



# STUDENT HANDBOOK

UPDATED ON 20/03/2018

## WELCOME

Welcome to Dublin College of Advanced Studies (DCAS). This document is intended to introduce you to the school. In the following pages you will find information on the facilities and services provided by the school and some details of DCAS policies

## HOW TO GET INFORMATION

Most information from the school will be sent to you by email. It is also the quickest way to contact a member of staff. **Please ensure we have your correct email address** or we will not be able to contact you as efficiently as we would like. All students' requests and queries will be processed and answered within 48 hours.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

<b>Paul Nicolle</b> Director of Studies	01 878 3377	paul@dcas.ie
<b>Cristina Dobrojan</b> ADoS and Student Liaison Officer/ Exam Registration	01 878 3377	cristina@dcas.ie
<b>María Melero</b> Senior Administrator Attendance Officer	01 878 3377	maria@dcas.ie
<b>General Enquiries</b>	01 878 3377	info@dcas.ie

## OPENING TIMES OF MAIN CENTRE

Monday-Thursday 8.30am to 5:30pm / Friday 9:30 – 5:00

## LANGUAGE

English must be used in the classroom and should be used at all times wherever possible. If you feel unable to express yourself adequately, some members of staff are fluent in both Spanish and Portuguese and may be able to assist you.

Swearing or using abusive or hostile language is not permitted. If you are heard using such language, you may face disciplinary procedures.

## LEARNER PROTECTION

All schools are legally obliged to provide students with Learner Protection Insurance and the school will make all arrangements for this. This policy ensures that students' fees and courses are guaranteed.

## STUDENT ORIENTATION

Students are provided with a map highlighting the location of the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB), Social Welfare Office and Bank. The induction process begins during enrolment and registration; nonetheless, students are required to attend induction to ensure they are as familiar as possible with their chosen course and

with the school's policies and procedures. It makes students aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to health and safety, discipline, student learning and development, complaints and grievances, appeals, information technology and any other relevant regulations.

## PLACEMENT TEST

Before students begin their course, they sit a placement test in order to establish an appropriate level at which to commence their studies.

## INDUCTION

Each student must attend an induction session that usually takes place on the same day as the placement test. In the induction session students will be introduced to the structure of the school and key personnel. Students will also hear about our punctuality policy, attendance policy and the rules of the school. Students will also receive information about the end-of-course exam and sign an agreement that they understand their rights and obligations, including the obligation to sit the end-of-course exam.

## REGISTERING WITH DCAS

The registration process is simple and can be carried out very quickly by following a number of easy steps in which you:

- Receive an Induction and welcome pack

- Complete the DCAS application form and sign other relevant paperwork.

**DCAS will provide you with letters necessary to:**

- Obtain a student card
- Register with INIS

## HEALTH INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS & PROCEDURES

All full-time non-EEA students are required to have private medical insurance, obtained either personally or through a group scheme operated by their school, at the time of their registration. DCAS provides a group private medical insurance scheme.

The procedures for attaining health insurance are as follows:

1. DCAS informs students of the insurance provision scheme in advance of their arrival in Ireland
2. Students are provided with a brief outline of the insurance coverage, such as the name of the insurance provider, cost, level of coverage etc.
3. Students pay for the insurance provision
4. The insurance policy is issued to students upon their arrival at DCAS
5. GNIB is informed

## STUDENT REQUEST FORM

Students wishing to update DCAS regarding a change in their circumstances (e.g. change of contact details, medical condition, holiday leave etc.) must fill in a request form available both online and at reception.

## REGISTERING WITH THE IRISH NATIONAL IMMIGRATION SERVICE (INIS)

In order to process your visa application, please ensure you:

1. Book an appointment with INIS on their website
2. Fill in the request form to notify the school about your appointment date
3. Collect your copy of the general letter and medical insurance certificate from DCAS
4. Ensure you are able to provide evidence of finances

DCAS sends acceptance/visa letters to INIS every Friday. Students should go to the INIS office within 5 working days of the letter being sent.

INIS do not accept acceptance/visa letters from students. It is DCAS's responsibility to send the student's details directly to INIS.

Students must take their passport and bank statement to INIS when extending their visa. The current fee for a student visa is €300. Once the process is complete, students are issued an Irish Residence

Permit which is valid for eight months. The IRP will be sent by post to your Irish home address within 10 days.

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

DCAS wants to provide students with the supportive and congenial environment needed to enable them to be successful in their studies and to get the most from their time in Dublin. At regular intervals, formal processes give you the opportunity to give feedback on the quality of service provided. Nevertheless, if you have any comments about improving facilities and services, feel free to contact a member of staff.

## CLASS TIMETABLE/MODES OF ENROLMENT

English language programmes of study are from Monday to Friday for 15 hours per week for the duration of 25 weeks, except for the IELTS Preparation Course, which are for 20 hours per week. Students commence classes on Mondays.

Morning courses are from Monday to Thursday from 9.00 am until 1.00pm with a 15 minutes break between 11.00 and 11.15.

