206[1]P1 GROUP 1
- Location:** GLAC100B, GLAC107
- Course:** CM206[1] PHOTOGRAPHY AND IMAGING
- Date:** 24/09/2019
- Day:** Tuesday
- Time:** 14:00
- Duration:** 2h
- Days:** 1-6, 8-12
- Lecturer:** Jurisic D, O'Callaghan D

PORTAL PAGE

Your portal page is your personal homepage on the DCU website. It includes information about your timetable, your registered modules, and much more. Just go to <https://www.dcu.ie/iss/Student-My-Page.shtml>, and enter your DCU account username and password.



ATTENDANCE

Attendance at class should be regarded as compulsory. Students who do not attend classes regularly are likely to have poor grades or, indeed, fail. Individual lecturers are not required to issue warnings to students with poor attendance records. The responsibility for attending class lies solely with you. Although a formal roll call or sign-in sheet is not always used, lecturers do note student attendance patterns. Good time-keeping, regular attendance and active participation in workshops/seminars are required of all students. In addition, you should note that it is your responsibility to keep up with the progress of the course. If you are unable to attend classes you should inform the lecturer of this, find out from classmates what you missed, and make sure you get access to any course materials given out during your absence.

CLASSROOM AND SOCIAL MEDIA ETIQUETTE

Classroom etiquette rules:

- Arrive on time for your lectures and tutorials. If you are late, inform the lecturer or tutor the reason why you are late. Any absences must be explained and certificates presented to lecturers/tutors if provided (e.g. medical certificates)
- Be polite. Both lecturers/tutors and students should treat each other with mutual respect. Don't chat when the lecture is taking place, and don't take pictures or record the lecture in any form unless you have explicit authorisation from the lecturer/tutor to do so. **Respect the opinion of others and encourage constructive dialogue.**

Social media etiquette rules:

- **Think before you post.** Assume everything posted online is public even if it is marked as private. Once content is online, it can be easily copied and redistributed beyond your control. Your conduct online can have serious implications for your future careers and posting inappropriate content can lead to criminal prosecution.
- **Do not post inappropriate comments, images or audio/video recordings about your fellow students or lecturers/tutors on social media channels** (connected to DCU or not). Any material posted that is conducive with bullying, threatening, harassing or that is defamatory will be treated seriously and may be subject to penalties and/or be referred to the Disciplinary Committee of the University.



LOOP

Loop is DCU's online learning environment where lecturers can provide digital access to course material and activities such as discussion forums, class exercises, online quizzes and assessment feedback. Note that any grades issued via Loop are provisional.

It is important that you check at the start of semester, and especially after any changes to optional module choices, that you are able to access all of your current registered modules on your Loop page. Inability to access module resources can seriously impede your progress and participation. Address this with your lecturer or the ISS Helpdesk, if modules are not showing correctly.

Lecturers will inform you about the requirements for their module and the resources available either on Loop or offline, including assessment submission. It is essential that you become comfortable with this environment as soon as possible, as it will be used throughout your studies at DCU. Go to <https://loop.dcu.ie/login/index.php> to get started.

REFERENCES FROM ACADEMIC STAFF

If you require a reference letter from a lecturer or programme chair, you should notify them as early as possible via email. Make clear: (i) the purpose of the reference and to whom it should be addressed/sent to; (ii) the deadline by which it must be sent. In your email you may refer to some specific details about your work/experience which you think might be relevant but note that the lecturer has full control over what appears in the letter.



PROGRAMME REGULATIONS & PROGRESSION

Each programme is governed by the university's rules and regulations (Marks & Standards) and its own programme specific regulations, all of which are viewable at

<https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/academic-governance-and-administration>

Previous Element Contribution (PEC)

A core part of programme regulations relates to the 'weighting' attached to each year of study. For undergraduate students registering for first year from 2022/23 onward the following proportion of each year will contribute to the calculation of their final degree classification:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
CS	10%	30%	60%
JR	10%	30%	60%
MMA	10%	40%	50%

All other students will have their precision mark calculated according to third year constituting 100%.

Progression

You are required to pass all the modules required by your programme to move from one year to the next, and to graduate. Depending on the module, that means continuous assessment, also known as CA (essays, practical projects and other deliverables), a formal exam, or a combination of both. The module lecturer — sometimes with assistance from tutors or external examiners — will assess your work and decide on a mark from 0 to 100% (see grading structure below for more information). That mark will be considered and approved by the programme board (in this case it adopts the name Progression and Award Board, or PAB), and finally by the university's Academic Council.



Credits

Each module that you undertake is worth a specific number of ECTS credits (2.5, 5, 10 or 30). 'ECTS' is the commonly used abbreviation for 'European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System'. This system is used within the European Union as a basis for transferring and accumulating credits undertaken in member states.

