DU Study Abroad Guide to the Republic of Ireland

Please use this booklet in conjunction with the DU Study Abroad Handbook

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Introduction

This handbook will provide you with a general overview of issues involved in traveling to the Republic of Ireland (Ireland). We thank the US State Department for sharing with us the Irish safety and travel information in this handbook. Please use this guide in conjunction with the DU Study Abroad Handbook.

We hope this information will assist you and your family in preparing for your time abroad. It is important that you review all the information, as well as the information sent by the Irish university, before you leave the US and that you take these materials with you to Ireland.

Studying abroad is an exciting opportunity. Nothing during your college years will likely change you more. You will learn about another country and another culture. You will also learn to look at your own country from a different perspective and most important, you will learn more about yourself. So, the OIE encourages you to invest yourself fully into this experience.

How much you gain from this opportunity will depend on your preparedness, flexibility and responsibility. Review the general pre-departure information the OIE has provided to you. Complete the administrative and academic matters that need to be taken care of before you leave. Research the country and city you will be going to. Review some of the suggested readings in the Study Abroad Handbook about what it means to go abroad. Be respectful of other cultures; things are not better, they are not worse; they are just different – learn to accept, not expect. Remember, you are there to complete an academic program successfully, just as if you were at DU. Good time management and goal setting are keys to handling a challenging academic program and becoming familiar with life outside the classroom.

Most of all, we want you to have a great experience and to make the most out of this opportunity. And when you return, be ready to share your stories with others. Your personal experience will be the best source of inspiration for others.

Safe Travels,
The DU Office of International Education (OIE)
Immigration

The immigration information for students traveling to Ireland can be found in DU Passport. However, we have provided a link to the immigration information for ease of access.
Preparing For Your Program

Confirming Move-In and Orientation Dates
You are responsible for knowing not only your program start and end dates, but also the date that you can move into or out of your housing and the date that the orientation begins. It is a good idea to arrive 1-2 days prior to your orientation (mandatory for all students) to allow yourself time to get settled, but confirm whether you will have access to your housing and, if not, plan accordingly. Make sure you have a contact number for your accommodations office and keep in touch with them if you have a delay and will not be arriving for move-in at a specific, pre-set time. If your flight arrives outside of regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm) make sure to contact your housing provider and understand the move-in procedure.

Connecting Flights
If you do not have a direct flight, make sure that you have ample time between connections. Also, confirm that your connecting flight leaves from the same airport where you are arriving as many major cities have multiple airports and transferring between airports may not be feasible.

Airport Pick-Up
Some Irish host universities offer to have volunteer students meet incoming international students at the airport. This is typically limited and requires that you arrive on a specific date within a specific time period. If you are interested in this service, ask your host university if they offer it and sign up before purchasing your ticket to avoid needing to make costly changes. Make sure to get a contact number for the person meeting you at the airport.

Arrival Tips
We recommend that you avoid arriving on a Sunday if possible (unless that date is specifically requested by your host university). Most businesses in Europe are closed on Sunday, and public transport runs less frequently, making it more difficult to find your way. We also recommend arriving in the morning/early afternoon to avoid finding your destination and housing in the dark.

Visitors from Home
We recommend that family and friends who are planning to visit you come towards the middle of the program, rather than at the beginning or the end. In the first few days after arrival, many welcome events are planned for students that you may miss if you are spending time with parents or friends from home. Likewise, at the end of the program you will need to be mindful of your final exams schedule and move-out procedures.

Customs Regulations
When passing through Irish customs, remember to be polite and to have all required documents easily on hand. When talking to an immigration officer, only answer questions you have been asked and keep the conversation as short as possible while still remaining courteous. Remember, immigration officers can refuse you entry for any reason so take the process seriously and be respectful.

