



Application Guidebook for Mature Students 2026

The Foundation Course for Higher Education –
Mature Students
Trinity College Dublin

&

The University Access Courses – CDETB
Pearse College & Plunket College



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

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1. What are the Foundation Course for Higher Education / University Access Courses?

The Foundation / University Access Courses are an academic and personal preparation for mature students who are under-represented in third-level education due to their socio-economic backgrounds. There are three courses:

1. Foundation Course for Higher Education Mature Students – Trinity College Dublin
2. University Access Course - CDET B Pearse College (Crumlin)
3. University Access Course - CDET B Plunket College (Whitehall)

2. What are the entry requirements?

There are no standard educational requirements, such as the Leaving Certificate or an aptitude test, but all applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be resident in Ireland.
- Demonstrate a real desire to pursue a third-level course and the ability to do so.
- Come from socio-economic background(s) under-represented in third-level education.
- Be resident in Ireland.
- Be 23 years of age or over on 1st January 2026 (22 years of age for Pearse and Plunket Colleges).
- Be eligible for the Government Free Fees Scheme (Foundation Course TCD only).
- Applicants with strong Leaving Certificate results meeting Matriculation requirements and/or who have undertaken a course at level 7 or upwards on the National Qualifications Framework (or equivalent) will not be considered eligible for the course unless they can provide evidence of deterioration of academic ability.
- Applicants who have a full level 6 Award will not be considered eligible for the course unless they can provide evidence of deterioration of academic ability, and/or where this Award does not prepare them to progress directly onto a degree course, and/or where the award was completed more than ten years prior to applying for the Foundation Course.

3. What can I study on the courses?

In addition to classes in Study Skills, Educational Guidance and Information Technology, students can study the following subjects: English, History, Philosophy, Law, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, Business, Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Computer Science (Science and Computer Science are only available to students on the Foundation Course in Trinity College).

For more detailed information on the course content and structure, please refer to our website at: www.tcd.ie/trinityaccess/alternative-entry-routes/mature-students/foundation-course/ .

4. What happens after the courses?

On successful completion of the Foundation Course, students receive a QQI Level 6 Certificate in Foundation Studies for Higher Education from Trinity College. Students completing the University Access Courses in Pearse and Plunket Colleges receive a QQI-FET level 5 ELAXX award. Students who complete these courses will be eligible to compete for places on most¹ full-time degree courses in Trinity College. Students who successfully complete the University Access Courses in Pearse and Plunket Colleges may also progress to other HEIs via the Higher Education Links Scheme.

5. How many places are available on the courses?

- There are 75 places each year (25 places on each course) and you may apply for the three courses on the one application form. The deadline for receipt of applications is **March 28th, 2026**, for recruitment for the 2026/27 academic year. One place is reserved each year for an applicant from the Traveller Community who meets the above criteria and who scores 30 or over at interview
- One place is reserved each year for an applicant who is a care leaver, meets the course criteria and scores 30 or over at interview.

¹ UAC, Pearse & Plunket Colleges are eligible to be considered for full-time degree courses in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences only. Students from the TAP Foundation Course may apply to degree courses in all three Faculties in TCD (depending on modules taken during the course).

6. What is the time commitment?

The courses are full-time with approximately 20 hours of class time per week and a further 20 hours of independent study. The courses run from September to May each year.

7. Is there any fee for these courses?

- The Foundation Course for Mature students is free of charge. However, students on the course are not eligible to apply for a Further Education/Higher Education grant. Students may be eligible for the Back to Education Allowance (see <http://www.welfare.ie> for more information).
- The University Access Courses in Pearse and Plunket Colleges have a registration fee of approximately €50. However, students may apply for a SUSI grant.

8. How do I apply for the courses?

You **must apply online**. You can apply using either the link below or from our webpage: my.tcd.ie/urd/sits.urd/run/siw_ipp_lgn.login?process=siw_ipp_app&code1=DFCMF-HEMS-1F09&code2=0017

9. What are the closing dates for applying?

- The closing date for completing the application form online is **March 28th, 2026**.
- Applicants have until **March 28th, 2026** to add their supporting documents.
- Referees have until **March 28th, 2026** to return the referee forms to TAP.

10. Do I have to complete my application all in one go?

No. Once you have created a *my.tcd.ie* account and entered your personal details, you can save your application and return to it as often as you like until March 28th, 2026. The deadline for submission is March 28th, 2026.

11. How do I create a *my.tcd.ie* account?

When you go to the website to make an application (as described in Question 8 above) you will be invited to create a *my.tcd.ie* account and instructed how to do so. You must create an account to be able to apply for the Foundation Course or University Access Courses. You will need to provide the following to create a *my.tcd.ie* account:

- Your Name
- Your Date of Birth
- A functioning e-mail address (one which you use and can access regularly)
- A password (which you should keep private)

12. How long will it take me to complete the application?

The form itself should take **approximately 30 minutes** to complete. Please remember you also have to include the following which will take additional time:

- Write an Essay (max 600 words)
- Get 2 referees to complete the referee forms
- Include your long form birth certificate
- Submit educational certificates (where applicable)

13. What do I write my essay about?

The essay can be about any topic that is currently in the news that you are interested in writing about. When you have decided on your topic, you may present your views in an essay or simply in a series of points. It cannot be more than 600 words.