Each programme has a specific number of credits that you need to achieve before completing it. Typically, you will expect to complete five or six modules in a semester in an undergraduate programme. Students typically complete 60 ECTS credits in any given year. For example, to complete the BSc in Multimedia programme, students must complete 60 ECTS credits per year (to achieve a total of 180 credits)

For Masters programmes, students might have the option (depending on the programme) of completing their programme on a full-time basis or a part-time basis to achieve the necessary credits. For example: To achieve the award of MSc in Climate Change: Policy, Media and Society, students must accumulate a total of 90 ECTS credits: 60 from the taught modules, and 30 from the Research Methodology and Dissertation modules. Students might also have the option (depending on the programme) of an exit award. Having successfully completed 60 ECTS credits of taught elements, students may choose to exit from the programme with a Graduate Diploma in Climate Change: Policy, Media and Society.

DEADLINES AND DELIVERY

The deadlines for continuous assessment (CA) assignments are set by the lecturer. Extensions / late submissions are facilitated at the discretion of the lecturer. Lecturers who do accept late work are bound by School of Communications policy as follows:

- For every day late (including Saturday and Sunday), 5% is deducted from the mark before it is issued to you;
- No work will be accepted if it is more than 5 days late.

Individual lecturers will specify the method of delivery (such as e-mail or Loop) for all assignments.



You must keep copies of all your work, either in physical or electronic format. Occasionally an external examiner may decide to re-examine work submitted previously. It is, therefore, important that you retain copies at least until marks for the academic year (at the end of semester 2) have been officially published. Ensure that you have at least two separate electronic backups of any work that you have submitted for assignments.

Note that every assignment must be accompanied by your signature on the academic integrity / plagiarism declaration available on your portal page. Submissions made via Loop will include an electronic equivalent of the academic integrity / plagiarism declaration form, which you are required to indicate your agreement with when uploading an assignment there.

DEADLINE EXTENSION

If you are ill, suffered a bereavement, or other serious circumstances beyond your control that prevent you completing an assignment on time, you should contact your lecturer as soon as possible to seek an extension. In the case of other personal circumstances, it is up to the individual lecturer's discretion. You should contact them as far in advance as possible and explain your reason for seeking the extension.

GRADING STRUCTURES

The grading at university level is quite different to what students experience in school. For example, while 90%+ might have been achievable in school, top grades in university are more typically in the low/mid-70s, and will only go above 80 for outstanding work.

Note that **any grades issued on Loop are provisional**, and students should not take them as the final grade. Final grades will be released approximately eight weeks after the teaching semester is finished.

Numerical marks, both in individual modules and in overall year and degree results, are translated into grades as follows:



UNDERGRADUATE GRADES	
70%+	First class honours (H1)
60-69%	Second class honours, Grade I (H2.1)
50-59%	Second class honours, Grade II (H2.2)
40-49%	Third class honours (H3)
under 40%	Fail

MASTERS' GRADES	
70%+	First Class Honours (H1)
60-69%	Second Class Honours, Grade I (H2.1)
50-59%	Second Class Honours, Grade II (H2.2)
40-49%	Third Class Honours (H3)
under 40%	Fail

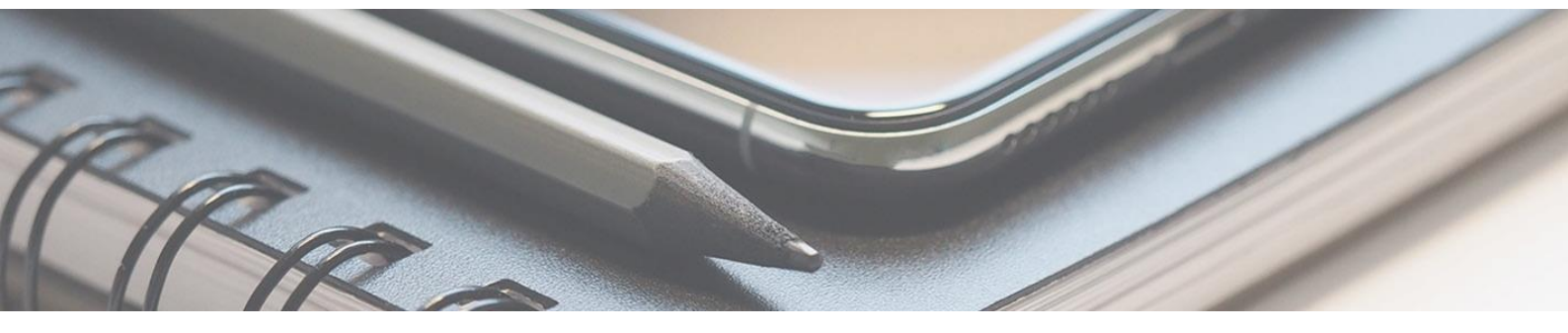
Undergraduate students who narrowly fail one or two modules in any year **may** be eligible for compensation (award of a pass on a module without reaching 40%) if their other marks are good enough. See the section on COMPENSATION below. Masters students are not eligible for compensation.