Medication
If you are taking regular medication, you should contact International SOS well before departure to confirm that the medicine and the quantities you will be carrying are permitted into the country. You should also ask what the necessary documentation is that you may need to provide. It is advisable that you get a letter from your doctor describing the medication you are taking and certifying that the medication has been supplied to you for a particular medical condition. Take this letter with you in your carry-on along with your actual
medication. Make sure you know the maximum amount you can bring with you. **Keep all medications in the container in which they were dispensed.**

**Orientations and Welcome Weeks**

Most universities will recommend a specific day(s) to arrive, which will be shortly before the orientation and/or welcome week commences. If you have a free day between your arrival and the beginning of orientation, former students recommend using this day to introduce yourself to other international students and invite them to join you on a guided tour of your host city. The content and extent of your orientation varies among programs. Your orientation may only be one day and include optional social activities later in the week, or it might be an entire week of meetings each day. Acceptance materials that your host university will send you will describe their orientation in more detail. In general, the orientations tend to be shorter rather than longer and culminate with registering for classes. You will get as much out of the orientation as you put in. Write down all of the questions you want to ask and make sure you get the answers, and participate in all of the optional social activities. **Please note that your attendance of the full on-site orientation program is absolutely required!**

**International Education Offices**

While abroad you will be working with the international office at your host university. These offices are equipped with advisors much like ours who will answer your questions, provide you with resources and an orientation upon arrival, and ensure that your transcripts are processed and sent to DU. Although the international office at your host university may have a 24-hour emergency phone number—which may be provided in your acceptance materials—they will not check-up on you regularly; nevertheless, they are your primary, port-of-call contact. If you have questions, concerns, or need advice, you need to take the initiative to make an appointment to speak with them. Most easy-to-answer questions will be laid-out in written material, which they will send to your email over the summer and give to you during your orientation—read these materials thoroughly and keep them in a safe and accessible place. Before asking questions, check to see if the answer is already contained in your written material.

Some students in the past have been frustrated with the lack of individualized attention from their host institution’s international office, complaining about poor communication. This frustration is often due to a cultural misunderstanding and ungrounded expectations about the level of service at public institutions abroad. The international office staff is there if you need them. Therefore, if you do not contact them, they assume that you have everything you need. Our partners abroad have no way of helping you if they do not know that you need assistance. You will find the communication and support to be satisfactory if you read the materials that they give you closely and seek staff out when you have questions. Feel free to ask them a variety of queries, even advice on the cheapest grocery stores or what local sites to visit. The message here is, when you have questions or need help, let our partners know. You need to go to them – they will not come to you!

For your reference and convenience, our partners’ contact information is located at the end of this guide book. Once you are accepted to your program, please begin corresponding with them whenever you have questions about the program, your host university, your host city, etc.

**The Irish Academic System**

**Registering for Class and Planning Your Academic Schedule**

You probably have learned some of the differences in terminology in the Irish system. Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US Terminology</th>
<th>Irish Terminology</th>
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For the purposes of this guide book, we will keep to the American terminology.

Remember that because the Irish universities do not set their academic timetables and course offerings until shortly before the beginning of the term. You probably will not finalize your registration until you are at your orientation in Ireland. The best way to cope with the uncertainty of what classes will actually be offered at your host university is to select many classes that would satisfy DU degree requirements and have them all pre-approved at DU; this way you will have many back-up plans when you register on-site. You can use the previous years’ catalogue as a guide because it’s likely that your host university will offer similar classes again, especially at lower levels. You should already be familiar with where to find the course listings since it was required to list some classes as part of your application; but if you have questions about this, e-mail your host university international office contact.

One way to maximize your level of immersion with local students and experience the Irish education system like a local is to take as many modules as possible from one department all at the same level, for example, taking 2000-level English modules. The reason for this is that local second-year English majors will be taking only 2000-level English modules; therefore, you’re likely to have a lot of the same people in all your courses, giving you ample opportunity to get to know your peers and experience their education system. Always remember, however, to discuss what credits you plan to earn abroad with your academic advisors at DU.

The best way to get your first-choice classes is to make sure that your host university is aware of your most current preferences. Many of our partnering universities do offer pre-registration. Therefore, if your preferences change from what you listed on your application, please e-mail your host university’s international office and let them know about this change.

**Getting Classes Approved for DU Degree Requirements**

Remember that generally all the courses you take abroad will be considered general electives unless you have successfully completed the course approval process and obtained approval for each course that you want to use to satisfy other DU requirements (i.e., major, minor, or common curriculum requirements). Directions for the course approval process are posted on our website at [http://www.du.edu/abroad/academics/earning-credit.html](http://www.du.edu/abroad/academics/earning-credit.html).

