School of Religion, Peace Studies

Guide for International Students, Belfast
2019-20
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Introduction

Welcome to the guide for international students applying to courses at the School of Religion (Peace Studies), Trinity College Dublin at Belfast. The information you need as an international student coming to Belfast is very different than if you were applying to study at the main Trinity campus in Dublin. This guide covers UK visas, healthcare, housing and more for prospective students. There are contact details at the end of the document. Please feel free to get in touch with any questions!

Important Information on Non-EU Fees

There are two sets of fees for all Trinity College Dublin courses: EU and Non-EU. It is useful to know that if you are paying Non-EU fees, you will need to pay the full tuition fees at the start of your course. The option to pay in two instalments is only available to EU fee-paying students. Please see Academic Registry Fees and Payments for further details.

Student Visas

EEA nationals
The UK government has guaranteed that whatever the outcome of Brexit, the current immigration rules will not change for EEA nationals for the 2019-20 academic year, so there will only be a brief check of identity documents when you arrive in the UK. If you would like to keep up to date with developments on this, the UK Council for International Student Affairs UKCISA is a good source of advice for prospective students applying to courses in the UK.

Non EEA nationals
If you are a non-EEA national you will need to apply for a Tier 4 UK student visa. You should apply from your own home country before you travel. Application is via the new online service Access UK. Feedback from past students is that applying for a
student visa can be expensive and complicated, but with up to date information and by starting in good time you should be able to navigate it without too much difficulty. The best place to find detailed information on completing your application is the UK Visas and Immigration Tier 4 guidance for applicants.

What do you need to get a visa?
The visa application is points-based: you need 30 points for having a CAS (confirmation of acceptance for studies, supplied by Trinity College Dublin at Belfast) and 10 points for having enough money to cover your first year’s fees and living expenses for the majority of your course (at least 50%). Living expenses are £1,015 per month for any region of the UK outside London, although you should find Belfast a little cheaper than other areas. Evidential documents for finance and qualifications are not usually required if you are from a country which qualifies for ‘differentiation arrangements’ however you should ensure you have these documents available as they can be requested. See full list of countries that qualify for differentiation arrangements.

Your CAS number
To obtain your CAS number, once you have accepted a firm offer of a place on one of the Belfast-based courses (MPhil in Conflict Resolution, or PhD study), please send a scan of the photograph page of your passport to Caroline Clarke in the Belfast office: cclarke4@tcd.ie. You will be issued with a CAS document, which includes your CAS number and other information that is helpful for your visa application. A CAS is valid for 6 months and can be issued from April of the year of entry. You can begin your visa application anytime in the 3 months before the course start date, but no earlier.

To speed up your visa application UKVI offers the following advice:

- Submit any supporting documents either with your application or shortly after in a timely manner;
- Enrol your biometrics as soon as you receive your enrolment request;
• Ensure you complete the Immigration Health Surcharge along with your Tier 4 application; and
• Use the Immigration Health Surcharge fee checker to understand the required payment.

**Healthcare Surcharge**

Students are required to pay a Healthcare Surcharge as part of the visa application. In 2019 this will be £300 for each 12 month period and it entitles you to use of the National Health Service (NHS) for the duration of your stay in the UK as a student. Please note that students applying for a visa to undertake a PhD will need to pay the full amount to cover their whole period of study in advance. Any dependents are also required to pay the healthcare surcharge as part of their separate visa application.

**Start of term dates and orientation**

The key date you need to know about is Orientation Day in Belfast, normally held in the first week of September. We will confirm the exact date and provide more details nearer the time. All Belfast-based MPhil students are required to attend, and new PhD students are welcome. Orientation includes a tour of facilities, a course information session, a tour of Queen’s University Sports Centre (PEC) and information on how support services work for students in Belfast.

Of course, throughout the pre-arrival period you will get lots of information about events taking place at the Trinity campus in Dublin. All of these events are optional and it is worth making the journey down to take part in a few of them as it helps to familiarize you with the facilities there. The Graduate Students Union (GSU) website is a good source of information for all things postgrad at the Dublin end.

As well as the main Trinity postgraduate orientation events, the School of Religion holds an orientation event in the first week of September in the school building on the main Trinity campus (see map) and Belfast students often attend. If you decide to go along, it is an opportunity to collect your student ID card from Academic Registry (which you will need to borrow books from the library in Belfast) and to get
to know other students in the wider school. Belfast-based students can take modules in Dublin Peace Studies courses and vice-versa, so there is lots of cross-border activity for those who want to get involved!