WHAT YOUR MARKS MEAN

Work in exams, essays and projects is marked using the following standards. Note that these are broad criteria and each module – and particularly continuous assessment projects – will also have more specific criteria but will follow the criteria below for their theoretical components (the lecturer might provide specific assessment guidelines for the practical components).

First Class (70%+): The answer contains all relevant information and has a coherent, logical and precise argument. It also shows an awareness of the broad and more subtle implications of the issues. There is evidence of wide knowledge and reading, an understanding of the issues and a critical analysis including original and fresh insights into the problem.

H2.1 (60-69%): The question is approached in a confident manner, the issues are identified, evidence and reading are used and some awareness of broader issues is displayed. There is



some critical analysis but lacks the poise and fluency of a first-class answer.

H2.2 (50-59%): There is a solid answer which grasps the material but does not always recognise the broader implications. Whilst it shows some intelligent application and understanding it lacks a clear grasp of the critical analysis required.

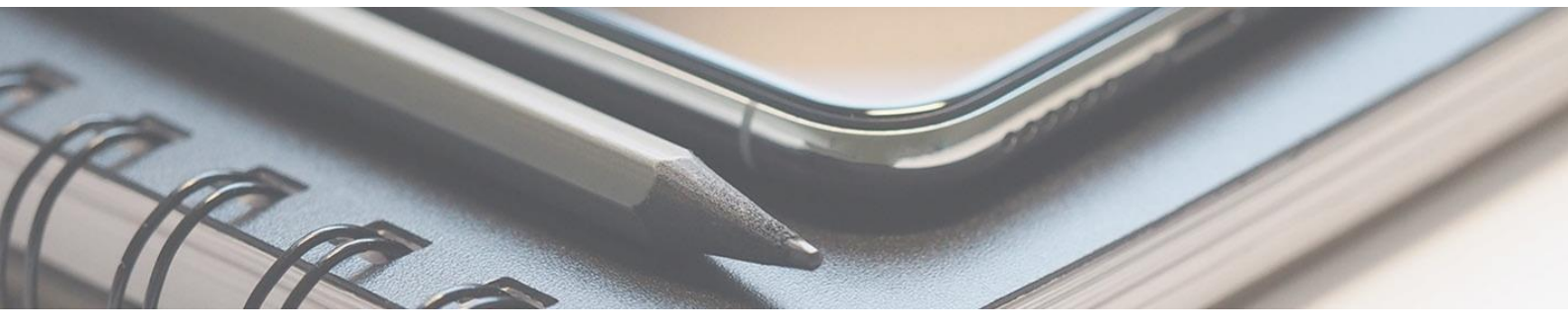
H3(40-49%): Shows some basic knowledge but there is difficulty in comprehending the material in general and the question in particular. Critical analysis and awareness of the broader implications and subtle issues in the debate is lacking. Weak development of argument, showing little evidence that substantial work was carried out by student. Barely adequate.

Fail (0-39%): Little, if any, evidence of a grasp of the basic course material – a simplistic approach to the question, disorganised, insufficient material and awareness of reading. Shows no awareness of the issues and related debates. May well contain errors of fact and understanding.

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

If you feel your performance in an exam or assignment was affected by circumstances outside your control (such as illness or family bereavement), you can request the programme board to take account of these circumstances by submitting an extenuating circumstances form. The detailed advice and the form (**the R-30 form**) for making an application form can be found on the DCU Registry website. You submit the form to Registry, who then inform the relevant programme chair. Note that you must make this request before the programme board meets to decide on marks – do not wait until your semester marks have been notified to you. You can make the request to the lecturer, your tutor, the programme board chair or to the Examinations Office in Registry.

If your circumstances are likely to remain difficult for some time, you can request a deferral of an exam or assessment using the **R-33 form** from Registry.



CONSEQUENCES OF FAILING A MODULE

When calculating your overall grade (precision mark) for any given year, only the grades from your first attempt to pass modules are included in the calculation. For example, if, for a particular module, you receive 25% in the first attempt but get 65% in the re-sit, it is the first attempt grade (25%) not the re-sit grade (65%) that is used in the precision mark calculation. The only exception to this rule is when students have deferred module assessments on legitimate grounds (extenuating circumstances). In such cases, the re-sit grade is used in the precision mark calculation.