**Course Levels and Equivalencies**

In general, we translate the course level equivalencies in the following way:

- **100/1000 level** – Ireland First Year – DU Sophomore/Junior Level
- **200/2000 level** – Ireland Second Year – DU Junior/Senior Level
- **300/3000 level** – Ireland Third Year – DU Senior/Graduate Level

We assume courses will be upper division in Ireland, unless the course’s title is “Introduction to ____” (fill the blank with a very broad academic discipline such as psychology, sociology, or philosophy)” and it is a first-year course. Always confirm a course will be upper-division with your OIE advisor if your academic advisor’s approval is contingent upon it being upper level.

**Credit Loads and Limits**
Before reading this section, please be sure to read the “Credit” section in the “Study Abroad Policies” of your handbook. The amount of credit that you will earn for each course varies not only among the locations in Ireland, but also among the courses within a particular university.

You must remain “full-time” in the terms of your host university. Your legal residence in Ireland is only valid so long as you are a full-time student at your host university. If you compromise this, you invalidate your legal immigration status and are vulnerable to deportation.

Grades

The Irish education system does not suffer from the same grade inflation that has become a problem in the US. Most Irish professors are accustomed to awarding “C” level grades to the average hard-working student, reserving “A” grades for rare and extraordinary students. Returned students have equated “B+” level work with “C+” level work in Ireland. Also, note that the grades awarded by percentage are very different; for example, a 70 percent in most Irish universities is considered to be the equivalent of an “A+”!

You Must Complete ALL Coursework Before You Leave!

Many of you will need to arrange your exams and/or final paper due dates with your professors before a specified deadline set by the international office at your host university. You may not be taking your exam with the local students because their assessment will be given after the winter holiday.

Your professors may be unfamiliar with the procedure for international students. Your host university’s international office will provide you with information at orientation, but keep in mind the following:

It’s not uncommon that a professor will misplace your work which you turned in for a grade. Save all your coursework and material and bring it home with you. If possible, save proof that you turned in your final assignment or exam on-time so that you can prove you did the exam or assignment in case your work is lost.

Being Successful in the Irish Academic System

The American and Irish education systems are very different; in fact, most study abroad students experience culture shock most vividly on campus. In the following paragraphs, we will try give you a better idea of what you might expect to experience.

Understand that Irish universities aim to produce specialists while most American undergraduate degrees are built to produce well-rounded students. To get into college, Irish students take placement exams on a particular academic subject at the end of the equivalent of their high school. They typically take these exams in 2-4 academic subjects that interest them (you might imagine these to be like AP exams), and they will receive a score in each area. If these topics in which they took the exams (for example, physics, math, and chemistry), students would use their highest score (say it’s physics) to apply to universities to study that subject (e.g., physics) exclusively for 3 years to get an undergraduate degree.

There are several consequences of this that may shock American students, for example:

- These degrees are rather rigidly mapped out and have first- and second-year students often taking the same sets of courses; in other words, there are far fewer major electives. Therefore, even if you cannot see the course catalogue for next academic year, they’re sure to offer the same sets of lower level courses every year, especially if they are required courses for a particular degree.
- Irish students have no general education requirements outside of their majors. They only study their topic. Because local students will be focusing exclusively on their majors at your host university, it is recommended that you do the same and at the same level if this is possible (remember to check with your major advisor first!) to genuinely experience what the local higher education is like. Because local students tend to take the same courses in the same term as they work through their
degree requirements, they tend to see each other in class a lot. The professors will often make references to other courses that these students will be enrolled in at the same time.  
• Every class you take in Ireland will be full of majors in that topic, and they will come to the course with a solid background knowledge and familiarity with the terminology. Therefore, if you’re going to take a class in a subject that you know nothing about, be prepared to work hard and stick to the first-year courses.

Remember also that Irish universities are public institutions. They do not compete with each other for business in the same way that American universities do. High levels of service and support for students is not a major selling point for them, especially not when compared to US private institutions such as DU. You should be prepared to be persistent, but polite and patient whenever you need assistance.

Another key to understanding the Irish education system is to understand that the local students have been raised to self-educate. Professors view learning how to educate yourself independently as part of the whole point of being at a university; therefore, they will push their students to not be overly reliant on their instructors, and they will expect you to be in the same mind set. Your independent research in the library or elsewhere—and not so much in the classroom—is the primary place where learning takes place in their education system. To get the most out of your study abroad at an Irish university, you should see this as an opportunity to take ownership over your education and practice self-education more independently.

