Erasmus Student Report

University College Dublin - Quinn School of Business, 2018/2019 Semester I

I was given the opportunity to spend the first semester of the 2018/2019 academic year at University College Dublin (Ireland) to study business. It was an unforgettable time of fun, a productive adventure and a great broadening as well as learning experience. This report is a brief summary of the different aspects and stages of my study abroad experience, which I believe might help the students who are considering attending UCD or other university in Dublin, Ireland.

Why UCD?

University College Dublin is ranked in the top 1% of the world’s universities, 25% of all students are international, and there are over 100 clubs and societies. Also, during my stay in Dublin many people told me that UCD is considered to be the best college in all Ireland. The university is basically a small town – it has its own ponds, parks, shops, restaurants, cinema, police station, hospital etc.

I have chosen Quinn School of Business mainly, because it offers a wide range of business subjects, all of which fit perfectly into my studies here, at Corvinus University of Budapest. Each module worth 5 ECTS, and a student can register up to 6 courses. It is important to discuss in advance with your teachers at Corvinus, which of your provisional modules can be recognized.

Module registration

The module registration is a rather easy process, it is done through the university’s central system called SISWeb (Student Information System). All the indicative in-semester grades, examination time table and results can be accessed through that, as well as the registration for on-campus accommodation, library resources, apps, past exam papers and many other things. The international affairs coordinator will send a detailed guide on how to register for your modules, but you are required to do that completely by yourself. A module can reach its capacity in just a minute or less, and it is unlikely that extra capacity is added. Also, the provisional list of modules is usually available in advance on UCD’s website, but bear in mind that a course can be removed even one day before the beginning of the module registration. The application for foreign languages starts later, during the orientation week.
Accommodation

The situation of finding and getting accommodation in Dublin is very difficult at the moment. I started looking for opportunities immediately after receiving acceptance for the Erasmus program, but later I realized it is actually much more efficient to deal with landlords in person. I found the on-campus accommodation to be unrealistically expensive, so I was looking for a single ensuite room, which would be in walking distance to UCD. There are many websites available for students to find a room, these are some of the most popular: Daft.ie, Rent.ie, Hostingpower.ie, Homstay.com. The best areas are in Dublin 4 or Dublin 14 – for example Donnybrook, Dundrum.

During the summer, an Irish family friend had found a room for me at an old lady’s house, which was 20 minutes away from college by walk. It was a small room for 160 euros/week, which included bed and breakfast, but no private bathroom. When I arrived to Dublin at the end of August, the room turned out to be much smaller than what the old lady had previously described to me over the telephone. I did not have a student desk and there was no internet. Also, after my arrival the landlady raised the previously discussed 160 euros/week price to 200 euros/week. I immediately started looking for a new accommodation and ended up renting an ensuite room at an Irish family’s house, which was 10 minutes’ walk away from the campus. The price was a bit more, 220 euros/week, but it was well worth it - breakfast and dinner was included, spacious room, own student desk, private bathroom, close to university, very nice family. It was a really good decision to move from my first accommodation to the new one.

Based on my experience, I would suggest travelling to Dublin a couple of weeks before the start of the orientation week to look for accommodation in person, for something close to the campus. The university has its own accommodation website, called UCD Accommodation Pad, that is where I had found my second place. It is much easier to find anything when you are in Dublin, because you can call the owner, discuss an appointment and view the room or apartment. Many landlords/landladies only take in students after meeting them. I also strongly advise not to pay anything in advance, not even the security deposit, or if you do always ask for a receipt signed by the landlord/landlady. You can also join Facebook groups like ‘Dublin rent a room/house/apartment’ or ‘Dublin rooms for rent’, just be aware that there are a lot of scams. The price for a single room usually varies from 120 to 250 euros/week.
Public Transport

Public transport system of Dublin is generally expensive and definitely not a good service compared to Budapest’s. A single bus ticket to the city may cost as much as 2.5 euros, the buses are often late, and the driver is allowed to skip the stop if thinks the bus is overcrowded. A big difference compared to Budapest is that in Dublin you have to put your hand out for the bus driver to stop. Also, when getting off it is common to thank the bus driver by simply saying ‘Thank you’, ‘Cheers’ or ‘Cheers mate’. Beside the bus, there are also trams (Luas) and commute (DART).