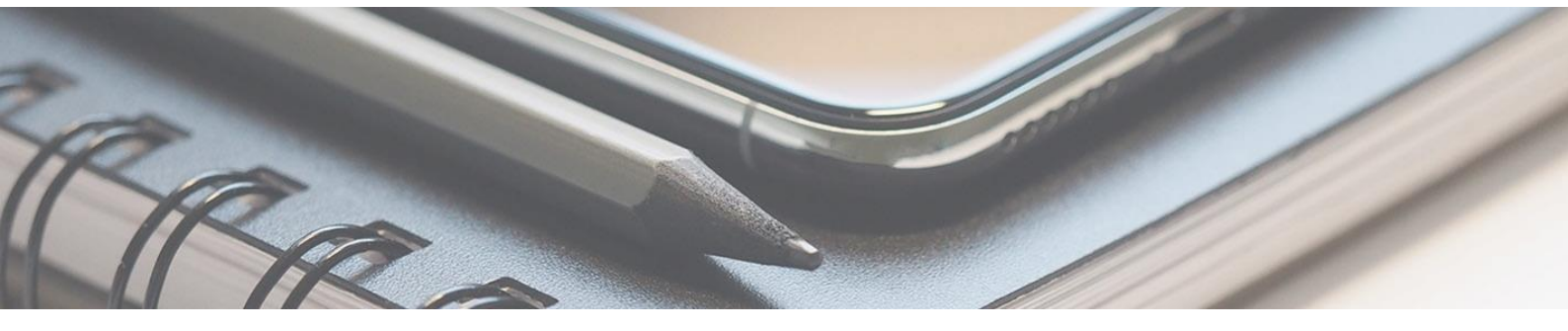
COMPENSATION

Compensation is the award of a pass for an undergraduate module where your mark is under 40%. You do not have to apply for compensation – it is applied automatically if you meet the conditions. There are strict limitations.

- this is your first attempt at the module – not a resit or repeat;
- your mark in the failed module must be at least 35%;
- you can compensate no more than 1/6th of your total modules for the year – normally one or two;
- your overall score for the year must be at least 45%.

In each programme, some modules are not eligible for compensation because of their importance – e.g. final year core modules, thesis or project. Check the specific programme regulations for further information.

Compensation is not possible for modules on postgraduate programmes.



RECHECKS

After your marks have been issued, you can ask for a recheck if you think there has been a mistake in a module. This only involves checking that marks have been properly recorded and calculated – **it is not a re-evaluation of the mark**. For more information see <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/appeals>

APPEALS

If you feel that the marks awarded by the Progression and Awards Board (PAB) at the end of the assessment process do not accurately reflect the quality of your work, you may appeal against the decision in one or more modules. Appeals are considered only on specified grounds. For more information see <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/appeals>

RESITTING FAILED / DEFERRED MODULES

If you fail / defer module assessments for semester 1 or 2 you may be offered the opportunity to re-sit those assessments over the summer (unless you pass by compensation - see section on compensation above).

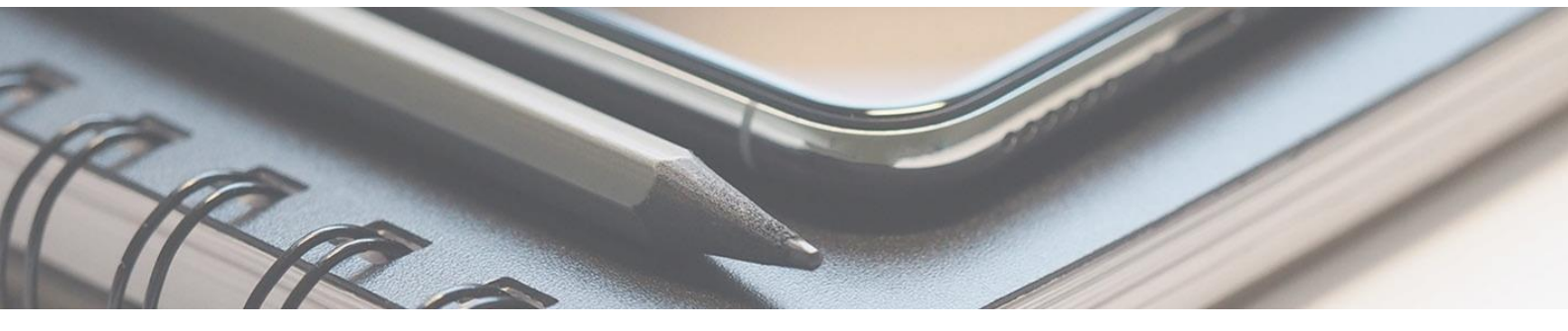
Note that it may not be feasible to re-sit a CA in some modules because of the nature of the assignments (for example the MMA Major Production Project, as this is a group project that cannot be executed in a shorter period than a full academic semester).

If you fail / defer module assessments which mean you fail / defer the module overall for semester 1 or 2 it is your responsibility to contact the lecturer or programme chair for instructions on the elements of the module assessment that you need to re-sit. Where the module is assessed by continuous assessment (e.g. essay) the deadline for submission is towards the end of July / early August. Where the module is assessed by exam, the re-sit exams, which are organised by the Registry, occur in August.



If, after the re-sits, you still have not passed all modules, the PAB will consider whether you are eligible to proceed to the next year of study (carrying a module). If you are not eligible to proceed to the next year of study then you must register to repeat the module. You will not retain marks for any elements of that module previously passed.