Because of this central difference in the education systems, you will probably notice some of the following about academic life in your Irish university:
• A lack of structure or sense of what’s expected of you to earn a good grade;
• Classes meet less frequently, and attendance might not be taken at all or considered as part of your grade;
• Local students take the lectures less seriously. Lectures are seen as a supplement to your private studies, not as the central piece;
• There are fewer assessments (e.g., quizzes, papers, exams, presentations), but they are weighed more heavily. Many courses may only require one exam or paper that’s worth 100% of your grade!
• You are not given many specific reading assignments nor is there a particular text that the class will focus upon;
• Classes are usually not discussion-based and your participation in class may not be considered as part of your grade;
• Professors are less approachable and less available;
• More time is spent in the library.

Assessment (Grading)
For your class grade, you may be expected to concentrate your academic efforts in library research and writing. It is not uncommon to have a large percentage of your grade based upon only one or two exams. The tutorials may require you to prepare material, present a paper, read articles or participate in group discussions.

Exams can last up to three hours in length. Some may be “open book” exams. In other cases, you may be given a topic or questions beforehand. In most, however, the exam will be closed book. In Ireland, the final exam may count for a larger proportion of your grade than in the US (up to 100% of your grade). Your exam or paper should be your very best work and you should set a specific study plan for yourself throughout the semester. Below are some helpful tips:
• The quality of your essay will be compared with others in your class. Grades will be awarded based on how yours ranks relative to the others. Students whose answers demonstrate that they did a lot of research outside of class tend to earn the highest grades.
• Make sure you cite sources in your paper/exam and bring in outside sources NOT discussed in class.
• Exam questions from previous terms are often available so that you can get a sense of typical questions.
• Plan on studying 3-4 hours for every hour spent in class.
• Use the learning outcomes of the class to determine what you should focus on and what outside research you need to find.
• Request a reading list from the professor (if not already provided) and search these sources for recurring themes and references.
• Supplement lecture topics with in-depth readings on the same theme.
• Schedule a time to meet with professors early in the term to show them your study plan. They may have additional suggestions for you.
• DO NOT PRESUME A CLASS IS EASY BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO HOMEWORK! Remember the professor assumes you will be assigning yourself homework and that will be reflected in the exam.

Learning Differences and Accommodations
If you have special needs regarding assessment, such as reading assistance, or note taking assistance, please inform your overseas program. Disability services are available in Ireland; however, you must give your documentation to the Irish university's disabilities services office, so it may determine accommodations for which you are eligible in Ireland. If you plan to request accommodation for a disability, you must do so now because waiting until after your program starts to disclose may result in you not receiving the accommodations you requested.

Living in Ireland

Accommodation (Housing)
At your Irish university, you will most likely live in a university residence hall with domestic or other international students. In most cases, this will be a co-ed residence hall with a small, private bedroom and shared facilities (bathroom, living area, kitchen, etc.) with the other students on your floor. However, confirm your housing options with your OIE advisor and host university as these may vary.

Make sure to submit your housing application in time. Your host university will send you instructions on this process—typically via email after you have been accepted—so it is very important that you read this information thoroughly. Housing is limited, and failure to apply for housing on time may result in not receiving a housing assignment.

Please read your accommodation contracts before signing them, being sure to double-check that the dates are correct. Some students have unknowingly signed year-long and were billed for breaking their contract early when they returned to the US after only one semester.

As a participant on a DU Partner Program, you must live in DU-arranged student housing during your program.

Moving In and Moving Out
Your host university/housing provider should provide you with a specific window of time to move in and receive your keys.
  o Plan your arrival around this time and have a phone number for a housing contact in case you arrive late, or no one is at the accommodation office when you arrive
  o This information is usually emailed to you over the summer for Fall term students. Contact your host university and/or housing provider if you have not received it
It is wise to have the name and contact information of a local hostel/hotel, just in case something unanticipated happens and you’re not able to get into your housing the night of your arrival. Make sure you are aware of your move-out date and procedures and plan accordingly for the end of the term.

