Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Studying at Trinity

Succeed in Your Education

www.tcd.ie/**study**

Contents

Coming to study at Trinity will be one of the most exciting experiences of your life. Think of it like a journey, with ups and downs, adjustments and new discoveries, answers and sometimes more questions. It may feel overwhelming, and that is to be expected, as it takes time and energy to establish a new lifestyle as a university student.

Where Am I In This Big Picture?

You may have had very different academic and social experiences to those you will encounter here in Ireland. You left your friends and family back home and probably feel out of your comfort zone.

Being an international student takes courage, and you have it.

Academically, you are entering a whole new world. Previously, you may have been used to remembering and reproducing information correctly in your exams, without having to write essays or give presentations. For some, questioning the views of a teacher or lecturer was not encouraged. For others, learning whatever and whenever you wanted and being able to enrol in modules of your own choice was normal.
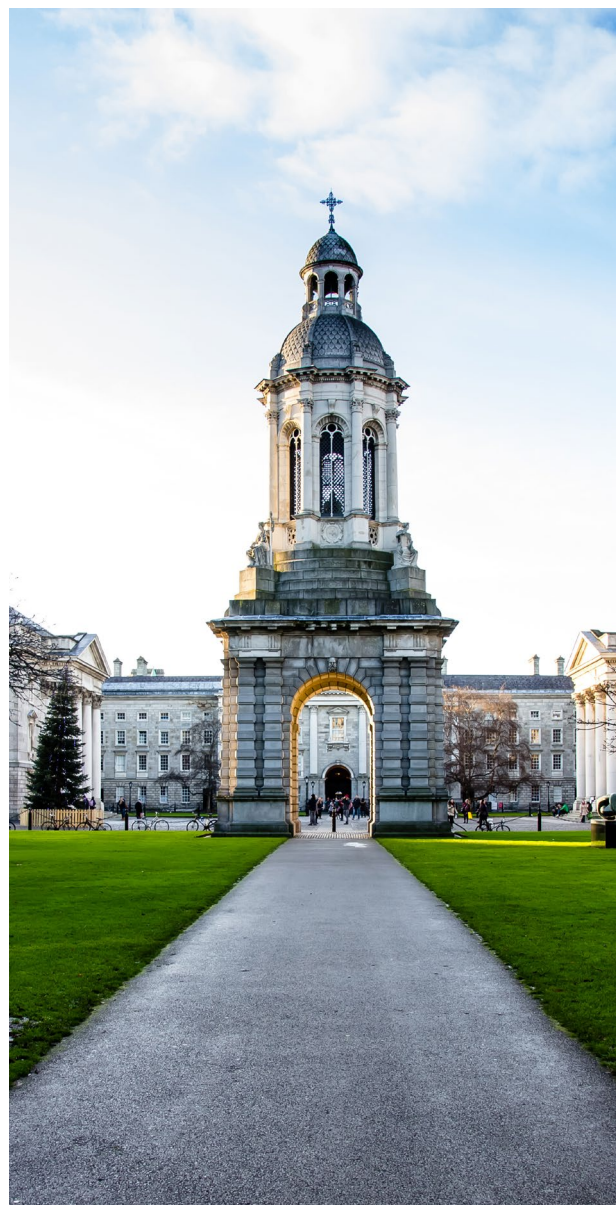
Furthermore, many students coming to Trinity may have had constant guidance and academic directions from their teachers, both inside and outside the classroom.

However, being in Trinity means that you are expected to make your own decisions about why, what, when, how and where you learn. Except for your assignment deadlines and exams, you will very rarely be told what to do and when, so keeping yourself motivated is going to be key.

Starting your studies in Trinity is not only about learning, it's also about learning how to learn.

You could prepare by asking yourself some of these questions:

▶ What do I expect to get out of my studies in Trinity, besides my qualification?

▶ What do I find easy when it comes to studying?

▶ What do I find difficult?