Full details on what the essay should include are given in the **Personal Statement** Section of the application form. Please consult the application form for further details.

You can write your essay outside the form and save this separately. Once you are finished your essay you can copy and paste this into the online form.

14. Who should I ask to be a referee?

You should get two suitable referees to complete the reference forms such as:

- **A tutor / teacher** from a course you have attended, e.g. part-time day courses, literacy scheme, VTOS, evening courses, etc.
- **A supervisor** from a place of work, e.g. full-time, part-time, CE scheme, etc.
- **An employee** of a local Resource / Information / Unemployment Centre who has been working with you on your career and educational options.
- **A chairperson or committee member** of a local community / voluntary organisation with which you are involved, e.g. Credit Union, Parents' Association, Unemployment Centre, etc.

Your referees can complete the online reference form using this link:

[FCM REFERENCE FORM 2026-27 Foundation Courses for Higher Education – Mature Students – Fill out form](#)

15. How do I know what I need to include with my application?

All applicants must do the following:

1. Complete all relevant sections of the online application form (by March 28th, 2026).
2. Complete and upload their essay to the **Personal Statement** section of the form (by March 28th, 2026).
3. Give the link to the online reference form to two referees who must submit these by March 28th, 2026: [FCM REFERENCE FORM 2026-27 Foundation Courses for Higher Education – Mature Students – Fill out form](#)
4. Include your long form birth certificate. You must upload this to online application.

For advice on uploading documents please see Question 18 below.

You may also need the following:

- **If you have completed or are completing any educational courses**

You must include copies of educational course certificate awards. You must upload these to the online application.

- **If English is not your first language**

If English is not your first language, you must submit evidence of your **English language proficiency**. For further information refer to: <https://www.tcd.ie/study/apply/admission-requirements/undergraduate/> .

You must upload the English language proficiency certificates to your online application.

- **If you are unsure if you are eligible for the Government Free Fees Scheme**

If you are in any doubt about your eligibility for free fees refer to the College Admissions webpage: <https://www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/fees-payments/free-fees> .

You must include the following to verify that you are eligible for the Government Free Fees Scheme:

- A copy of your (EU) **passport OR national identity card OR the original letter** issued by the Department of Equality, Justice and Law Reform confirming your **EU or refugee status**.
- Evidence of residency in an EU member state for at least **three of the five years** preceding admission. Residency is based on your principal residence for purposes of taxation. To meet this requirement you must submit a letter from the tax or social welfare office, or a social welfare receipt, or utility bill etc dated three years hence.

16. Where do I get the referee form?

The referee form must be completed by your referees online using this link:

[FCM REFERENCE FORM 2026-27 Foundation Courses for Higher Education – Mature Students – Fill out form](#)

17. How do I get electronic copies of my documents?

If you have a hard copy or print out of the document (such as a birth certificate or educational certificate) you can create an electronic copy in some of the following ways:

- Scan the document and save the file. Scanners may be available to you at a local library, in an education/jobs centre or in a copy centre.
- Take an image of the document and save the file.

Please note:

All documents uploaded must be of high quality. All parts of the form, official stamps and signatures must be clearly legible otherwise documents will not be accepted.

Please retain all of your original hard copy documents as you may be asked to produce these to verify your application.

18. How do I upload documents to my application?

Uploading documents to your application form is the same as adding attachments to an e-mail. You simply follow the instruction on the application form and attach the relevant file from your computer. This will add the document to your application.

19. What if I am not sure what documents to include?

Please see Question 16 above. If you are still not sure contact TAP at foundationcourse@tcd.ie.

20. What if I experience difficulty accessing my *my.tcd.ie* account?

If you have any problems accessing your account, please follow the Help instructions on *my.tcd.ie*.

If you still have questions about your application, please contact TAP directly.

21. Privacy Statement

This is a statement of the practices of Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin (the "University") of College Green, Dublin 2, Ireland in connection with the capture and the use of personal data and the steps taken by the University to protect your personal data and respect your right to privacy.

The University fully respects your right to privacy and actively seeks to preserve the privacy rights of those who share information with the University. Any personal information which you volunteer to the University will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, in accordance with Irish and European Data Protection legislation. The University shall process your personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The privacy notice explains the following:

- How we collect and use personal data
- The purpose and legal basis for collecting personal data
- How we store and secure personal data
- How we obtain your data
- How and why we use your data
- Details of third parties with whom we share personal data
- What are your rights

For further information please see <https://www.tcd.ie/courses/application-privacy-statement/>