**When should you plan to arrive?**
Your student visa normally allows you to arrive up to a month before the start date on your CAS (likely to the end of August - date to be confirmed) which gives you time to settle in and find your feet before classes begin. It is advisable to arrive in Belfast at least a couple of weeks before classes start to allow time to find housing. For any late applicants to the course who are applying for a visa in a tight timeframe, expedited services may be available in your country. The visa usually includes a four month stay in the UK after your studies which you can use to travel around and see the sights.

**Travel to Belfast**

**How to get here**
If coming from the US, you are likely to travel to Northern Ireland by one of three routes: a flight directly to Belfast International Airport; a flight to mainland UK (e.g. London, Manchester etc.) and a connecting flight to Belfast International or Belfast City Airport, or a direct flight to Dublin. Past students mentioned that US-Reykjavik-Belfast is also worth exploring. A 24-hour bus service runs run from both Belfast International Airport and Dublin Airport into Belfast city centre.

At your point of entry into a UK airport an immigration officer may ask you to show evidence of your reasons for coming to the UK. This could include your CAS document, acceptance letter, travel tickets, passport with 30-day vignette sticker, and evidence of funding. Spot interviews may take place. Whatever your chosen route you should carry the key documents in your hand luggage.
If you travel via Dublin

If you plan to fly into Dublin rather than a UK airport you should keep your travel documents as proof of your journey to the UK. As you will not be arriving at a UK airport, your passport won’t be stamped. You can get a stamp later by leaving and coming back into a UK airport, for example if you take a trip to Europe. If you arrive into Dublin Airport, you will be in the Common Travel Area. UKCISA has [further information](#) for students arriving via Dublin whose place of study is in the UK.

Collecting your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) after you arrive in Belfast

When your leave to travel is granted in your home country, you will be given a 30 day vignette in your passport. This gives you permission to come to the UK and is valid for 30 days from the date you said you would arrive in the UK (even if you arrive at a later date). You should collect your BRP from the main Belfast Post Office in High Street within 10 days of your arrival in the UK. You will receive a decision letter from UKVI telling you when it will be ready for collection. Bring your passport and any other IDs you have when you collect your BRP. If you have problems picking it up or if it contains any errors please report it as soon as possible. You can find advice on the [UKVI website](#). At the back of this document, there is a map showing the location of the High Street Post Office.

Bringing your documents to the School

You will need to bring your BRP and passport to the School office in Belfast at the start of term, as we are required to keep a copy for our records. Usually we scan these at orientation and return them to you the same day. You will also need to let us know your term time address and contact details once available and keep us updated with any changes throughout the year.

Travel between Belfast and Dublin

At the start of term you will also need to travel to the main campus in Dublin to collect your student ID card. Don’t forget, you need to have completed online registration before you can collect your card! Academic Registry will let you know when your card is ready for collection.
Students from some countries will need a short Irish visitor visa to make the journey to Dublin, as this entails crossing from the UK into the Republic of Ireland. The same would also apply if taking a module at our Dublin school. Such students are also likely to need their UK student visa to allow them to leave and re-enter the UK. To get an Irish visitor visa, once you have arrived in Belfast and completed the UK visa procedures, you will need to go in person to the Irish Embassy in London. For more information on how to apply for this visa or for a list of nationalities this applies to, please see the Irish Embassy website. Please note however, that Academic Registry will be happy to post your card to Belfast if you prefer to avoid the added expense of getting a second visa. You can request this through the Belfast office.

All international students are advised to carry their passport, BRP and Trinity student ID card when travelling between Belfast and Dublin, as there are sometimes identity checks on public transport.

**Accommodation**

It is a student’s own responsibility to find accommodation for the year. To help you, in this section we provide information on accommodation available on-site, other student housing options, which areas of the city are best to live in, and useful websites to help you get started. Feedback from past students suggests that it’s best to started ahead of your arrival if possible.

**Short term accommodation suggestions**

If you need somewhere to stay while you search for a place for the year, here are some options in South Belfast recommended by past students:

- **Arnies Backpacker** Fitzwilliam Street
- **Paddys Palace** Fitzwilliam Street
- **Lagan Backpackers** Fitzroy Avenue
- **Global Village** University Street
- **Vagabonds** University Road
• Full list of Belfast hostels from Hostelworld.com
• Air B&B run by past student Ormeau Road area

**On-site accommodation**

Trinity College Dublin at Belfast is located at no. 9 Lennoxvale, just off the Malone Road and right in the heart of the pleasant university quarter of the city. [Click here for map](#). The School of Religion shares the building with Edgehill Theological College and other offices of the Methodist Church. There is a student accommodation block on-site with a small number of rooms are available which are allocated on a first come first served basis. As a guide, usually 2 or 3 students opt for this and the rest find a place in the surrounding area, either in one of the accommodation blocks listed below or in a shared house. As the on-site accommodation is managed separately by Edgehill College, please contact the Edgehill bursar Wayne Mullholland for more information: [wmulholland@edgehillcollege.org](mailto:wmulholland@edgehillcollege.org). You can apply [after Easter](#) in the year of entry.