**Damage Deposit**

You may be required to pay a refundable damage deposit to secure your accommodation, which is usually around €250-300. Before paying the deposit, please check with the OIE or host university that it is refundable. Because this deposit is refundable, DU will not cover this for you. If you are unable to pay your deposit up front, please speak with the OIE. To secure some university accommodations, a “Pre-payment” (i.e., a down payment on your rent) may be required. If the fee is a non-refundable fee relating to housing rent, the OIE will pay for this on your behalf.

If the cost of damages to your room exceeds your damage deposit, the OIE reserves the right to bill you for the outstanding amount. Your abroad transcript will be held until the bill has been settled.

**Meals**

DU Partner Program universities in Ireland do not provide meal plans for their students. For this reason, you will be responsible for your own meals and will not be charged a DU meal plan for your term abroad. If your host university does offer meal plan options, these are entirely optional and you would need to pay your host institution directly for that cost.

**Realistic Expectations and Planning Tips**

Remember that most things in Ireland are smaller, older, and more expensive than in the US. Please set realistic expectations about your accommodation in Ireland. You can usually see pictures of the rooms online, or you can ask a recently returned DU student for a description.

*Many programs and housing providers do NOT provide you with linens and basic kitchenware.* Check with your accommodation provider to find out what is included, if that information is not provided upfront. Most housing options have websites with answers to the most common questions. You should build this into your start-up costs when you are designing your budget. If there is a “starter kit” available for purchase, this cost is not covered by DU.

Laundry facilities are typically more expensive in Ireland than US students are accustomed to. It can cost around €5 to do one load of laundry, so budget accordingly.

**Behaviour**

You need to respect quiet hours, guest policies, and other rules of your housing site. Your mature behavior ensures that DU can continue housing its study abroad students in those halls. Have respect for the accommodations management team. If you do not agree with the management about certain issues, please let the OIE know the details of the disagreement so it may intercede.

**HINT:** If you do not agree with the stated charges for certain services provided by the residence hall, do not use those services. Please do not use those services and then refuse to pay saying the cost is too high.

**Fitness Center Membership**

The Irish government heavily subsidizes university education for its citizens. This means that some on-campus facilities, such as the fitness center, charge for student usage. Therefore, when budgeting for study abroad, consider whether you plan to use the fitness center. You can generally find usage rates on the overseas university’s website by searching for “sport” or “fitness.”
Internet
As with the fitness center, you may have to pay for internet usage at your program location. Some universities have unlimited internet usage when you are in the university computer lab; some universities give you up to a certain amount of downloads on your account for free.

If there is internet available in your housing, you will most likely pay for your internet usage. You can contact your accommodations provider to understand typical costs of internet for one term. Because many other DU study abroad students will be in homestay or other accommodation situations without internet access, DU decided it would not be fair to foot the internet bill for some students, but not others.

HINT: While email is a great way to keep in touch with family and friends back here, too much time spent on Skype, IM, or social media will prevent you from having a full study abroad experience.

Meeting Locals
A major goal of study abroad is to develop cross-cultural understanding. In addition to achieving academic success, you should strive to meet locals and get to know their culture. Successful strategies for meeting locals include the following:

1. **Make an effort.** Because the universities host new study abroad students each semester (some of whom promise to keep in touch with the locals but never do), Irish students may not immediately try to befriend you. Likewise, Europeans generally take longer to form friendships rather than just acquaintances. As the “outsider” you must show that you want to meet the locals and get to know their culture. Be friendly and genuine.

2. **Join an organization.** Each of the universities has a student union or student guild which oversees clubs and societies on campus. They may also provide general support such as tutoring or helping connect students to resources/activities on campus. The university’s sport center should also have a listing of social sport clubs that you can join.

3. **Stick around.** While you may be tempted to head out every weekend to travel around the country, doing so will greatly impede your chances of making friendships with local students. Many Irish students go home on the weekends – make it a goal to be invited home! Constantly talking about your travel, particularly about expensive excursions, will also turn off the local students, who typically will not have as much spending money as an American study abroad student.

4. **Be respectful.** Compare and contrast gets old fast. Talking non-stop about your personal belongings, including cars and other expensive items in the US, will merely reinforce stereotypes about Americans and prevent you from getting to know local students.