Afternoon Classes are from Monday to Friday from 13.45 until 17.00 with a 15 minutes break between 15.15 and 15.30.

## STARTING CLASS

New students and students returning from holidays will get an email informing them when they need to (re)start their course well in advance.

In the email they are informed of their timetable, school location, level and classroom.

## CHANGING LEVEL

Students wishing to change level must consult with their teacher, who will decide whether they should sit a level progression exam based on the syllabus. If the student scores 70% or more, they may progress to the next level. Level change is only permitted on Mondays.

## EXTERNAL END-OF-COURSE EXAMINATIONS

Students' visas dictate that a final examination takes place when their course is completed. It is the obligation of the school to register students for the exam and it is the students' obligation to sit the external exam accordingly.

Students are informed of the date and time of their exam. Following the exam, the results and certificates are available for collection in the Academic Department Area (basement).

Any queries about exam preparation are to be addressed to any of the student's teachers. Queries about exam dates, times etc. are to be addressed to the ADoS at **cristina@dcas.ie**.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

As outlined by The Irish National Immigration Service (INIS) regulations, students are expected to **achieve 85%** or more of class attendance as required by the terms of their visa. Class attendance will be checked regularly, and students will be informed if their attendance is unsatisfactory.

Attendance is revised every week:

- If a student's **overall attendance** falls below **85%** a warning letter for overall poor attendance will be sent. This letter informs the student of their poor attendance and has a preventive nature. There is still time for a student to correct their attendance and reach **85%** by the end of the course.
- If a student fails to respond to previous correspondence and **is unable to achieve a minimum of 85% attendance at the end of their course** a **final warning letter** will be issued. This will result in a student being removed from the attendance list and they will not be able to continue to study at DCAS. In this case, the school is obliged to inform GNIB.

Students may appeal this decision, but it must be done within 5 working days of receipt of the **Final Warning**.

## HOLIDAYS

The school is closed for three weeks in December and the 9 Public holidays during the year. The list of public holidays each year is as follows:

1. New Year's Day (1 January)

2. St. Patrick's Day (17 March)
3. Easter Monday
4. First Monday in May,
5. First Monday in June,
6. First Monday in August
7. Last Monday in October
8. Christmas Day (25 December)
9. St. Stephen's Day (26 December)

Students are permitted to take 8 weeks holiday from school. These will normally be taken at the end of the course. However, after a certain amount of time spent in class, students may take a break for up to 4 weeks. This break must be requested before the beginning of the course and holiday requests forms must be submitted no later than the first day of class. **After a student`s course has started, no holidays can be requested until the end of the course. In exceptional cases, holiday requests can be granted after the issue has been discussed with and approved by the DoS.**

For more information regarding breaks and holidays, please visit <http://www.inis.gov.ie/>

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Clarity and consistency must be evident with regard to students' timetabled hours. This will be achieved by issuing students with a

course calendar at the beginning of their course where class time and holidays (if requested on time) will be outlined. Therefore, once a student is assigned a class, they cannot change between morning and afternoon shifts, apart from exceptional circumstances and at the school's discretion.

## UNSCHEDULED BREAKS

In the event of exceptional circumstances, such as a serious illness or a family bereavement, students must contact the school immediately and let the school know of the nature of the circumstance and details about the length of time the student expects to be away from class.

Students must make this request in person at reception. Students will be informed of the school's decision promptly.

Documentary evidence may be required to substantiate a request. If a request is granted, then a course credit under the refund policy will be given to the student.

## STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

The Student Disciplinary procedure aims at correcting continuous breach of conduct while attending a course at DCAS. This includes:

- use of mobile phones in the classroom for non-educational purposes or without the teacher`s consent
- bullying of any kind towards classmates, teachers or any member of DCAS staff, including use of foul language.

- continuous lack of participation in class activities
- continuous use of native language during class time
- coming to school under the influence of alcohol or any other intoxicating substance

The following stages are followed:

- a. Informal oral warning: given by the teacher and documented on the school database.
- b. Formal oral warning: given by the teacher and documented on the school database.
- c. Written warning: given by the DoS after the informal and formal oral warning have been given. The written warning is then documented on the school database.
- d. Disciplinary committee: In the case of the student continuing to break the rules, the disciplinary committee meet to discuss the next step to be taken with the student. After the meeting, the committee informs the student of their decision in writing.
- e. Appeal: If the student considers that the decision taken by the Disciplinary Committee is unfair, they have the right to appeal that decision within 10 working days. The Committee will then hear the appeal and inform the student of the outcome of the appeal within 5 working days.
- f.

## MOBILE PHONES

The use of mobile phones is permitted in the classroom **only** if it is for using translation apps or for project research. The use of social media in the classroom is strictly forbidden.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FACILITIES

A computer area is available for student usage during class time as part of a structured lesson and is also accessible for self-study and learning consolidation purposes on an ad hoc basis.

