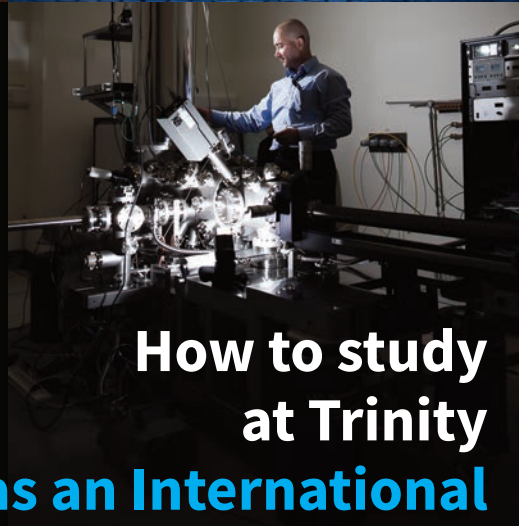




Trinity
College
Dublin

The University of Dublin



How to study at Trinity as an International Undergraduate Student



www.tcd.ie

WELCOME

BEING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TAKES COURAGE AND YOU HAVE IT.



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HOW TO STUDY IN TRINITY



Coming to study in 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 the 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.



PREPARE YOURSELF



You can do that by:

- Attending relevant sessions and lunchtime talks during Orientation week;
- 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, S2S mentor or the Students' Union Class Representatives;
- Making an appointment with your Global Officer.

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) 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.

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.

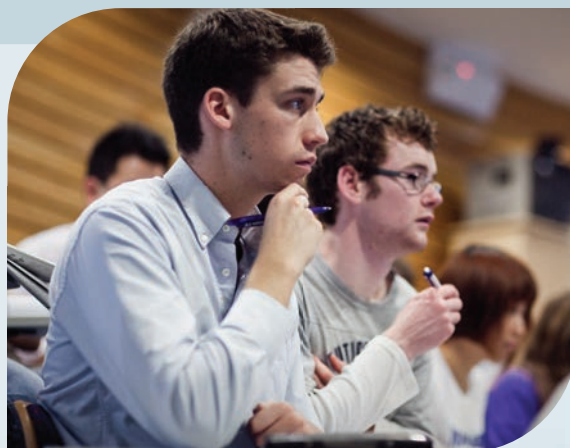
Moreover, at the beginning it might be a bit difficult to understand unfamiliar accents and you will feel that you are making extra effort in staying focused during your lectures. This is also something many students experience. With foreign languages, just like with other things, practice makes perfect.



HOW TO STUDY IN TRINITY

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;
- 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.



Some other time management strategies are:

- Prioritizing 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.

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 maximize the positive outcomes.

SET LEARNING GOALS AND ASK YOURSELF WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE DURING YOUR STUDIES IN TRINITY.

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

- Attending Student Learning Development (SLD) workshops on organisation and time management;
- Making an individual appointment with SLD;
- Organizing 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.

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.

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.

In 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 material 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 in a lecture hall together 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 College Tutor is quite separate from the teaching role.

Tutors are a first point of contact and a source of support, both on arrival in College and at any time during your time in College. They provide CONFIDENTIAL help and advice on personal as well as academic issues or on 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 College.

For example, you would contact your Tutor for help and 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.

http://www.tcd.ie/Senior_Tutor/contact/



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 work, are always making breakthroughs in knowledge and innovation.

Students are expected to:

- Question what they hear and read
- Think critically about the evidence of particular theories or points of view
- Develop their own ideas and arguments.

You are expected to move from the question “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.

HOW TO STUDY IN TRINITY



Therefore,

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 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;
- Organize or take part in a peer study group, this way you can discuss theories, and also make some friends along the way.

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 if you monitor your understanding, re-read difficult questions and review what you learned. Taking notes is important considering that most of your exams will take place at the end of the academic year and going back to your notes then 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 prioritize your readings;
- Organize a study group to discuss various readings with your fellow peers;
- Ask students in the years ahead for hints and tips on how to prioritize 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 Trinity Library information course to find out how you can make the most of using the library and all its resources.



ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING

Your assignments will involve writing: essays, lab reports, projects. At the end of your studies you'll have to write a dissertation if you are an undergraduate student or a thesis if you are a postgraduate student. 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
- 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;
- Make an appointment with IT Services to get free support for the technical side of writing – how to use Microsoft Word and other useful programmes;
- Set up a writing group with your peers to discuss and review each other's assignments.



HOW TO STUDY IN TRINITY

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 or soft copy or via Blackboard, confirming that you understand what plagiarism is and have completed the tutorial. Please see <http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism>.

You can find out more about how to avoid plagiarism through referencing by:

- Consulting the course handbook on what is the preferred referencing style in your department;
- Attending one of the Student Learning Development (SLD) workshops on plagiarism;
- Attending one of the Trinity Library courses on Endnote, a programme that automatically organizes references for you;
- Attending an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course to gain confidence with expressing your opinions in English.

If your lecturer requires it, you will have to submit your assignment through Turnitin, a programme that detects plagiarism.

See www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/students/integrity-plagiarism/#What_is_Turnitin

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.



PARTICIPATING IN GROUP WORK

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's important to try to 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 year 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. pre-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.

In second year, team work is usually restricted to poster presentations or verbal PowerPoint presentations. In the third year of your degree, this may change to individual presentations where you are also checked for competency and background knowledge.

In final year, Science students undertake a research project, which is usually linked to the work of a research group. You are expected to work as a team member, but also receive individual supervision from older members of the group. You will be encouraged to ask questions, and to attend group meetings, both of which help you to prepare a final year report or thesis. This work must also be your own so it is very important that you understand both your project and the background to it. Don't be afraid to ask for help!