All academic regulations are outlined in the University's Marks & Standards document which is available at <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/policies-and-regulations>



PERSONAL SUPPORT

The Student Advice Centre provides a comprehensive A-Z guide for students making their way through DCU, available at: <https://www.dcu.ie/students/a-z-guide.shtml>. The centre is located on the ground floor of the Henry Grattan building. Some specific services offered in DCU include:

Counselling and Personal Development Service:

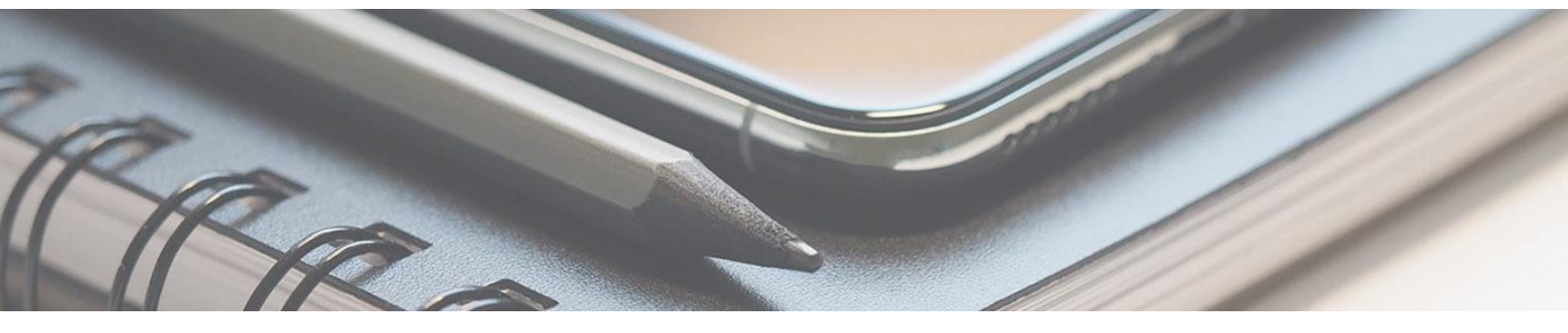
This is a professional and confidential service available to all registered undergraduate and postgraduate DCU students **free of charge**. The service is staffed by counselling psychologists/psychotherapists and psychotherapists at an advanced stage in their training. The service offers one-to-one professional and confidential counselling, psychological support and input to help address personal, family, or social difficulties that hinder a student's academic performance.

The challenges facing a student which can be addressed by counselling may include, stress/anxiety, low mood/depression, relationship and family difficulties, feelings of being overwhelmed/underachieving, impact from a traumatic incident, self harm, suicide ideation, etc. If you are affected by any of these, the counselling service is your first port of call and you can expect discrete and friendly advice. For full information: <https://www.dcu.ie/counselling>

Disability and Learning Support Services (DLSS):

All students wishing to avail of academic supports while studying in DCU must register with the DLSS and should register with the service as soon as they start their studies. Registration requires a face-to-face appointment and students are asked to complete a needs assessment. This assessment is an initial review of the supports you require in order to complete your studies. Depending on your needs, there are various supports available, such as notetaking in lectures, occupational therapy supports and assistive technology, and many others.

Contact the Disability & Learning Support Service by phone on 7005927, e-mail disability.service@dcu.ie. For more information online, go to: <https://www.dcu.ie/disability/index.shtml>



DCU Writing Centre:

The Writing Centre offers free one-to-one guidance with academic writing to all undergraduate and postgraduate students. The sessions provide students with the opportunity to receive expert advice from a peer tutor. Students may visit the Centre during any stage of the writing process: planning an assignment, writing a first draft, or revising and editing a document. Sessions are booked online and are free of charge. For further information, see: <https://www.dcu.ie/studentlearning/writing-centre.shtml>. The website also provides a host of writing advice and tips, such as how to write introductions and conclusions, academic language guidelines, and advice on critical thinking.



WRITING AN ESSAY

Although we often take it for granted that we have the ability to write, it is important to realise that academic writing poses a unique set of challenges. Putting together a good academic essay involves not only the presentation of facts and figures but also requires that you use that information to construct convincing and coherent arguments. Very few people have an innate ability to do this – it is a skill that must be learned through practice.

More extensive advice on essays is in Appendix 2 at the end of this document. In general terms, a good essay is one which:

- Is well-presented and clear to understand, with a clear structure;
- Displays knowledge of the relevant facts/data;
- Expresses a cogent, coherent and convincing argument;
- Backs up arguments with reference to clearly identified, relevant source material;
- Demonstrates a deep understanding of the subject and, where appropriate, an ability to use abstract theoretical concepts.

Why write essays?

Although many of the programmes in the School of Communications have strong practical elements, you will also be required to write essays. It might be helpful to understand why essays form a key element of your assessment:

- They make you construct arguments, using ideas with which you are beginning to become familiar;
- They make you aware of what you know and what you don't know in a given field, helping you to clarify and organise ideas;
- They make you read around the subject, and therefore enable you to develop your own point(s) of view, which may (or may not) be aligned with the lecturer's point of view;
- An essay that has been revised and commented by your lecturer is a very useful resource towards improving your writing skills for both academic and professional purposes;
- They provide important feedback to the teaching staff regarding how messages and ideas are being understood by students.