▶ What are my academic strengths?

▶ What are my academic weaknesses?

▶ What has worked for me in the past?

▶ How did I overcome similar situations?

It is also helpful to think of your personality, values and goals. Do you prefer to study by yourself or with others? What do you value in relation to your studies in Trinity?

Getting to know your academic self is the first step towards academic success.

How Can I Prepare Myself?

When you start your studies in Trinity you enter not only the overall culture of the institution, but also the culture of the discipline(s) in which you will study. On the one hand, there are certain study skills that are required to be developed by all Trinity students (critical thinking, writing, reading, presenting) and you will find that doing so will help you perform successfully in the course of your studies. On the other hand, academic disciplines might differ in their cultures and you may find that there can be more than one appropriate methodology or language required.

Finding out about the culture and educational expectations of both Trinity and your discipline is another important step in your academic journey.

You can do that by:

▶ Attending relevant sessions and lunch time talks during Orientation week: **www.tcd.ie/students/orientation**

▶ Reading the departmental guidelines and course handbooks and exploring the relevant websites of your School

▶ Asking your Lecturer/Erasmus coordinator or Teaching Assistant (TA) what are considered good study practices and what are the assessment methods used in your department

▶ Discussing with your peers, Student 2 Student mentor or the Students' Union Class Representatives

▶ Talking to your Tutor

▶ Making an appointment with your Global Officer: **www.tcd.ie/globalrelations/people/#GO**

How Can I Strengthen My English?

For many of Trinity's international students, English is a second language. That can be frustrating sometimes, especially if you feel it takes longer to find your words and express your opinions. You might feel that you are more aware of how you speak and you don't want to make mistakes when you discuss with your classmates or professors. This feeling is totally normal and almost everybody experiences it.

Moreover, at the beginning it might be a bit difficult to understand unfamilliar accents and you will feel that you are making extra effort in staying focused during your lectures. This is also something many students experience. With foreign languages, just like with other things, practice makes perfect.
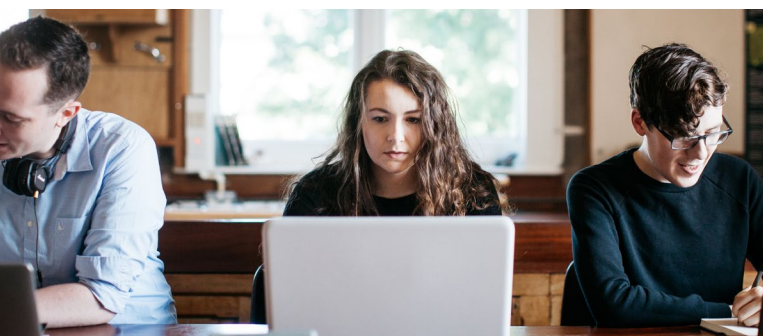
You can exercise your English language abilities through formal and informal methods by:

▶ Attending an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course for strengthening your academic English: **www.tcd.ie/slscs/english**

▶ Finding out if there is any specific academic language to be used in the assignments for your course

▶ Keeping a vocabulary notebook with all the new words you are learning

▶ Setting up a proofreading system with your classmates or friends and regularly proofreading each other's essays

▶ Meeting with the Students' Union Education Officer and finding out what other support is available

▶ Interacting as much as you can in English with Irish students as well as other international students

▶ Joining societies that are active in areas related to your studies.

Learning On My Own

Trinity students are expected to become responsible for their study behaviour. You will have to manage your workload and your time, while keeping yourself motivated. You will be given a lot of deadlines to reach and, in order to reach them, you need to do a lot of work to get your assignments done. When you have many courses/modules, this might become overwhelming unless you manage your time properly.

It is also helpful to evaluate your current study habits and make an analysis of the study methods you are used to, see what works well for you and how you can maximise the positive outcomes.