## STUDY RESOURCE AREA

Students may use this as a resource for independent learning or as a study area. It has books and resources for self-study. A microwave and tea/coffee making facilities are also available.

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Cultural awareness is an integral aspect of the syllabus. When appropriate, visits incorporating exhibitions and tours are organised; lesson plans and learning materials are designed accordingly as a precursor to such a visit. Irish culture and heritage is introduced as a supplement to the primary learning materials and it is structured within a thematic context. A social programme focused on recreational activities is scheduled on a monthly basis and a range of sports and leisure pursuits are also available, these are contingent on the levels of student interest expressed.

## PASTORAL CARE POLICY

The school offers the provision of pastoral oversight for non-academic problems, involving support to the students, advising them on financial, visa related, health /social or other problems. Students can receive advice and support regarding these issues through reception. Students may also enquire by e-mail.

Where appropriate, support is given to learners by the Assistant Director of Studies (ADoS) or Director of Studies (DoS). If necessary, the student will be referred to a professional organisation to assist them in resolving outstanding issues.

## EQUALITY

It is expected that everyone in the school respects others and treats them as they would wish to be treated themselves. Our equality statement is displayed and available to read on our website. DCAS' anti-discrimination policy compiles with Irish equality legislation.

The school regards any breach of this policy by any student or staff member as a serious matter to be dealt with through its established procedures and may result in disciplinary action.

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If a student is unhappy with any aspect of the service they receive, they have the right to complain. The complaints process follows the three stages outlined below:

### Stage one:

Firstly, the issue will be informally addressed with the relevant individual(s) and an attempt to resolve the situation will be made. Should this prove unsuccessful, complainants may progress to the second stage.

### Stage two:

At this stage, the student completes a **complaints form**, available at reception, ensuring to provide full details of the nature of the complaint. Then they must return the enclosed form along with any relevant documents, addressed to the Director of Studies. Once the complaint has been received, it will be reviewed by the Director of Studies and responded to within 7 working days. Where appropriate, the Director of Studies will provide a full explanation of any relevant errors and details of any remedial action taken.

### Stage three:

After stage two has been completed, DCAS will consider the matter resolved. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, DCAS will advise the complainant to bring the matter to the attention of the relevant statutory authority (contact details will be provided).

## FEES REFUND POLICY



**The school assumes that all prospective students will have made a committed decision to study a given course before applying for admission. Consequently, the school policy on the refund of fees upon withdrawal from a course is as follows:**

- i. No refund is permitted or shall be made when a student decides to leave the school for whatever reason after an extension of a student visa has been obtained through school facilitation.
- ii. In a case where a prospective student is refused a student visa, the school will refund all fees paid **less a €150** administration fee. However, in such an event, no refund will be made unless the school has received **all original copies of the school letters of enrolment plus an original copy of refusal from the appropriate immigration authority.**
- iii. No refund is permitted or shall be made if a student enters the country on a student visa obtained on the basis of the school's letters of acceptance and enrolment.

## REFUND PROCEDURE

Whenever a student or prospective student decides to initiate a request for a refund, the request must be made in writing.

## LEAD TIME

Although the school will always endeavour to respond to refund requests with a sense of urgency, under normal circumstances it takes up to **60 days** to process a refund.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is essential that while at school, students take responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of others as well as themselves. In that regard, the following list details some of the DOs and DON'Ts, which will make the school a safer place to study.

### DO:

- I. Dress appropriately for school
- II. Know and observe the code of safe practices that applies in your area of study
- III. Know and observe the rules that are designed for the computer area and classrooms, as well as those that relate to certain equipment and materials
- IV. Always be aware of potential hazards and use common sense to try to lessen the risk of accidents
- V. If you are not clear about anything to do with health and safety, always ask for help and advice
- VI. Read all the safety notices about potential hazards in the school

### DO NOT:

- I. Misuse, neglect, damage or interfere with anything that is provided for safety
- II. Run within the school buildings
- III. Obstruct any traffic areas of the school
- IV. Eat food during class

## LIVING IN IRELAND

Ireland is a modern, English-speaking country with a dynamic economy. It has one of the highest standards of living in Europe, average earnings are well above the European average. Job opportunities are available in the hospitality, retail, IT, pharmaceutical, financial and service sectors.

Famous for its friendliness, Ireland has a vibrant multicultural population. Ireland is world renowned for providing quality education. Currently, more than 100,000 international students are studying at colleges in Ireland.

## FACTS

**Capital:** Dublin (pop: 1.1 million)

**Time zone:** Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)

**Population:** 4.2 million

**Average Age:** 35.6yrs

**Official Languages:** English & Irish

**Currency:** Euro (€)

**Climate:** Ireland has a mild oceanic climate. All year average temperatures are 1 – 6 C° (35 - 45 F°) in winter and 20 – 25 C° (65 - 75F° in summer. May and June are the sunniest months with an average of over 7 hours of sunshine per day.

**Political Status:** European Union (EU) member state