We believe that it is impossible to really know what you have learnt until you demonstrate the ability to express it. In practice, therefore, discussing course material with classmates, writing notes, short pieces and essays is a necessary part of study as well as a requirement of academic life.

Formatting the essay

Your lecturer may issue specific instructions, but if not, some general guidelines:

- Pages must be in A4 portrait format and set in a legible serif or san-serif font (eg Times New Roman or Verdana);
- Font Size: 12 point;
- Line Spacing: 1.5 lines (unless stated otherwise by your lecturer);
- Page numbering in footer (i.e. at bottom of page);
- The full bibliography should be at the end, including every work referred to, alphabetically by author's surname, with full publication details;
- Referencing throughout should be in the Harvard style.

Harvard Referencing

When doing written work, all the material and sources you use must be detailed in a clear and consistent manner. This is done using specific referencing styles, and the School of Communications uses the Harvard referencing system which all students will be expected to follow. This system is outlined in the DCU Library's guides to citation and referencing, available via the library. Using this system ensures that all work presented for assessment have properly attributed the original sources of all ideas, quotations, paraphrasing, summaries, tables, diagrams or any other material used from the work of others.

In addition, students must provide a complete bibliography of all works and sources used in the preparation of projects, essays, assignments and dissertations and to include a personally signed School of Communications plagiarism declaration (Appendix 1).



ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The reputation of Dublin City University and of its graduates depends on upholding the highest quality standards of academic integrity. The University is responsible for upholding academic integrity through its policy, which is underpinned by its procedures and practices.

Academic Integrity is based on the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage including the courage to act with integrity.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Submitting work as your own for assessment, which has been done in whole or in part by someone else: a peer; a family member; friend or commercially or otherwise by a third party for an agreed fee;
- Submitting unauthorised Generative Artificial Intelligence generated work
- Plagiarism: Presenting work / ideas taken from other sources without proper acknowledgement;
- Multi-submission/Self plagiarism: i.e. resubmission of parts of a piece of your own work that was previously submitted for credit without prior consultation with the module coordinator; • Selling or providing previously completed assignments to other learners
- Falsifying references and documentation;
- Breaches of Examination Regulation (see Examination Regulations)
- Cheating in continuous assessments (e.g. collusion or using essay mills or other homework help sites);
- Misrepresenting research (e.g. data fabrication, data falsification, misinterpretation);
- Bribery;
- Improper use of technology, laboratories or other equipment;
- Doing some or all of a peer's assignment for them;
- Sharing or selling staff or institutional intellectual property to third parties without permission.



Alleged academic misconduct will be managed according to the Procedure for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Sanction.

All penalties for academic misconduct will be greater than the penalty for submitting poor work or none. If the allegation is upheld, local penalties may include:

- A zero mark for an assessment component and a requirement to resubmit the assessment component. Additional work may be imposed.
- A zero mark for the complete assessment and a requirement to resubmit the complete assessment. Additional work may be imposed.
- A zero mark for the module and the requirement to resit the module or repeat it in the following academic session. Additional work may be imposed.

The full implication of the penalty must be made clear to the student, including potential impact for progression and/or award. In egregious cases, the University Disciplinary Committee may impose higher sanctions, including suspension from the University for a year or permanent exclusion from the University.

Submission of Assessments

Students are required to submit a completed Student Declaration of Academic Integrity or the statement from the Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis, in the case of work submitted for a research award.

In all cases students must make a declaration of academic integrity, either by physically completing such a declaration and submitting it with their assignment - available at <https://www.dcu.ie/iss/student-my-page> - or engaging appropriately with the electronic version of the declaration on Loop. Assignments submitted such that the form has not been included, or the electronic equivalent has been circumvented, will not be accepted.

Submitted assessments and theses may be subjected to electronic review and analysed electronically for plagiarism, collusion, generative AI content, etc.



FINAL PROJECT/THESIS GUIDELINES

Detailed guidelines on preparation and presentation of theses, dissertations and final-year projects are issued separately by the lecturers through the relevant modules.



TECHNICIANS' OFFICES AND LOANS

The Loans Office is located at: C105.

The School's senior technicians, Damien Hickey (damien.hickey@dcu.ie) and Eoin Campbell (eoin.campbell@dcu.ie), are in charge of audio/video-related equipment.

If you experience problems technical staff are available to troubleshoot from 10am until 5pm during both semesters.

EQUIPMENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Late returns will result in a one-week ban for the first time, a two-week ban for the second, three weeks for the third and so on, up to a six-week ban. This applies to late returns up to two days late. Returns later than this will be subject to a review by the School and will result in a much longer ban. Students who repeatedly return equipment late may have the loan privileges revoked by the School and will no longer be able to borrow any equipment or book studios.
- Equipment borrowed is the sole responsibility of the borrower and only they may return it. If this is not possible, alternative arrangements must be made with a technician, otherwise it will be treated as a late return with the appropriate penalty starting with a two-week ban.
- Equipment lost or broken will be subject to a review by the School and will result in a minimum of a two-week ban up to a complete ban depending on the circumstances. You may be required to replace the equipment at your own expense.
- Be aware that a ban will not be lifted just because you have an assignment due.
- Equipment is only available for courses scheduled to use it and then only while doing project work.