Some other time management strategies are:

▶ Prioritising your workload

▶ Planning

▶ Breaking tasks into small, manageable pieces

▶ Being specific

▶ Action builds momentum – do something, anything

▶ Using all your time – even travel time can be used to review or quiz yourself

▶ Making a commitment – create a deadline if one doesn't exist or you need an earlier one, hang a planner on your wall or use an agenda.

You can find more ways of giving your studies priority by:

▶ Attending a Student Learning Development (SLD) workshop on organisation and time management

▶ Making an individual appointment with SLD

▶ Organising a study group with your peers to discuss assignments and lectures

▶ Meeting with your Class Rep or the Students' Union Education Officer

▶ Finding out tips and hints from students in the years ahead.

▶ Checking out the Library's welcome pack at: **www.tcd.ie/library/new-students**

Set learning goals and ask yourself what you want to achieve during your studies at Trinity.

Your life as a student is not only about studying. Planning your time means reaching a balance between your academic work and activities necessary for your wellbeing – social activities, sport, being part of societies, doing volunteer work etc. These are equally important parts of being a student and it might be important for you not to miss out on them.

Learning in an online or hybrid environment

Learning in Trinity can include a mixture of on-campus and off-campus (online) activities– this is what we mean by a hybrid environment.

To discover effective ways of preparing for and studying for this experience, please check out the information in the Learning to Learn Online in Trinity Blackboard module.

Instructions on how to self-enrol on this module are at **student-learning.tcd.ie/learning_to_learn_online**

Who Are My Lecturers?

There are some significant differences in the responsibilities of lecturers, also known as professors, in Trinity. In some academic cultures, the lecturer is considered an expert whose job is to transfer particular knowledge to the student, providing them with the correct perspective or solution.

At Trinity, however, the lecturer is considered a more advanced colleague in the field who gives academic advice and encourages students to engage with the learning materials and seek the answers. Lecturers generally keep set "office hours" when you can make an appointment to meet and speak with them. Furthermore, there will also be Teaching Assistants (TAs) that you can talk to.

The relationship between Trinity academic staff and students is a formal one, yet academic staff remain accessible to students. This might look difficult to achieve when it comes to large classes where you find yourself with 200 other students. However, respecting the office hours, you are encouraged to:

►Ask questions

►Seek advice

►Discuss ideas

►Ask for feedback on your assignments and progress

►Share any concerns you have as soon as they arise with your Tutor.

What Is A Tutor?

A Tutor is a member of the academic staff who is appointed to look after the general welfare and development of the students in his/her care. Whilst the Tutor may be one of your lecturers, this is not always the case, as the role of the Tutor is quite separate from the teaching role.

Tutors are a first point of contact and a source of support, both on arrival at Trinity and at anytime during your time here. They provide confidential help and advice on personal as well as academic issues or anything that has an impact on your life. They will also, if necessary, support and defend your point of view in your relations with the University.

For example, you would contact your Tutor for advice on issues such as:

►Course choices

►Exam results

►Family conflicts

►Bereavement

►Financial difficulties

►Taking a year out.

Your Tutor can make sure you are supported and that any negative impact on your studies is reduced.

www.tcd.ie/senior_tutor

Becoming A Critical Thinker

Trinity, like many other universities, is constantly engaged in questioning current ideas and theories and in creating and discovering new knowledge. Academic staff, through their research, are always making breakthroughs in knowledge and innovation.

Students are expected to:

▶ Question what they hear and read

▶ Think about and evaluate the evidence of particular theories or points of view

▶ Develop their own ideas and arguments

You are expected to move from questions such as "what" to questions such as:

▶ Why?

▶ How?

▶ How important?

▶ How valid?

▶ What if?

▶ What might happen if?

