

# *Student Life in Belfast*



20 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, Belfast is a city that has really come into its own. It has a lot to offer students and visitors, including tourist attractions, gardens, extensive parklands for walking and cycling, restaurants and pubs, and a thriving arts scene with lots of festivals throughout the year. Most major attractions, the countryside and coast are all easy to get to. It is home to about a quarter of a million people (with a further quarter million in the surrounding suburbs and towns) giving it both the dynamism of a city and the friendliness of a smaller town.

ISE is based in South Belfast, the best area of the city to live in as a student, with plenty of opportunities for social and intellectual action! Over the years our students have added their feedback and helped us put together these tips for making the most of living in Belfast. We hope you find them useful. If you're a current student feel free to send us your suggestions! Read on for lots of ideas on discount cards, entertainment, broadband providers, shipping services and more.

Don't forget to read our [Guide for International Students](#) for information on visas, travel to Belfast, accommodation and healthcare.

## Safety

The Troubles gave Belfast a very bad image but the city is generally very safe with a low crime rate. Basically it's like any city, use your common sense and you will be fine. For advice on which areas are best to live, see the Guide referred to above.

## Student Discount Cards

The International Student Identity Card opens up a world of discount both in Ireland and worldwide for the full-time international student. [Apply for a USIT CARD.](#)

## Students Union

The representative body for Trinity postgraduate students is the Graduate Students Union. GSU is active in supporting students in Belfast and last year established a link with the Student's Union at Queen's University in South Belfast, meaning that Trinity students are now able to join local Students Union clubs and societies and take advantage of the thriving social life on offer. The all-Ireland Student Union body has useful [advice](#) on issues like job hunting, safety and welfare, information for international students etc.

# Queen's Library Card

In addition to the specialist library on site, ISE provides its Belfast students with membership of the nearby Queen's library which opens up access to a wider choice of study space, evening and weekend opening hours.

## Volunteering

The Community Learning module which forms part of the Master's teaching provides an opportunity to get involved in community life in Belfast. In addition there are lots of volunteering opportunities available locally. See [Volunteer Now](#) for full listings. You may also be interested in College's [resources on civic engagement](#).

## Places of Worship

For those who wish to attend religious services while in Belfast, here are some suggestions:

- Windsor Baptist, Malone Avenue
- Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, University Street
- Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Malone Road
- Lisburn Road Methodist Church
- All Saints Church of Ireland, University Street
- Belfast Jewish Community, Somerton Road
- Belfast Islamic Centre, Wellington Park
- Quakers, Marlborough Park North, off Lisburn Road
- Clonard Monastery, Falls Road

## Fitness and Gyms

There are several council owned leisure centres in Belfast with reasonable monthly membership. For more details visit [Better Leisure Centres](#). If living in South Belfast you may be interested in joining Queen's PEC which is in the Botanic Gardens, just off Stranmillis Road.

## Tourist Information

Tourist Information for visitors can be found on the [Belfast Welcome Centre](#) website. There is a drop in centre opposite the City Hall. For an overview of Northern Ireland attractions and activities

see [NI Tourist Board](#). Winterfell locations trek anyone....? And this seems like as good a place as any to give a plug to past ISE student, Therese Cullen, who runs the excellent [Belfast coffee tours!](#)

## Entertainment

Belfast Giants Ice Hockey team play regularly at the Odyssey. The players are all Canadian....Tickets are available through [Ticketmaster](#).

Located on University Square, Queen's Film Theatre known as QFT, plays host to a variety of independent, foreign and arthouse films, has its own bar/cafe, offers student discounts and is a favourite place for ISE students.

Just down the road from Queen's University, The Crescent Arts Centre runs classes on everything creative you can think of and has a programme of events throughout the year.

Movie House cinema is the main central multiplex, situated on Dublin Road. Tickets are cheapest on Crazy Tuesday!

The Black Box in the Cathedral Quarter is a great venue for live music, film, readings, and comedy. Leans toward the indie side of things.

The Empire on Botanic Avenue is good for cover bands and comedy.

### Theatres

- [Grand Opera House](#)
- [Waterfront Hall](#)
- [Lyric](#)
- [Crescent Arts Centre](#)
- [The MAC](#)

### Festivals

Belfast has dozens of festivals every year. Here's just a selection:

- [Belfast International Arts Festival](#)
- [West Belfast Festival](#)
- [Open House Festival](#)
- [Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival](#)
- [Belfast - Nashville Singer/Songwriter Festival](#)
- [Imagine Ideas and Politics Festival](#)

## Markets

[St George's Market](#) is a popular meeting place and features crafts, local produce, artisan stalls, food and music. It's located near the waterfront and Central Train Station, a few minutes' walk from the City Hall. In May and December a continental market sets up in the grounds of the City Hall. Crescent Arts has a monthly arts and craft market.

## Pubs

Belfast has some great pubs. Please note, it's best to not wear any sports jerseys into any pub.

- John Hewitt & Duke of York, Cathedral Quarter, Donegall Street.
- McHugh's, Custom House Square.
- The Spaniard, Cathedral Quarter, just off Waring Street by the Merchant Hotel. Tiny, but class!
- Madden's & Kelly's, behind Castle Court shopping centre. Great places for live, traditional Irish Music.
- The House & Cutters Wharf: Stranmillis area.

# Visiting Dublin

For somewhere to stay for a night or two check out [bedandbreakfasts.ie](http://bedandbreakfasts.ie) which lists hotels and B&Bs near Trinity that won't break the bank. GSU provides a list of [postgraduate spaces](#) on campus, handy if you want somewhere to make a cuppa or just chill for a while. You can also use the postgraduate reading room at the Irish School of Ecumenics/Loyola Institute building. For tourist information see Trinity's [Guide to Dublin](#).

# Transport

[Translink](#) operates most trains and buses in Northern Ireland. Look out for the Enterprise Belfast to Dublin train webfare specials. Pre-book at least 3 days in advance. [Aircoach](#) and [Dublin Coach](#) also operate 24 hour coach services from Belfast to Dublin city centre and Dublin Airport.

# Shipping

[NI Parcels](#)

[Postage Supermarket](#)

[Parcel Monkey](#)

[Seven Seas](#)

## Yoga Classes

Namaste Yoga Studio on the Ormeau Road provides classes in yoga, well-being and meditation.

## Broadband & TV

[BT](#) and [Virgin Media](#) offer 9 month student contracts with high speed broadband and TV. Virgin is one of the few providers which doesn't require you to take line rental with their package. Go through the student team to get student-friendly contracts. In a shared house you will probably split the cost between you, making it relatively cheap.

## Mobiles

Tesco and Giffgaff are two examples of inexpensive mobile phone providers in the UK. You can get lots more tips by checking out online comparison sites e.g. [SavetheStudent](#).

## Money Saving Tips and Deals

[Money Saving Expert](#) is an excellent website for finding the best deals on a whole range of UK products, services and utilities. Don't forget that student deals and software downloads are available through Trinity's IT Services.

## International Calls

It's best to use a free service such as Skype or Facetime although remember this is only free if both you and the person you are speaking to are calling online. Visit [Call Checker](#) for more options.

## TV Licence

The UK requires each address to hold a TV licence if you watch or record live TV as it finances public programming such as BBC. Recently this has been extended to include the BBC iPlayer on demand and catch up service. For more information for students, visit [TV Licensing](#).