STUDIOS AND LABS

On the first floor of the Henry Grattan, the School of Communications has dedicated computer laboratories in rooms C101, C102, C107 (Mac labs) and C106 (PC lab). All labs have the same software suite. C116 is a post-production lab available only to certain postgraduate programmes.

There are radio studios in C122 and C143 and a media studio in C139/C140. There is a photo lab in C100.

Their use is subject to conditions:

- Wipe down work areas at the end of your class;
- All studios and labs must be kept tidy;
- NO food or drink is allowed in any of the rooms;
- No equipment may be rewired or reconfigured or removed from any of the labs or studios without prior consent from the technical staff.

ACCESS TO SOFTWARE

The computer labs in the Henry Grattan building will have the required software to complete projects. Students needing access to Adobe software on their laptops can pay for a student subscription for the Adobe Creative Cloud

<https://www.adobe.com/ie/creativecloud/plans.html?plan=edu>.

Microsoft Office 365 is available to all current students free of charge for their laptops/PCs which ensures that DCU students always have the latest version of Word, Excel and PowerPoint. See: <https://www.dcu.ie/iss/procurement/software-student.shtml>

Student discounts are also available for computer products, such as iPads, from <https://www.heanet.ie/store>.



APPENDIX 1: WRITING A GOOD ESSAY

In general terms, a good essay is one which:

- Is well-presented and clear to understand;
- Has a clear structure;
- Displays knowledge of the relevant facts/data;
- Expresses a cogent, coherent and convincing argument;
- Backs up its arguments with reference to clearly identified, relevant source material.
- Demonstrates a deep understanding of the subject and, where appropriate, an ability to use the abstract theoretical concepts.

Structure: Your essay is a "complex thing", as it should usually include plenty of raw data, your own ideas, reasoned argument and relevant conclusions. But good structure should help to make this "complex thing" comprehensible to the ordinary reader i.e. your examiner/lecturer.

Ultimately, the structure of your essay will vary depending on the assignment and should be shaped by the content of your argument. However, it should generally have a clear beginning, a middle, and an end, and be written in a logical sequence:

- Your essay should firstly have an introduction, in which you provide some broad context and state the argument you are going to pursue (and briefly indicate how you are going to set about the task).
- The following section should pursue the argument in orderly fashion, marshalling data, facts, reason and analysis.
- Finally, your conclusion should review the argument and offer a summary of your judgments on the matter.

Careful paragraphing is essential: **each paragraph should deal with a single topic.** You should be able to put a (mental) headline on each paragraph which summarises the subject-matter dealt with there. You should group together all things you have to say on a particular topic. Don't introduce a particular issue and then leave it for something else, before coming back to it again (or worse still just leave the issue hanging in the air, unrelated to anything else in your essay). This produces a disconnected feel to your essay, is often repetitive, wastes space and ultimately tries your reader's patience.

DCU Student Learning: 7 steps for doing essays

Analyse the Question	Brainstorm	Research	Plan	First draft	Edit	References
<p>Check key words which define the question: what are you being asked to do?</p> <p>Consider level of interest, availability of resources, usefulness for exam, when choosing your title.</p>	<p>Use Google, YouTube, skim read textbooks to get overview.</p> <p>Brainstorm main ideas for essay.</p>	<p>Research specific topics generated through brainstorm</p> <p>Library research: databases and textbooks.</p> <p>Take notes, store references.</p>	<p>Put ideas in order.</p> <p>Use the templates where applicable</p> <p>Try using flow diagrams or mind-maps.</p> <p>Check that your plan is logical and that it addresses the question.</p>	<p>Write in sections. Does not have to be done in order – start anywhere.</p> <p>Put main ideas in sentences and paragraphs.</p> <p>Write without worrying too much about how it reads.</p> <p>Leave intro and conclusion until the end.</p>	<p>Refer back to the question - have you answered it and stayed on topic?</p> <p>Does the order of ideas make sense?</p> <p>Ask someone to read it or read it aloud</p> <p>Check style, grammar, punctuation.</p> <p>Is it within the word limit?</p>	<p>Complete your references using Harvard referencing style</p> <p>Refer to DCU Citing and Referencing Guide</p> <p>Can use software, eg Refworks or equivalent</p>

One of the most important parts of the 7-step plan outlined above is that the actual writing only properly begins in Step 5. Before that, you should spend time understanding the question, brainstorming and researching, writing notes, and coming up with a plan for the essay's structure.

Argument: The argument in an essay can be thought of as a series of "If X, then Y" statements. In other words, having presented a piece of data or information, you as the writer then draw a conclusion on that basis. That conclusion may in turn constitute the basis for a further conclusion. It is critical to stress that the points that you make should connect with each other, cumulatively developing an overall argument. Your finished essay should have links between each of the points that you make. Each point should lead on smoothly to the next.