5. **Know your politics.** Most likely you will be asked by locals about your political stance. Questions about your political views generally will be well-intentioned and made by people genuinely interested in hearing your perspective. Be careful not to get offended or defensive when these questions arise. Also, try not to compare and contrast governments. Your best move is to remain open-minded in political discussions.

6. **Know the local culture/history.** Identifying someone as “British” rather than “Irish,” “Welsh,” or “Scottish” can have deep political or historical connotations, and individuals often have a strong preference in how they identify. Do some research about the local area and listen to how people identify themselves before making assumptions. Don’t be afraid to ask respectful questions.

Keep in mind that you are only there for a short time, so you want to make the most of your time in Ireland.
Health & Safety

Health Insurance
You are responsible for ensuring that you have sufficient health insurance coverage while abroad. You should contact your insurance provider to understand their coverage abroad and, if you are interested, explore travel insurance options.

Non-Irish or EU residents should anticipate having to pay for all health services. These charges can be quite high—in some cases higher than in the US—so it is important that you understand what is covered by your insurance and what travel insurance options exist if you are interested in more coverage.

We require that you maintain your US insurance policy while you are abroad. It is important for you to maintain coverage in the case you require any short or longer-term care abroad, need to continue care at home, travel outside Ireland, or come home mid-term for any reason. DU’s health insurance is valid overseas and can provide additional coverage while abroad. If you typically waive DU health insurance, we recommend that you contact your current health policy provider to find out what type of coverage it offers while abroad. Make sure you understand how to process any claims and what you may need to pay up front.

Vaccinations
You should check with your doctor for any recommendations. If you plan to visit other countries while you are abroad, check with one of the following to find out what vaccinations, if any, may be required:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- DU Health and Counseling Center: www.du.edu/health-and-counseling-center/medical/travelmedicine
- International SOS: www.du.edu/abroad/health/index.html

Homesickness, Mental Health and Culture Shock
US students in Ireland often experience a high level of culture shock because they expect it to be so similar to the US. Although Ireland is English-speaking, there are still many large differences that you will encounter. For example, you will notice a very different mentality regarding customer service, convenience, and consumerism. Stores in Ireland are open less frequently and are usually less helpful to their customers. If you are expecting the US with just a funny accent, you are in for a real surprise!

Another common source of struggle for DU students in Ireland is the weather. With approximately 300 days of sunshine in Colorado, it can be very difficult adjusting to the typical gray, rainy weather of Ireland. Remember that you’ll be just as far north as Canada.

Student unions often offer counseling services. If you are seeing a counselor here, you should see one abroad too. Culture shock and homesickness tend to exacerbate (not resolve) depression, anxiety, and many other emotional concerns and physiological disorders. Even if you’re not accustomed to meeting with a counselor, you may consider meeting with one while you’re abroad. Even if you just want to talk through and process how you’re adjusting to your new surroundings, counseling is a luxury that is very expensive in the US, but may be available at a lower cost through your host university’s student union!

Emergency Number
The standard emergency phone numbers in Ireland are 112 or 999.

U.S. Embassy & Consulate General in Ireland
Americans living abroad are encouraged to register with their nearest embassy or consulate through the US Department of State’s STEP (Smart Traveler Enrollment Program) website. By doing so, you will receive updated information on travel and security within the country to which you are heading. You also make it easier for the US embassy (and your family) to locate you in case of emergency or disaster. To register, go to: https://step.state.gov/step.

Crime

Ireland has a relatively low rate of violent crime. Petty crime and residential crime are much more common, especially in urban and tourist areas. Rates for residential break-ins, theft, burglary, and purse-snatching have all risen in recent years, and thieves often target rental cars and tourists, particularly in the vicinity of tourist attractions. In rare cases, these crimes have involved physical assault or violence, more commonly in Dublin. Avoid parks after dark. In addition to guarding your valuables, passport and wallet, avoid showing signs of affluence. The State Department recommends you leave your passport in a secure location separate from your purse or luggage. Do not leave your drinks unattended at bars or restaurants, as there have been reported incidents of drinks being spiked with illegal substances, leading to robbery and sexual assaults. Please practice sound personal security practices and maintain an awareness of your surroundings during your stay in Ireland (US State Department, 2014). International SOS (ISOS) has detailed information for cities, occasionally down to the individual neighborhood. To log in to ISOS with the DU membership number, go to: https://www.internalsos.com/member-zone.

