

Welcome to DCAS



Est. 2007

STUDENT HANDBOOK

UPDATED ON 20/12/2019

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 2 working days.

CONTACT INFORMATION

David Kirwan Director of Studies	01 878 3377	david@dcas.ie
Conor Doonan ADoS and Student Welfare (DCAS1) Officer/ Exam Registration	01 878 3377	conor@dcas.ie
Cristina Dobrojan ADoS and Student Welfare (DCAS2)	01 515 2883	cristina@dcas.ie
General Administration	01 878 3377	admin@dcas.ie
General Enquiries	01 878 3377	info@dcas.ie
Emergency Number out-of-hours	+353 87 193 6500	

OPENING HOURS

MAIN CAMPUS (DCAS 1 – 98 Capel Street)

Monday-Thursday 8.45 am to 5:15 pm / Friday 9:30 am – 5:15 pm

SECOND CAMPUS (DCAS 2 – Ulysses House, Foley Street)

Monday-Thursday 8.45 am to 5:15 pm / Friday 12:30 pm – 5:15 pm

SCHOOL CLOSURE DAYS

The school is closed for a 2-week period at Christmas and New Year's Day. These weeks are not counted towards total class weeks.

DCAS also closes on other public holidays and Good Friday. These days are counted towards the total class period. The list of these 7 days each year is as follows:

1. St. Patrick's Day (17th March) – If this day falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the public holiday is observed on the following Monday
2. Good Friday (Friday that precedes Easter Sunday)
3. Easter Monday
4. May Bank Holiday (First Monday in May)
5. June Bank Holiday (First Monday in June)
6. August Bank Holiday (First Monday in August)
7. October Bank Holiday (Last Monday in October)

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 Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin 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

A Learner Protection Scheme is included in the 25-week full-time time English course fee for Non-EU/EEA students. All English language schools are legally obliged to provide non-EU/EEA students with Learner Protection Insurance. This insurance ensures that those students' fees and courses are guaranteed, in the eventuality that 25-week full-time English language programmes become unavailable.

STUDENT ORIENTATION

Students are provided with a map highlighting the location of the Local Immigration Office (INIS). 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. INIS 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. 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 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 75% 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 (DCAS1 Lower Ground Floor / 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 conor@dcas.ie.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance Rules:

Students who are on a Student Visa must attend class full-time (15 hours per week) and should aim for 100% attendance. All students must attend at least 85% of classes, as required by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Services (INIS) (www.inis.gov.ie). Students' attendance rates are reported as routine to INIS every week.

Absence due to sickness:

In the first day of sickness and each day subsequently, the student must inform DCAS Administration (admin@dcas.ie) about their absence. Students can only be excused from class for the specific dates on a medical certificate, which should be presented immediately to DCAS Administration on the first day of return to classes. Students can only be excused from class if they have a medical certificate from a doctor who is registered with the Medical Council (<https://www.medicalcouncil.ie>).

Consequences of Poor Attendance:

If you do not comply with the Attendance Rules above, you will receive by email:

1. **Warning:** when your attendance is below 85% after week 4 of the course
2. **Final warning:** when your attendance is below 75% after week 8 of the course
3. **Exit letter to student:** when your attendance is below 65% after week 12 of the course

If you receive an Exit letter from DCAS due to poor attendance:

- 3.1 Your name is removed from the Attendance Register and you cannot attend classes anymore;
- 3.2 You have 5 working days to submit an appeal, which should be submitted to admin@dcas.ie (Please use the following format in the email: Subject: *ATTENDANCE APPEAL – “STUDENT NAME”* along with supporting documentation (PDF attachment);

3.3 The DCAS Management Committee makes a decision within 5 working days regarding appeals. This decision is final and you will be notified by email of the outcome.

If your appeal is approved by the committee: Your name is returned to the Attendance Register; Further uncertified absences will result in another Exit letter to you, which may lead to expulsion from the school.

If your appeal is rejected by the committee: Exit letter is sent to INIS/GNIB, and you are expelled from the school, and fees paid are fully forfeited; INIS/GNIB are informed that you are no longer registered at the school. Your Study Visa and permission to stay in the country may be revoked.