This will help you understand, criticize and evaluate what you learn and integrate that with your previous knowledge and ideas.
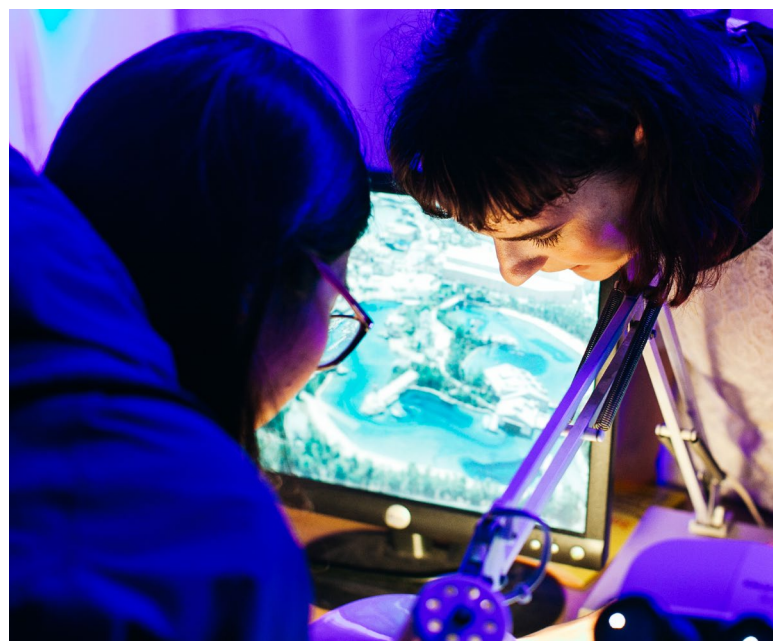
You are encouraged to become not only an independent learner, but also an independent thinker.

Critical thinking means different things in different disciplines. If you are studying in an education discipline, for example, you will be thinking critically when you apply theory to a practical situation. You then reflect on what happened as a result of your application of that particular theory in that particular situation.

In a discipline which has a less obvious practical application, for example some humanities areas of study, you will be thinking critically when you compare and contrast theories with each other, or when you try to work out gaps or flaws in those theories. Your lecturers expect that even first year students can do more than just describe a theory or concept in assignments. In addition to describing, lecturers also expect students to analyse and evaluate or judge a concept, or apply a concept or theory to a practical situation.

You can improve your critical thinking skills by:

▶ Discussing with your Tutor/Lecturer/Erasmus Coordinator/Teaching Assistant how you can develop critical arguments in the context of your discipline

▶ Attending a Student Learning Development (SLD) workshop on critical thinking

▶ Making an individual appointment with SLD to discuss any specific concerns

▶ Organise or take part in a peer study group, this way you can discuss theories, and also make some friends along the way

▶ Booking a consultation with your Subject Librarian for tips on evaluating information: **www.tcd.ie/library/support/subjects**

Reading With A Purpose

Some of the information provided during your studies will come from your lectures, but the greater part of it will come from what you read on your own. Reading as a student is different to reading for leisure, and understanding this helps you adapt your habits and maximize your readings. Firstly, determine your purpose. This will help you to focus your attention and to select a suitable strategy.