Understanding the subject:

As noted, the writing of an essay is a demonstration of a working knowledge and understanding of a particular topic. Acquiring such knowledge and understanding means:

- attending lectures
- undertaking purposeful reading
- discussing study material with your classmates
- writing about what you've learnt

The last two in particular deserve particular emphasis— it is sometimes assumed that attending lectures and diligently working through prescribed reading material will automatically lead to "understanding". Yet while these activities are critical, your understanding of a subject will improve by working through the material in verbal discussion and in your writing.

Learning takes place in the activity of writing notes and essays – actively using the ideas - not just in passive reading. Be critical of what you read. Always ask "Do I understand this?" and "Do I understand how it fits in with other things I want to say in the essay?" Don't expect to understand everything, and its relevance, straight off. Not understanding, making mistakes, are important ways of learning. They should be acknowledged, at least to yourself and used as points of development.

Understanding implies that you have acquired the ability to see limitations in one's own and others' approaches, and to arrive at some reconciliations or decisions regarding these. **An essay is always improved by an author showing awareness of counter-arguments** and attempting to deal with evidence that does not fit the argument being presented.

Planning an Essay:

Decide what is required of you in the question. "What topics, problems, principles, etc. will need to be dealt with somewhere in my essay if I'm to answer this?"

- Jot down any ideas, headings, notes, queries and references that occur to you;
- Decide what books or other sources look like being useful;
- With each, check the contents page and index for chunks that seem useful;
- Skim these to see if they are of any use;
- Make notes: be sure to note the page number of each reference, and the author/year/publication.

Read over all your notes and decide what the main points are. Try summing these up in a few sentences, and order them for importance. Then, try to move them around into a

logical sequence. Focus your attention on the first “main chunk” and try to decide what minor or supporting material should go in at this point. Repeat this until you have a rough outline. BEFORE you start writing you should have a clear plan and structure and ideal word count for each section. An outline should clarify:

- that you have a clear, relevant and workable topic;
- how the essay is structured;
- that your essay has a focus and object;
- that your essay plan is efficient and to the point of the title;
- that the different sections are inter-related as a necessary part of a coherent discussion and not merely casually related to the title;
- that your approach / method is critical and analytical rather than simply discursive;
- that your use of source material is adequate and balanced;
- that your essay has a conclusion.

This planning puts you in a strong position to start writing, making each section feel more manageable and will ultimately save you time. When writing essays:

- Do not chat to the reader (“I”/“you”), asking coy questions and generally presenting the stuff in a light-hearted way;
- Do not make assertions that are wide-open to questions and/or have no supporting argument. Learn to use cautious, diplomatic phrases (“It has been suggested that...” or “X has argued that...”; rather than “It is common knowledge...”);
- Try to avoid unsupported assertions of an ethical or emotive kind ('should' vs 'should not', or 'right' vs 'wrong'): there are lots of grey areas to be explored;
- Essays should not exceed the requested length;
- Do not use extravagant language, unless you are 100% confident of the meaning of the words you're using. It is better to keep it simple and clear.

Sample essay structure

This template, from DCU Student Learning and used by the Writing Centre, gives a general structure for writing an essay. Adjust it where needed to best suit your topic and question. Identifying the major themes to you want to address (in the example below there are 3, but there may be more), and the points you want to make relating to each theme, can help to ensure a structure, logical flow to the essay.

INTRO 10% of word count	Go from the broad to the specific. Introduce the general topic, why it is an important area, then state what you will specifically do to investigate it further.		
Section 1	Sub-point 1	Sub-point 2	Sub-point 3
Section 2	Sub-point 1	Sub-point 2	Sub-point 3
Section 3	Sub-point 1	Sub-point 2	Sub-point 3
CONCLUSION 10% of word count	Go from the specific to the broad. State the conclusions you can draw from the points you've made in the essay, and connect this learning to the general topic.		

Presentation

Marks are frequently lost not because the student doesn't understand the subject, but because they are unable to clearly express that understanding. This often comes down to a failure of presentation: poor writing and poor proof-reading.

Simply running a Microsoft Word spell-check or grammar-check does not constitute proofing as it may not catch everything and may not know the difference between there/their, etc. However, you can do the following to help it pick up mistakes:

- Make sure the language is set to “English (Ireland)” to avoid US spelling errors (This is seen at the bottom left of the screen beside the word count)
- Go to File > Options > Proofing > and make sure “Grammar and Refinements” are selected in the “writing style” option. This will help catch a lot more problems. (In some older versions it is referred to as “Grammar and Style”.)
- Grammarly software can be installed and added on to Word to help with further language problems

However, while the software can help to some degree, the best way is to make sure an essay is readable is to print it out and read it yourself or to have someone else read it for you. Reading it aloud slowly, or having software read it out while you listen (either built-in in Word, or ClaroRead, available to students) is also an excellent way to make sure it makes sense and is free from errors.