Irish School of Ecumenics, Belfast

International Student Handbook
2016–2017
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Applying for Your Student Visa

If you are a national of the EEA (27 EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) or Switzerland you have the right of free movement and residence in the UK. There will be only a brief passport or identity card check on arrival in the UK.

Non EU students should apply for a Tier 4 student visa, see UKVI website: https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa. You can apply for your visa anytime from 3 months before the start of your course.


Some US students chose to use an expedited service such as WorldBridge or Swift.

As part of your visa application you will need a CAS (confirmation of acceptance for studies) from ISE. You may also have to provide for your visa application documents TCD has used to issue your CAS (eg transcripts). We can provide this once you have accepted an unconditional offer for the course and paid your course fee deposit. We normally start issuing CAS to incoming students from May in the year of entry. A CAS is valid for 6 months. As part of the visa application you will also need to show that you have enough funds to cover tuition fees and living expenses for up to 9 months.

To obtain your CAS number, please send proof of payment of your course fee deposit and a scan of the photograph page of your passport to the MPhil office at reconsec@tcd.ie. Proof of payment can be a screenshot showing your deposit payment to TCD or a scan of a bank/credit card statement. We will then issue you with a PDF version of your CAS containing your CAS number and other information about the course which you may need for your visa application. 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
- Utilise the Immigration Health Surcharge fee checker to understand the required payment

As referred to above students are required to pay a Healthcare Surcharge of £150 per year as part of the visa application. This entitles you to use of the UK National Health Service for the duration of your stay in the UK as a student.

When your leave is granted, you’ll be given a 30 day vignette. The vignette means you have permission to come to the UK and is valid for 30 days from the date you said you’d arrive in the UK (even if you arrive at a later date). You will then need to
collect your Biometric Residence Permit from a Post Office when you arrive in the UK. You’ll receive a decision letter from UK visas and immigration (UKVI) telling you when your BRP will be available and which Post Office branch you can collect it from. You must bring your passport or travel document with your vignette sticker in when you collect your BRP.

If you have problems picking up your BRP you should use the UKVI online service at: https://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits.

Students on a Tier 4 visa will need to bring their BRP to ISE Belfast on Orientation day or as soon as possible after that, as the School is required to keep a copy for our records. You will also need to provide your term time contact details once available and let us know of any changes throughout the year.

Clearing Immigration
You can fly directly to Belfast International Airport (BFS), although entering the UK via London, Heathrow, Manchester etc. is also feasible. There are regular flights to BFS from the U.S., Great Britain, and continental Europe. If necessary, please make clear at your point of entry that the course is in Belfast and you will be resident in the UK. You are not simply in transit to the Republic of Ireland – a confusion which can sometimes arise due to your being a TCD student. On arrival, an immigration officer may ask you to show evidence of your reasons for coming to the UK. This could include your CAS and acceptance letter, travel tickets, passport, evidence of funding and your 30 day travel vignette. You should carry these documents in your hand luggage. Spot interviews may take place.

If you travel via Dublin you should keep your travel documents in case they are later needed as proof of your journey to the UK. The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) has further information on this: http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/When-you-arrive/Arriving-via-Republic-of-Ireland/

Travel Between Belfast and Dublin
After you have completed online registration you will need to travel to the main TCD campus in Dublin, in the Republic of Ireland, to collect your student ID card. As part of the registration process you will be notified of the dates when your card will be available for collection. (Please note you will need to have completed online registration before you can collect your card).

Students from certain countries may need a UK student visa which covers re-entry to the UK so they can legally travel out of Northern Ireland, to the Republic of Ireland and back. Check with UK Visas and Immigration if you think this might apply to you. In terms of Irish visa requirements some nationalities will need a short visitor visa in order to make the journey to Dublin. These are issued by the Irish authorities. For more information on Irish visas see: https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/great-britain/our-services/visas/visas-for-ireland/

Citizens of many countries do not need a visa to enter the Republic of Ireland, including US and Canadian citizens. All Non EU students are advised to carry their
passport, BRP and TCD student ID card when travelling between the two jurisdictions as there are sometimes identity checks on public transport.

**Accommodation**

It is the student’s own responsibility to find accommodation for the year. In this section we provide advice on which areas of the city are most student-friendly and some options to help you with your housing search.

**Choosing Where to Live**

The Irish School of Ecumenics is currently at 683 Antrim Road in North Belfast, however in 2016 the school will be moving to a new building in the university area (south Belfast). We will send incoming students details of our new location once we have moved in late April. The area we are moving to will be much more convenient as most of our students already chose to live in the student friendly south of the city: Lisburn Road, Ormeau, Malone, Stranmillis, and Botanic. In these areas weekly/monthly rentals are easier to find and they are on the main bus routes into town. The area directly behind Queen’s University, known as ‘the Holylands’ can be quite lively and as a postgraduate you may wish to opt for a quieter environment.