As a critical reader, it is important to question what you read and evaluate the quality of the sources. It helps you monitor your understanding, re-read difficult questions and review what you learned. Taking notes is important as this helps you to engage actively in your reading which helps you to remember more for exams at the end of the semester. Going back to your notes will be more efficient than reading entire text books all over again.
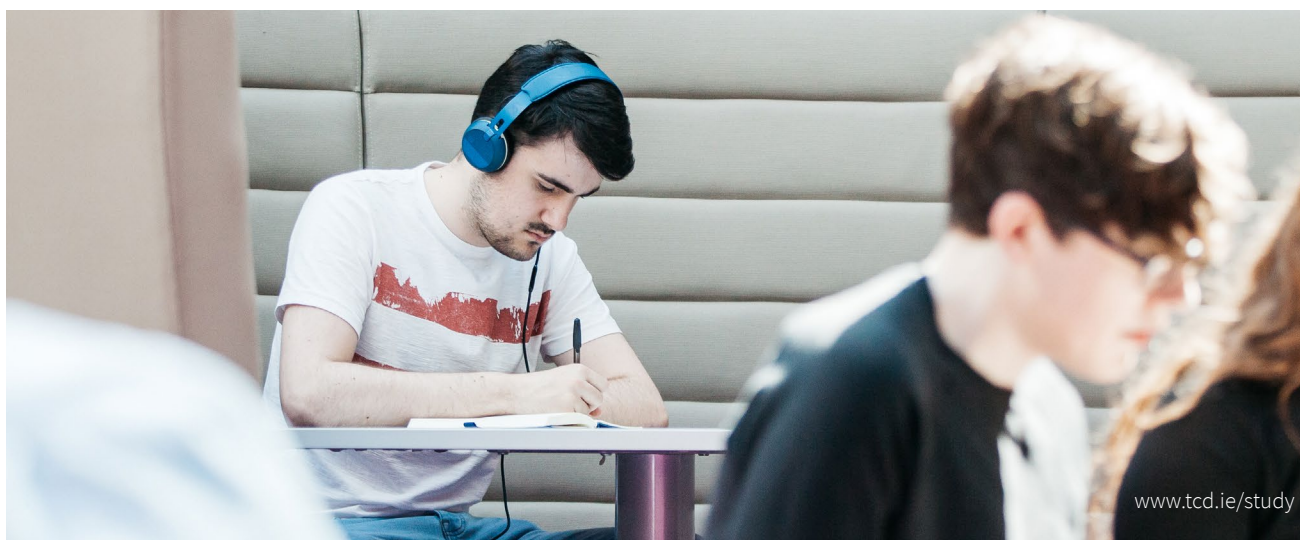
For reading and note-making strategies, you can:

▶ Ask your Lecturer/Teaching Assistant to indicate which parts of the recommended materials are more relevant and why, in order to prioritise your readings

▶ Organise a study group to discuss various readings with your fellow peers

▶ Ask students in the years ahead for hints and tips on how to prioritise readings in your courses

▶ Note which books/materials are most regularly mentioned in other books as being important

▶ Skim very fast through recommended books, decide which might be most beneficial for you

▶ Attend a Student Learning Development (SLD) workshop on reading and note-making

▶ Make an individual appointment with SLD

▶ Attend a Library HITS class to find out how you can make the most of using the Library and all its resources: **www.tcd.ie/library/support/skills-training.php**

Academic Reading And Writing

Your assignments will involve writing essays, lab reports, projects, case studies, blogs, etc. In your final year, you will have to complete a Capstone Project which may require you to write a dissertation or report. These written assignments might be different than the ones you were used to doing in your home university, or might be something that you've never done before.

To develop or improve your writing style, you can:

▶ Ask for examples of good and bad writing from your lecturers

▶ Ask your lecturer what the writing requirements are in your department

▶ Find out if there is any specific academic language to be used in the written assignments of your course

▶ Enrol yourself in the Academic Skills for Successful Learning Blackboard Module to access more information and resources on Essay Writing and Scientific Writing.
You can find the instructions here: **student-learning.tcd.ie**

▶ Make use of the Academic Writing Centre where you can meet with a writing tutor to discuss issues. For more information and to book an appointment see **student-learning.tcd.ie/services/awc**

▶ Attend one of the Student Learning Development (SLD) workshops on academic writing or writing for sciences

▶ Make an individual appointment with SLD to discuss your writing assignments

▶ Attend an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course for strengthening your Academic English

▶ Set up a writing group with your peers to discuss and review each other's assignments

Plagiarism And Referencing

Acknowledging your sources is a very important aspect of Trinity academic culture and integrity. As a strong emphasis is put on everyone to develop their own opinions and ideas, it is important to distinguish between those and the ideas and opinions coming from authors, lecturers or peers. Failing to do so will result in being accused of plagiarism. This is the use of any information or exact words from a book, journal or internet site without referencing and without using quotation marks when necessary.