**Other Student Accommodation in Belfast**

There are several new student accommodation blocks in the city open to students of any university. All offer a range of packages at different prices.

**SOUTH BELFAST**

- Queen’s University accommodation – the Queen’s Elms option is a few minutes’ walk from where you will be studying and has ‘lifestyle choices’ - no alcohol and quiet living.
- Botanic Studios - Dublin Road, about 10 minutes’ walk. Some past and current students have stayed there and although it mostly houses undergraduates, they would recommend it.

**CITY CENTRE**

- Student Roost - various city centre locations. None of our students stayed here to date, so we can’t say what it is like.
- Mark Royal House – near the Cathedral Quarter. Past students have had a good experience here, in fact the two girls you see in the photo on their
home page are busy studying for their MPhil with Trinity in Belfast! Suitable for students who want to live in the city centre – bus ride from south Belfast.

**Private Rented Accommodation**

For a general search for student housing in the private rented sector, you could try the [Student Pad website](#). This lists private rental properties approved for students by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the local housing authority, so the properties listed on the website should reach a certain standard. Usually these are rooms in a shared house, so look for somewhere described as suitable for postgrads or professionals. You won’t find our small campus listed so just search under Queen’s University or under area: Belfast- Botanic, Malone, Stranmillis, Windsor and Ravenhill. Student Pad also has a useful [advice section](#) covering safety tips, signing your contract etc.

**Choosing which area to live in**

Plenty of student rentals are available in south Belfast and within walking distance of where you will be studying. These are Lisburn Road (also known as Windsor), Ormeau, Malone, Stranmillis, Ravenhill and Botanic. **The area directly behind Queen’s University known as ‘the Holylands’ is popular with undergrads and can be quite rowdy; for a quieter life you might prefer to avoid that area!**

**Useful Websites**

- [Daft.ie](#) Student Accommodation (select Queens University Belfast as the nearest campus)
- [Belfast Student Accommodation](#)
- [Spare Room Flat Share](#)
- [City Lets](#)
- [Property Pal](#)
- [Gumtree](#)
- [Property News](#)
TIPS

Safety
Belfast is a relatively safe city. There have been some incidents of racism and hate crimes directed towards non-white immigrants, however there are plenty of areas where anyone will feel safe and welcome. Please contact us if you would like advice about a particular area - we will be happy to help with your questions.

Sharing with other students on the course
In the weeks before term you will be invited to connect with other students through a class What’sApp group. This means you can find out if anyone is interested in sharing accommodation.

Luggage
If you need somewhere to leave your luggage for a few days when you arrive, please contact the office and we will do our best to help.

Location of Belfast School
The school building is in Lennoxvale, off the Malone Road, and a short taxi ride from the main bus and train stations in the city centre. To get there by bus, take the 8B or 8C from the City Hall. Hop off a couple of stops after Queen’s University. We are right at the end of the Lennoxvale cul-de-sac. See map at the back of this booklet. Once you have arrived in Belfast you are welcome to drop by and ask any questions you might have. Mornings are best, as the Belfast Executive Officer, Caroline Clarke, is available 9.00am – 1.00pm.

Important Information on Access to Money
Please ensure you have access to enough money to see you through the first few weeks of term in the unlikely event there is any delay in processing student loans.
Working

A Tier 4 student visa entitles you to work for 20 hours during term time and full time during holidays. If you want to work, you will need to get a National Insurance Number. You can search for jobs through the local press or online. Local bars, cafés and shops will often post vacancies in their window, so you can drop in your CV. Bear in mind that if you take the Community Learning placement you will also have an internship to factor into your time in the second term. (The student visa covers you for the internship, which is unpaid, and you do not need to get a National Insurance number for this.) As we are a small department, unfortunately we cannot offer employment opportunities to students.

Healthcare

You can register with any doctor (GP) practice in your area. We strongly advise that you do this once you have found your accommodation for the year. You will be glad to have this in place if you get sick later in the year. You can make an appointment to register and take along your BRP, passport and evidence of your address. You will get an NHS medical card that you can also use to register with a dentist. A consultation with your doctor is free, but you may have to pay for any medicines prescribed. You can find a healthcare factsheet with more information and a list of GPs on our website.