Belfast is a relatively safe city on the whole. 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. We encourage you to contact us for advice.

**Short Term Accommodation Suggestions**

Listed below are some hostels and other options in South Belfast, recommended by past students, where you can stay for a few days or a week while you find accommodation for the year:

- **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**

**Finding a Place for the Year**

Below are some housing options used by current and past ISE students, along with suggestions of where to search online for student housing.

Comfortable and well equipped student housing is available at [Edgehill College](#) off the Malone Road. Edgehill College students have priority on places, however there is likely to be availability. If you are interested please contact Edgehill directly.

For those interested in city centre apartment living, Mark Royal House is located across from St. Anne’s Cathedral in the Cathedral Quarter. ISE students have had good experiences there and report that the building is very secure with key fob
access required to enter the building and to enter onto your floor and specific wing. Interested students can contact the director of the building at info@cathedralliving.com and the building's website is www.cathedralliving.com.

For a general search for student housing you could try the Student Pad website. This resource lists private rental properties approved by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for students: http://www.nihestudentpad.co.uk/Accommodation As ISE isn’t listed as one of the campuses, it’s best to search under Area/Belfast: Botanic, Malone, Stranmillis, Windsor and Ravenhill. There is also a useful advice section: http://www.housingguideonline.co.uk/HousingGuide

Useful Websites
• Gumtree https://www.gumtree.com/flatshare/belfast
• Property News http://www.propertynews.com/
• Daft.ie http://www.daft.ie/student-accommodation/ (select Queens’ University Belfast as the nearest campus)
• Spare Room Flat Share https://www.spareroom.co.uk/
• City Lets http://www.citylets.co.uk/flats-rent-belfast/
• Property Pal http://www.propertypal.com/

Finally, we can put you in touch with other incoming ISE students if you are interested in sharing accommodation.

Getting to ISE Belfast
We will contact incoming students with details of our new address.

Access to Money
Please make sure that you have access to money to see you through the first few weeks of term in case of any delay in processing student loans.

Working

You can search for work through the local press, or online, for example http://www.nijobfinder.co.uk/ and it is sometimes possible to find bar or cafe work by dropping in your CV. Bear in mind that if you take the Community Learning module you will also have an internship to factor in.

Healthcare
You can register with any doctor (GP) practice. Take along your BRP, passport and evidence of your address to your nearest clinic or surgery to register. You will then
be sent an NHS medical card with an individual identity code, which 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.

Some students opt to register with the University Health Centre at Queens where the staff is experienced in student health issues, but you can register with any doctor in your area.

**Living Costs**
UKVI estimates that you will need around £1,015 per calendar month to cover living expenses, although you may find Belfast a little cheaper compared to the rest of the UK.


**Currency**
The currency used in Northern Ireland is the British Pound, sterling. The Republic of Ireland uses Euros. If you wish to get some Euros before you travel to Dublin, you can buy them at any Post Office or bank. The Ulster Bank beside the City Hall has a Euro ATM. On the train to and from Dublin you can use either currency. TCD fees are calculated 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 at reconsec@tcd.ie when you are ready to open a bank account (once you know your term time address). Current students have recommended the new Santander branch at Queen’s University Student’s Union as being the easiest bank to deal with when opening a student account.

Further general advice is available here: [http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/banking/](http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/banking/)

**The Weather!**
Northern Ireland has a mild, temperate climate. It’s rare to get extremes of hot or cold. Do bring warm clothing and a waterproof coat.

**Transport**
Translink operates all bus and trains services in Northern Ireland, making it easy to find information. Various smart travel cards are available to help you save money: [http://www.translink.co.uk/Fares/](http://www.translink.co.uk/Fares/). The city service is called Metro. 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. There is also a cross border coach service operated by Aircoach: [http://www.aircoach.ie/](http://www.aircoach.ie/).
Living in Dublin
The TCD International Office has information on accommodation, cost of living, opening a bank account, college health services for students, which may be of interest for anyone who proposes to live in Dublin and undertake the MPhil by travelling to Belfast for classes: http://www.tcd.ie/study/non-eu/

Further Information
UK Council for International Student Affairs
http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/

UK Visas and Immigration
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-application-for-uk-visa-as-tier-4-student

ISE Guide to Living in Belfast

Course Contacts

Please note, the school will be moving this year. Incoming students will be kept informed of our new location. Current address details:
Irish School of Ecumenics
Trinity College Dublin
683 Antrim Road
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT15 4EG

MPhil Office
Executive Officer
Ms Caroline Clarke
Tel: +44(0)28 9077 0087 (9.00 am – 1.00 pm GMT)
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Course Coordinator
Tel: +44(0)28 9037 3989
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Fax: +44(0)28 9037 3986
Web: http://www.tcd.ie/ise/postgraduate/conflict-resolution.php

For application, fee payment and registration enquiries contact Academic Registry:
Tel: +353 (0) 1 896 4500
Email: academic.registry@tcd.ie