All students must complete the Ready Steady Write plagiarism tutorial and sign a declaration when submitting course work, whether in hard copy or via Blackboard, confirming that you understand what plagiarism is and have completed the tutorial. Please see: **libguides.tcd.ie/plagiarism**

You can learn how to avoid plagiarism through appropriate referencing by:

▶ Consulting the course handbook on what is the preferred referencing style in your department

▶ Attending one of the Student Learning Development (SLD) or Library workshops on plagiarism

▶ Attending one of the Trinity Library courses on Endnote, a programme that automatically organises refernces for you

▶ Using the Ready Steady Write resource on the Library's website. For online tutorials see: **libguides.tcd.ie/plagiarism/ready-steady-write**

If your lecturer requires it, you will have to submit your assignment through Turnitin, a programme in Blackboard (the College Virtual Learning Environment) that detects plagiarism.

If this is the case, you might be able to use this programme to check your assignment for plagiarism before the final submission. Double check this with your lecturer. For further information on how Turnitin works, see: **www.tcd.ie/capsl/resources/turnitin**

Participating In Tutorials

The aim of tutorials is to approach a certain topic in greater detail and encourage discussion on different ideas and points of view as well as clarify any misunderstandings from various readings. Depending on your course, you might be involved in tutorials with only 10-20 students, or in larger ones, with 60 or more.

Tutorials vary depending on your area of study and are linked to modules: some might involve interaction and you will be required to participate and lead discussions, while others might be less interactive. Furthermore, some of them will be led by teaching assistants, while others will involve the lecturers themselves. In most courses you will be assessed based on your participation in tutorials, so it is important to try and contribute to discussions.

Individual courses have specific requirements for tutorials and these will be explained during your course. For example, science students often have to attempt problem-solving work in advance of a tutorial, language students may have to prepare a translation, English or history students may have to discuss a topic, etc. The format of the tutorial will then focus on answering problems of a similar nature so that you can further develop your knowledge of the area while practising your problem-solving techniques. The problems will often be similar to the questions that are asked in the end of term/semester exams, therefore it is beneficial for every student to attend and participate in all tutorials scheduled for a course.

Separate to that are the requirements of labs in science or clinical courses, where reports are expected to be submitted individually and weekly. In addition, some courses require you to complete specific work in advance of the lab (e.g. practical questions) so that you can maximise the benefits of attending each session. The pre-practical questions are designed to develop your own background knowledge of the area and cannot be plagiarised. Many courses require you to submit laboratory work on-line, e.g. via Blackboard.

Group Work

Many courses in Trinity involve informal and formal group work. More formal group work usually has students working collaboratively to complete a task or assignment. Your lecturer will provide information on how the assignment will be assessed, although presentations, posters and reports are common.

For more information on group work and other forms of assessment see:
student-learning.tcd.ie/assessments

For information on digital assessment see **www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/Gateway_to_Assessment/students**.

In order to get comfortable with participating in tutorials you can:

- ▶ Ask your Lecturer/Teaching Assistant what are their expectations from students during tutorials
- ▶ Practice listening to your peers to see how they interact with each other during tutorials
- ▶ Prepare some questions or a comment on something you found interesting before the class so you can demonstrate that you understand the material
- ▶ Make an appointment with Student Learning Development (SLD) to identify how you can improve your listening and communication skills
- ▶ Attend an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course to practice your academic English and gain more comfort in speaking.

Exams

Exams take place in Trinity at the end of the term/semester. There are typically 12 weeks of teaching and learning followed by a revision week then an assessment week.

While you have a week to revise your study material and prepare for exams, it is more effective to keep up your studying during the semester. Use active study strategies and practice retrieving information learned on a regular basis to ensure success at exam time.

Exams in Trinity are managed by the Academic Registry. They take place in multiple venues, including digital and online, with the examination method determined by your course.