The loss or theft abroad of a US passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest US Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you in finding appropriate medical care, help you contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you understand the local criminal justice process and find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities

Quality medical care is widely available, but waiting lists exist for certain types of treatment. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Natural Disasters

Ireland is not prone to regular natural disasters; however severe storms and flooding can occur in certain areas. The US State Departments offers the following resource to help you plan in the case of an emergency overseas: travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/emergencies.html. You should also read through FEMA’s Disaster Response Tips: https://www.ready.gov/be-informed.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions

All traffic travels on the left in Ireland. Roads are generally excellent but often narrow and only two lanes. In urban areas, roads can be very congested. Cars turning left must yield to oncoming cars turning in the same direction. This is especially important to remember on two-lane roads. Proceed carefully through intersections and be wary of drivers who may run yellow and red lights. Drivers should use caution to avoid animals when driving in rural areas. Pedestrians are advised to use crosswalks and look carefully in all directions before crossing a street or roadway. Traffic always yields to the right and pedestrians do not have the right of way except at crosswalks... and usually not even then!
Drivers yield to all traffic crossing or approaching from the right, and the speed limit is 70mph (roughly 100km) on highways. Multi-lane motorways and expressways form the approaches to urban areas. Distances are posted in kilometers (km).

Drinking and driving laws are strictly enforced in Ireland and often result in prison sentences.

**Driving Abroad**
The University of Denver—along with our partner universities in Ireland—discourages students from driving because it can be difficult and dangerous.

**Criminal Penalties**
While in a foreign country, US citizens are subject to that country’s laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and do not always afford the protections available under US law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those for similar offenses in the United States. Persons violating Irish laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking of illegal drugs in Ireland are severe, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Some materials that are legal in the US are illegal to carry in Ireland.

**Pubs and Alcohol**
Please reference the OIE Study Abroad Handbook for policy about alcohol.

**Communication**

**How to Call Home**
First things first - call home as soon as you can after arrival because your family is anxious to hear from you. Give your family your abroad phone number, email address and mailing address so they know how to reach you in the event of an emergency.

To make a direct call to the US using a phone that provides a direct dialing option, dial: **00+ 1 + area code + phone number**.

To help you call home or to help your family call you, please refer to the following link for detailed dialing instructions: [www.countrycallingcodes.com](http://www.countrycallingcodes.com).

**Calling Cards**
Pre-paid calling cards can be purchased both in the US and Ireland. Generally, calling rates with cards from the US are slightly lower, though it depends on the card. Do some research to see which card offers the best rate per minute. Cards can be purchased almost anywhere: at the airport, newspaper shops, and markets. Be careful of using your US cell phone without understanding roaming or international charges.

**Time Differences**
Whatever calling method you choose, consider the time difference before you dial. Generally, all locations in Ireland are 7 hours ahead of Denver. However, be mindful of the time change in the spring and fall. While Ireland does observe daylight savings time, the exact date of the change may differ from the US.


**Mobile Phones**
Many students purchase a cheap pay-as-you-go phone while in Ireland. Keep in mind that it may be cheaper to “rent” a mobile phone rather than buy one. Ask former study abroad students who may still have their Irish cell phone if they are interested in selling it to you.

**Email**

Your Irish university may provide you with a local email account. Please make sure that you continue to check your DU email regularly (or forward it), as this is how the OIE will most likely maintain communication with you. Keep in mind, however, that you may or may not have internet access in your housing, and you will likely have to pay for internet use both on- and off-campus. Check your housing and host university’s websites to find out about internet access where you’ll be studying.

**Money**

**Irish Currency**

The Irish currency is the “Euro”. The Euro (€) is made up of 100 cents (sometimes called Euro cents). Notes come in denominations of €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200, and €500 and differ in color and size. Coins come in €2, €1, 50c, 20c, 10c, 5c, 2c, and 1c, and differ in color and size. Start to familiarize yourself with the currency, both notes and coins, as well as exchange rates. Check out [www.xe.com/currencyconverter/](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/) to figure out conversion rates.