Student Welfare:

The ADoS (Assistant Director of Studies), who provides pastoral care as part of their role as Student Welfare Officer, is on hand at DCAS 1 and DCAS 2, to meet students who wish to discuss attendance issues. Please note that attendance issues can only be discussed in person before the Exit Letter to student, stage 3 (described above). Once the student receives an Exit Letter to student, all further communication on the matter is by email; the student can submit an appeal to admin@dcas.ie along with supporting documentation.

STUDY BREAK POLICY

For the consideration of others and in compliance with INIS regulations:

1. (AY) Academic Year students (25-week courses | 8-month study visa):

- 1.1. Only one Study Break can be booked
- 1.2. Total study break period must not exceed 5 weeks (including the 2-week Christmas holiday period)
- 1.3. Students may book a Study Break of 2, 3, or 4 consecutive weeks during their 7-month study period (8-month study visa):
 - 1.3.1. One 2-week study break after completing 6 weeks of classes
 - 1.3.2. One 3-week study break after completing 9 weeks of classes
 - 1.3.3. One 4-week study break after completing 12 weeks of classes
- 1.4. Study breaks must be requested at least 4 weeks in advance
2. (ST) Short-term students must request study breaks at the enrolment stage
3. Students are required to restart their course on the first business day of the week
4. Students returning from study breaks may be placed in a different class/campus on return.

Complying with this policy will make the best of your study time and enhance everyone's learning experience.

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 DISCIPLINE

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 verbal warning: given by the staff and documented on the school database.
- b. Formal verbal warning: given by the staff 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.

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

The Social Activities Co-ordinator organises cultural visits, social events and extra life-skills lessons on a regular basis. A programme focused on recreational activities is scheduled on a monthly basis, contingent on the levels of student interest.

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 AND DIVERSITY POLICY

We strive to maintain an unbiased learning and working environment in which nobody feels threatened or intimidated. Furthermore, DCAS recognises the real educational and organisational benefits of having a diverse community of staff and students. To this end, the school works towards building and maintaining an inclusive environment which promotes equality, values diversity and respects the rights and dignity of all. Equality best practices at DCAS guarantee people's rights and ensure accordance with legislation. This means, the school embraces diversity, combats discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity for learners and staff.

DCAS believes in the principles of social justice, acknowledges that discrimination affects people in complex ways and is committed to challenging all forms of inequality. To this end, DCAS aims to ensure that:

- Individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect regardless of their: gender; civil status; family status; sexual orientation; religious belief or lack of religious belief; age; disability or the nature of their disability; race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin; membership of any particular community that is recognised by the state;
- An inclusive and supportive environment is promoted;

- Contributions to the achievement of the school's mission made by individuals from diverse backgrounds are recognised;

- DCAS complies with its obligations under the legislation and that no staff or student is unlawfully discriminated against.

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).

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

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 will be made when a student withdraws with less than two weeks prior to the course start date, as stated on the Application Form. In cases of Study Visa renewals, it is the student's responsibility to check with relevant authorities that their visa application is eligible for approval.
- II. No refund will 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.
- III. 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.

IV. Where it is proved that a prospective student has submitted a forged document(s) with a view to registering as a student, fees will not be refunded by the school and relevant authorities will be notified.

V. 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 or Irish embassy.

VI. Please note that in cases of visa refusals for renewals/extensions in Ireland, the student must: provide a current full passport showing a lack of new stamp from INIS; flight tickets proving that the student will be leaving the country once their visa has expired; and return all official school documentation (Acceptance Letter).

VII. No refund will be made when a student is refused entry to the country or asked to leave the country.

VIII. Registration fee and third-party costs, such as examination fees, medical insurance fees and courier fees are non-refundable.

All refund requests must be made in writing through the Fee Refund Form available at school reception. It may take up to 20 working days to process a refund, once a request is approved and the approval is communicated to the student.

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 (population: 1.36 million)

Time zone: Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)

Population: Ireland 4.83 million

Average Age: 36.8yrs

Official Languages: English & Irish

Currency: Euro (€)

Climate: Ireland has a mild oceanic climate. All year average temperatures are 1 – 6 C° in winter and 20 – 25 C° 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