Different formats for exams include essays, multiple choice questions, short questions but there may be other options which your lecturers will explain to you.

Assessment timetables will be published on the portal, **my.tcd.ie**, four weeks prior to assessments taking place. No notice is required of intention to take an assessment in the course in which students have registered.

If you are a student with a disability, you will need to register and also contact the Disability Service. They will guide you through arranging a Learning Educational Needs Summary (LENS) and exam supports. For information see: **www.tcd.ie/disability**

Finding yourself in the same exam hall with hundreds of other students might seem a bit daunting at the beginning, but you can prepare yourself for that experience by:

▶ Reading the Student Guidelines and other information on venues and timetables on the Assess, Progress and Graduation webpage of the Academic Registry: **www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/exams**. It is important to check the location of examinations in advance.

▶ Consulting past papers on the same webpage to support your study.

▶ Reading your course handbooks and familiarise yourself with the learning outcomes for each module.

▶ Attending the Student Learning Development (SLD) workshops on exam skills **student-learning.tcd.ie**.

▶ Enrolling yourself in the Academic Skills for Successful Learning Blackboard module to find out more tips for preparing for and performing well on your exams. You can find the instructions here: **student-learning.tcd.ie**.

▶ Participating in an Exam Simulation organised by SLD during Revision Week.

Remember, the exam is an opportunity for you to show that you have engaged with the course material, that you understand it, and that you are able to demonstrate this in a written or oral exam.

You can prepare yourself for online exams or open-book assessments by:

▶ Reading The 4 W's of Open-Book Assessment for Students resource at: **www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/Assets/pdf/gateway/ infographic_4WsofOBAforStudents.pdf**

▶ Joining the Online Exams Practice Module run by IT Services and reading their Online Assessments – Student Guides at: **www.tcd.ie/itservices/working-remotely/ online-assessment/student**

▶ Participating in a Student Learning Development (SLD) workshop on online exams

Trinity Grading System

Trinity's main marking scale for undergraduate courses is captured in the table below*

Degree classification	Grade	Percentage range
First class Honours	I	70-100%
Second class Honours, first division	II.1	60-69%
Second class Honours, second division	II.2	50-59%
Third class Honours	III	40-49%
Fail	F1	30-39%
	F2	Below 29%

* There may be variances in the marking scale, in particular for Health Science undergraduate courses, and students should check with their School for further information

Each department has different guidelines and expectations when it comes to the grades awarded.

Getting 70% for an assessment means excellent performance. The student must have showed comprehensive understanding of the topic/subject matter and an excellent ability to structure arguments in a critical manner, fluently and creatively.

It is possible to get 100% in a maths exam, but it's very rare to get that grade or even more than 70% in an essay. Note that getting 70% on an assignment means that your academic performance and results are excellent.

II.1 means the student had a very good performance on the subject, while II.2 stands for a good performance. The difference between the two categories might come from various aspects, depending on the type of assignment and the requirements of your course. However, higher marks are linked to the demonstration of critical thinking, structure of an argument and originality.

To get a better understanding of this, you can:

▶ Consult your course handbook for more information about guidelines and expectations

▶ Ask your course Coordinator or Tutor about the departmental requirements

▶ During office hours, ask for feedback from your lecturer to see how you can improve

▶ Make an appointment with Student Learning Development (SLD) to identify concrete strategies for improving your skills.

These are just a few tips to get you going, you'll discover many more on your own. Academic skills develop over time and it takes a while until you figure out what works for you. Allow yourself time to get accustomed to Trinity's academic culture and, when in doubt, ask for help!

There are other types of assessment in Trinity, such as reflective journals or presentations.

For further information please see:

student-learning.tcd.ie/assessments/

and our Student Gateway to Digital Assessment:

www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/Gateway_to_Assessment/students/index.php

Where Do I Go For Help?