As a student, you can get a discount by purchasing a Student Leap Card. With this card the maximum amount you can be charged for using either the bus or other public transport is 5 euros a day, 20 euros a week. You can get a Leap Card during the orientation week for a one time 10 euro fee, then you can top-up your card online or at payzone agents.

I was living close to the campus and 40 minutes of walk away from St Stephen’s Green, so I used public transport quite rarely. The Irish consider Dublin as a small village, where everything is close and can be accessed by walk.

Travelling

Dublin is the home of Ryanair, so there are dozens of flights available to every major city of Europe at a reasonably low price. You can get very cheap flights not only to the UK, but also to France and Spain for example. During my stay I travelled to Edinburgh to visit a friend and to Manchester to watch a football game. The flights don’t cost much, but accommodation and food can be pricey.

Unfortunately, I have not had the time to travel in the country, but the International Society and other organizations create events every week to places like Cliffs of Moher, Galway, Blarney, Limerick, Giant’s Causeway, Glendalough etc.

Studying at UCD

At University College Dublin – Quinn School of Business there is a huge emphasis on group projects. There are presentations, group essays/works in almost every module. On one hand, it means the final exam is of less weight, but on the other hand you have to work a lot during the semester. A big difference compared to Corvinus is, that ‘A’ is always from 70%, but it is still really hard to get the maximum grade at UCD. Another thing is that all the midterms and final exams are written off-campus at a different location, in special examination
centers. These centers are not that close to the main campus, so in some occasions you may have to take a bus to get there in time.

An important thing to note is that the grades of first year Irish students do not count towards their final degree – the only requirement for them is to pass –, so they may not be the most active in group projects.

There is always just one appointment for an exam, so it must be passed, otherwise resitting is only available next semester or even next year. All exams are two hours long, so it is usually at least 10 pages of writing. In my case, I had 3 exams on 3 consecutive days, because my other 3 modules had no exam and were graded during the semester. International students whose first language is not English are allowed to use a dictionary, but I would not advise to do so, because 2 hours is not always enough time to fully complete the exam paper.

Social life

There are dozens of societies available and anyone can join. Membership for the academic year costs only 2 euros, and there is always something planned for the week. I joined International Society, Film Society, Food Society, Entrepreneurs Society and Netsoc. There is also an organization called Students’ Union, which offers a lot of support for the students during the semester.

Sports

To my surprise, almost all the sports are free to play on campus. As a UCD student you have access to both gyms at the sports center at any time you want. There is also an Olympic size pool and tepidarium on the campus, which costs 4 euros/access. During the orientation week you can join any sport club you like, and there are dozens of them for basically every sport there is. I did judo and played football every week, it was a very good experience.

Nightlife

Dublin is famous for its live music pub life, which is indeed amazing. There are many nightclubs across the city, they are usually open until 2 am, entrance fee depends on the place. If you like clubs I recommend Dicey’s and DTtwo. There is a popular area called Temple Bar, which is filled with pubs, restaurants and clubs – it is also one of the most expensive area in Dublin.
Sightseeing

Dublin is a beautiful city, although for a capital it is relatively small, and you can visit every major sight there is in just a week or so. Museums are generally free to enter and well worth to visit them. Beside that, I strongly recommend the following places to visit: Guinness Storehouse, Irish Whiskey Museum, Phoenix Park, St Stephen’s Green, Merrion square. In my opinion, Dublin Castle and Dublin Zoo does not really worth the money.

Conclusion

Overall, studying a semester in Dublin was one of the most beneficial experiences I had as a university student. I had the opportunity to see the world, experience a new country and its culture, experience a different style of education, find new interests, make international friends and develop personally. It was an unforgettable time of fun, a productive adventure and a great broadening as well as learning experience. Studying abroad is truly an experience unlike any other.