Links with Queen’s University – Sports Centre, Clubs & Societies and Library

The following arrangements are in place for students at the School of Religion, Trinity College Dublin in Belfast:

- The Sports Centre Charge that you pay as part of tuition fees covers the cost of membership at Queen’s sports centre (PEC).
- An arrangement between Trinity and Queen’s students unions means you can join Queen’s clubs and societies.
• Associate membership of Queen’s library is provided for each student. There is a specialist library at the School of Religion, but study space is provided through the membership of the Queen’s library. These memberships need to be set up for you at the start of term, so please wait until we have gone through arrangements with you at orientation.

Living Costs

UKVI estimates that you will need around £1,015 per month to cover living expenses, although you will find Belfast a little cheaper compared to the rest of the UK. UKCISA is again helpful for general information on student finances, and indeed, anything you might need to know about life as a student in the UK!

Currency

The currency used in Northern Ireland is the Sterling. The Republic of Ireland uses Euros. Many city centre banks have Euro cash machines if you want to pick up Euros before you go, or you can buy currency at any Post Office. You can use both sterling and euros on the train to Dublin. Trinity fees are always in euros.

Opening a Bank Account

To open a bank account you will need your passport, BRP and a letter from us to confirm your student status and your term time address. Please request a letter from the Executive Officer in Belfast, Caroline Clarke, at cclarke4@tcd.ie when you are ready to open a bank account (i.e. once you know your term time address). The process seems to be a little complicated, but we have had good reports of Santander in city centre. Students in receipt of US Federal Aid have said it is best to open an account in a bank that has branches in the Republic of Ireland. Those include Ulster Bank and Bank of Ireland.
The Weather!

Northern Ireland has a mild, temperate climate. It is rare to get extremes of hot or cold, especially hot…. Do bring warm clothing and a waterproof coat. Layers are best, as the weather is always changeable.

Transport

Translink operates all local bus and trains services in Northern Ireland, making it easy to find information. The bus service within Belfast city is called Metro. Various smart cards are available to help you save money. Regular buses and trains run between Belfast and Dublin. The bus is cheaper but there are webfares available for the train if you book a few days in advance. Other Belfast to Dublin bus services are Aircoach and Dublin Coach. See maps at the back of this booklet for stations.

Shops

Here are some suggestions of shops where you can buy everything from pots and pans to duvet covers:

- Ikea – Holywood Exchange served by no 26 and 27 bus from city centre
- Argos – Castle Court and Rosses Court (near Victoria Square) and online
- B & M Bargains – Rosemary Street
- Dunnes – off Cornmarket

Further Information on Living in Belfast

More information about Student Life in Belfast is available on our website. You can download our helpful checklist for international students, a healthcare factsheet and a Living in Belfast guide.

Further Information on Studying in the UK

UK Council for International Student Affairs
British Council
Living in Dublin

The Trinity Global Relations Office provides information for International students living in Dublin. Information on travel and Irish visas is available here.
Contact Us

School of Religion office (Peace Studies), Trinity College Dublin at Belfast
Caroline Clarke
Senior Executive Officer
Tel: +44(0)28 9077 0087 (9.00 am – 1.00 pm GMT)
Email: cclarke4@tcd.ie

Academic Staff
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Course Coordinator
Tel: +44(0)28 9037 3988
Email: brbrowne@tcd.ie

Dr David Mitchell
Tel: +44(0)28 9037 3989
Email: damitche@tcd.ie

School of Religion Postgraduate Officer, based in Dublin. Admission enquiries.
Ms Helen Murphy
srpostgrad@tcd.ie
Tel: +353 (0)1 896 4772

Click here for map of Belfast campus
Follow us on Twitter
Follow us on Facebook
School video

Academic Registry
Central college office for application, fee payment and registration enquiries.
Tel: +353 (0) 1 896 4500
Email: academic.registry@tcd.ie
Maps

School of Religion, Trinity College Dublin at Belfast, 9 Lennoxevale, Malone Road

From city centre take the 8B or 8C bus which leaves from the City Hall near the Ulster Bank. Hop off after you see Fisherwick Presbyterian church on the left just past Queen’s university. ISE is the last building in the Lennoxvale cul de sac.
Post Office in High Street, city centre – collection point for BRP

Walk down Donegall Place, the main street opposite the front of the City Hall, and turn right at McDonalds. Post office is at the junction a short distance along on the left.
Main Transport Links

Translink coaches to Dublin, Dublin airport, Belfast International airport and Belfast City airport - Europa Bus Centre

Aircoach and Dublin Bus - Glengall Street, beside Europa Bus Centre

Trains to Dublin – Lanyon Place Station (formerly known as Central Station)