Pre Arrival Information

www.tcd.ie/study/international/before-arrival

Orientation Information

www.tcd.ie/students/orientation

Student Learning Development

SLD offers advice, resources, individual consultations, workshops and much more to help you improve your academic skills and confidence to reach your potential. We have significant experience with international students.

7-9 South Leinster Street, 3rd Floor, Trinity
E: student.learning@tcd.ie
T: +353 (0)1 896 1407
Blackboard: Academic Skills for Successful Learning (instructions for enrolment on our website)
student-learning.tcd.ie

Tutorial Service

The Tutorial Service is unique, confidential and available to all undergraduate students offering student support in all aspects of University life.

7-9 South Leinster Street, 3rd Floor, Trinity

www.tcd.ie/seniortutor/students/undergraduate

Global Officers

Global Officers are available to link in with non-EU students. Click below for a link to Schools with Global Officers. www.tcd.ie/globalrelations/people/#GO

Trinity Global Room

The Global Room is a hub for international students with any questions about navigating Trinity, Dublin and settling in to college life.

www.tcd.ie/study/international/trinity-life/global-room

E: tcdglobalroom@tcd.ie

Students' Union Education Officer

House 6, Trinity College Dublin campus
www.tcdsu.org
E: education@tcdsu.org

Student 2 Student (S2S)

7-9 South Leinster Street, 3rd Floor, Trinity
student2student.tcd.ie
E: student2student@tcd.ie

English for Academic Purposes

EAP provides English Language Learning Support for prospective and accepted students of Trinity who are not native speakers of English.

www.tcd.ie/slscs/english
E: cellt@tcd.ie
T: +353 (0)1 896 1127

Trinity Library

www.tcd.ie/library/support/subjects

IT Services

Áras an Phiarsaigh, Ground Floor, Trinity
www.tcd.ie/itservices
E: itservicedesk@tcd.ie
T: +353 (0)1 896 2000

Maths Help Room

The place to go for help with your maths assignments and problems. For more details see:
student-learning.tcd.ie/services/index_stem.php

Programming Centre

The Programming Centre provides programming help for undergraduate Computer Science and Engineering students.

www.scss.tcd.ie/misc/psc

Academic Registry
www.tcd.ie/academicregistry
Exams and assessments:
www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/exams

For term dates see:
www.tcd.ie/calendar/academic-year-structure

Academic Practice And eLearning

For information on using Blackboard Learn see:

www.tcd.ie/capsl/resources/elearning-students

Disability Service

The Disability Service aims to develop clear and effective support systems at all stages in the student journey from university entrance to graduation to employment.

Room 2054, Arts Building , Trinity
www.tcd.ie/disability

Sources

Academic Skills Unit, University of Melbourne. "Studying in Australia: 10 tips for International Students"

Marshall, L. & Rowland, F. (1998). A guide to learning independently. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Trinity Grading System: **www.tcd.ie/study/study-abroad/inbound/study-options**

The International Students Blog
https://tcdglobal.wordpress.com/

This brochure was created by Irina Dimitriade of Student Learning Development, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin and supported by the Global Relations Office.

Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Contact Details

If you have any questions about studying at Trinity, please get in touch with us!

Our Global Relations office is dedicated to helping international students and we would be pleased to answer your questions.

E: international@tcd.ie

Global Relations Office

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
Global Relations Office,
East Theatre, College Green,
Dublin 2,
Ireland
Tel: +353 (0) 1 896 4507
www.tcd.ie/globalrelations

If you have further questions about the application process you can contact the Applications and Admissions Team in Trinity's Academic Registry.

Academic Registry

Watts Building,
Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
College Green,
Dublin 2,
Ireland
Tel: +353 (0) 1 896 4500

E: academic.registry@tcd.ie
www.tcd.ie/academicregistry

For more information on studying at Trinity, visit our website:
www.tcd.ie/study

Join the Trinity Community

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tcdglobal.wordpress.com