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

Most exams in Trinity take place at the end of the academic year, in the course of four weeks in April/May. Some exams, depending on the School, take place in January.

Before the summer exams you will have 3 weeks of revision, when you will have the chance to revise your study material and prepare for exams. This might seem odd if you are used to being continuously assessed after each module or have exams at the end of each semester. Furthermore, this is one of the reasons why staying motivated until the end of the year is so important.



HOW TO STUDY IN TRINITY

Exams in Trinity are managed by the Examinations and Assessments section of the Academic Registry. They take place in various venues, both on and off campus. The examination method depends on your course. In some cases you will have multiple choice questions, while in others you will have to answer essay based questions.

The full exam timetable is only available towards the mid-end of Hilary Term and links to further details are at the end of this guide.

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/current/registration.php



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 Exams and Assessments webpage of the Academic Registry: www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/exams. Some exam venues are off campus, so it is important to check in advance.
- Consulting past papers on the same webpage in order to see what were the topics up for assessment in previous years and to test yourself to improve your performance;
- Reading your course handbooks and learning outcomes;
- Attending the Student Learning Development (SLD) workshop on exam skills;
- 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 organized by SLD during Revision week.

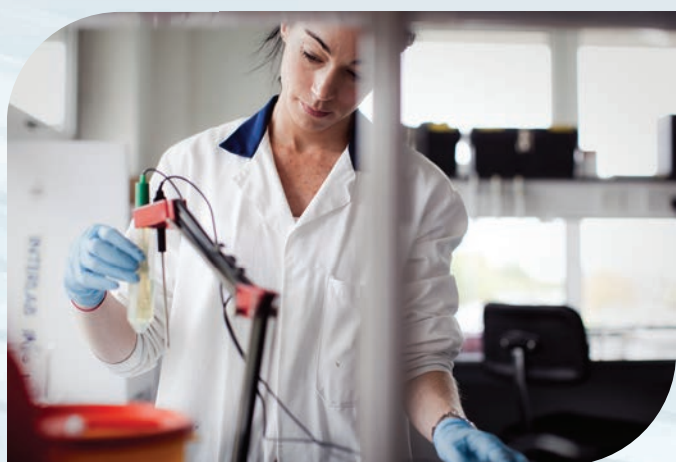
Remember, **examiners want you to PASS**, to give you marks. The exam is an opportunity for you to show that you have engaged with the course material, that you understand it, and that you are able to demonstrate this in a written exam.

TRINITY GRADING SYSTEM

Trinity's grading system 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%

REMEMBER, EXAMINERS WANT YOU TO PASS



Getting 70% for an assignment 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 argument and originality. Each department has different guidelines and expectations when it comes to the grades awarded.

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, whenever in doubt, ask for help!



HOW TO STUDY IN TRINITY

WHERE DO I GO FOR HELP?

Pre Arrival Information

www.tcd.ie/study

Orientation Information

www.tcd.ie/orientation

Student Learning Development

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

7-9 South Leinster Street, 3rd floor

student-learning.tcd.ie

E: student.learning@tcd.ie

T: +353 (0)1 896 1407

Blackboard: Academic Skills for Successful Learning (instructions for enrolment on our website)

Tutorial Service

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

www.tcd.ie/Senior_Tutor/your-tutor/who

Global Officers

Global Officers are available to link in with non-EU students. The following schools have Global Officers: English; Chemistry; Computer Science and Statistics; Engineering; Mathematics; Natural Sciences; Nursing and Midwifery; Physics; Psychology; Social Work and Social Policy; Social Sciences and Philosophy

www.tcd.ie/globalrelations/aboutus

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

www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/student2student/

E: student2student@tcd.ie

English for Academic Purposes

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

Room 4091, Arts Building

www.tcd.ie/slscs/english

E: clcsinfo@tcd.ie

T: +353 (0)1 896 1127

Trinity Library

www.tcd.ie/library

IT Services

Áras an Phiarsaigh, ground floor

www.tcd.ie/itservices/

E: itservicedesk@tcd.ie

T: +353 (0)1 896 2000

Maths Help Room

The Help Room offers free assistance to students who are having difficulty with Mathematics, Statistics or related courses.

www.maths.tcd.ie/~mathshelp

Maths Seminar Room 2.6

18 Westland Row, 2nd floor

Mon-Fri, 1-2pm

Programming Centre

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

www.scss.tcd.ie/misc/psc

Academic Registry

Term dates and Timetables

www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/lecture-timetables

Exams and Assessments

www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/exams

Academic Practice and eLearning
www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/students

Disability Service

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

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

Sources

Marshall, Lorain, Rowland, Frances (1996),
A Guide to Learning Independently,
Open University Press
Academic Skills Unit, University of Melbourne,
Australia “Studying in Australia. 10 Tips for
International Students”
Trinity Grading System
<http://www.tcd.ie/study/non-eu/study-abroad/to-trinity/erasmus/Apply/Grading.php>

Further reading

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International Students, 2nd ed. Abingdon:
Routledge.
Brandt, C. (2009) Read, Research and Write:
Academic Skills for ESL Students in Higher
Education, London: Sage.
McMillan, K., Weyers, J. (2012) Study Skills for
International Students, 1st ed. Prentice Hall
Lowes, R. (2004) The International Student's Guide:
Studying in English at University. London: Sage.
The World of Trinity. International Students Blog
<http://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. It is based on the '10 Tips for International Students' document of the Academic Skills Unit, University of Melbourne, Australia.





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www.tcd.ie

Global Relations Office
www.tcd.ie/globalrelations

Student Learning Development
student-learning.tcd.ie

www.facebook.com/tcdglobalrelations



www.twitter.com/tcdglobal



success