We suggest you carry a small amount of local currency before you leave, roughly €200 Euros, for the first few days, and especially if you plan to arrive on a weekend. You can exchange money at a US bank or airport before departure or at an Irish airport upon arrival.

**Cost of Living**

Cost of living in Ireland is generally higher than in the US. Remember that as part of your immigration process, you will be required to show proof of funding to support yourself. Please refer to the immigration checklist in your DU Passport. Be sure to account for any private travel or additional optional expenses. Many host universities will also have cost of living calculators on their websites or in their visiting student handbooks to help you determine a feasible budget during your time abroad. Program returnees are also a good resource for suggestions. Remember to account for what is not included in your program. Some expenses that typically are your individual responsibility include meals, an unlimited local transportation pass, and a recreation center pass. Internet service is not always included.

**Bank Account in Ireland**

It is not always possible for short term students to open a bank account in Ireland, though some banks will allow it. Typically, opening an account will require an application form, your passport, proof that you are a full-time student, and proof of address in Ireland. A bank account can allow you to keep your money in a safe place and avoid some ATM fees. If you are interested in the option, ask the international office at your host university for further information and advice.

If you open a bank account in Ireland, your family can transfer money from a bank in the US to your bank in Ireland. Ask your US bank and the receiving Irish bank about the service charges that may apply to this transfer.
ATM & Credit Cards

Make sure you know how to contact your US bank from overseas. Find out if they offer a 24-hour customer service help line and what their emergency phone number is for calls from outside of the US (1-800 numbers do not work outside of the US). If your bankcard is lost or stolen, you should notify your bank immediately.

Most credit cards, such as MasterCard, Visa or American Express, can be used in Ireland, as well as worldwide. ATMs are widely available. International credit cards and ATM cards will work as long as they have a four-digit PIN encoded. Check with your bank before leaving home. You may also want to ask you bank about getting a “chip and pin” card, as they are most common in Ireland.

If your credit card is lost or stolen, you must contact the financial institution that issued your card immediately and report it lost or stolen. You should keep a copy of your financial institution's name, its customer service phone number, and your card account number in a convenient place -- separate from your card.

Traveler's Checks, Cashier’s Checks, Money Orders, Personal Checks

We do not recommend taking cashier’s checks, money orders, or personal checks. Although banks will accept your checks, they will not give you cash for them until they have cleared through the whole banking network, which usually takes at least 6-8 weeks.

General Information

Electricity

If you plan to bring any electrical appliances with you from the US (e.g. hairdryers, curling irons, etc.), make sure that you bring a transformer and an adaptor. The electrical current in Ireland is 230 volts, while it is only 110 volts in the US. This means that American appliances are made to handle about half the amount of electricity that Irish sockets provide!

Therefore, you need not only an adaptor to change the shape of the plug, but also a transformer to lower the voltage for American appliances. One good option is to simply purchase lower cost appliances once you arrive in Ireland. Irish adaptors look like the picture on the right—3 prongs: 2 horizontal, 1 vertical.

Weather

Ireland uses Celsius (not Fahrenheit) as their system of measurement for weather. To help you remember approximate temperatures in Celsius, consider that:

- Water freezes at 0° Celsius: 32° Fahrenheit
- Water boils at 100° Celsius: 212° Fahrenheit
- Normal body temperature: 37° Celsius/98.6° Fahrenheit

Weather in Ireland is generally cool, though it can get quite warm in the summer and very cold in the winter. Pack according to the seasonal conditions of your host city. This means bringing warm clothing, including hats, gloves, a winter coat, and scarves. Your warmest sweaters and trousers will also be necessary. Fleece is a practical accessory as is an umbrella. Even within your housing, you may find the temperature colder than
you're accustomed to in the US. A good sleeping bag and a pair of thermal underwear will help combat the cold. Libraries are popular havens in colder weather because they are generally well heated.

For further information about the weather conditions, check out www.weather.com. If you refer to Ireland weather sources, the following temperature conversions will help you:

- Fahrenheit to Celsius: Subtract 32 then multiply by 5/9
- Celsius to Fahrenheit: Multiply by 9/5 then add 32

**Irish Slang**

You’d be surprised how different English can sound in Ireland! Google “Irish Slang” to get an idea of some common phrases you’ll likely hear.

For more information on Ireland visit: 
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Ireland.html
## Important Contacts

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