



DON'T DROP OUT UNTIL YOU DROP IN

If you are thinking of changing your course or leaving the university **DON'T DROP OUT UNTIL YOU DROP IN** invites you to seek support, help and advice from the many student supports in UCD.

What you might be experiencing:

It is not unusual for you to feel overwhelmed at times by all the adjustments you have to make when you first go to college. These are normal transitional adjustments but they can make some students feel very anxious and unable to cope at the start. For example:

- You might be feeling disappointed because you chose your course based on skimpy information or because you thought you could achieve the points for that course, not because it was something you had a talent for or really wanted to do. Making a course selection mistake can damage confidence so it is important to talk to someone about this as soon as possible.
- You might be feeling disappointed because you thought you would be doing or learning something different than you are. Often you just need to give it time to learn the basics before doing the more exciting material in later semesters. Talking with someone who knows the course may help to clarify this for you.
- You might not be doing as well as you had hoped in your mid/end of semester exams. Student Advisers and Programme Office staff can help you make sense of your results and how they fit into the bigger academic picture.
- You might be thinking about your wish to study and your aptitudes, interests, motivation, and talents. You might be thinking about your capacity to apply yourself,

your ability to plan, to time-manage and to deal with further exam stress or the stress of assignments.

- You might be feeling cut off from your family if you are living away from home and find it hard to manage your new freedom and its responsibilities. You may also be suffering from homesickness and loneliness.

Other challenges that you might be facing:

UCD offers you a comprehensive orientation and welcoming programme in the first weeks of college because it recognizes that there are normal transitional challenges that you have to face.

These include:

- Loss of school structure
- Living with new people for the first time
- Pressure of clothes and image
- Being in a large group on a big campus
- Finding your way around campus
- Following complex timetables
- Managing new relationships with a range of lecturers, tutors, classmates and peers
- Understanding college procedures
- Integrating into the college system
- Taking personal responsibility for attendance (unlike in school), study schedules, completion of assignments etc.
- Managing finances and self-care for the first time
- Making new friends and developing an appropriate social life

It is no wonder it takes time before you become confident and truly feel at home!



You are not alone

You might think that you are the only one who is feeling a bit lost or experiencing uncertainty or insecurity. You might think you are the only one who is feeling socially intimidated or emotionally overwhelmed or feeling academically inundated. You might feel guilty about this, afraid that you have chosen the wrong college or the wrong direction in life.

This can be particularly difficult if you are not from Dublin - if you are from other parts of the country or from other parts of the world. You might have had to travel long distances and can suffer from 'culture shock' as you try to adapt to so many changes in a short time.

Also you might feel that your family has made sacrifices to send you to college and you might be afraid of squandering your opportunity or of dishonoring the family.

So if you are struggling in any way try and remember you are not alone and seek support.



What supports are available to you?

There are a huge range of support services in UCD and information on all of these can be found on www.ucd.ie/students/studentssupport.html

Other key online resources include:

- www.ucd.ie/studentadvisers
- www.ucd.ie/studentcounselling
- www.ucd.ie/chaplaincy
- www.ucd.ie/stuhealth
- www.ucd.ie/programmeoffices
- www.ucd.ie/balinkedup



So if you are struggling you should:

- Recognise that it is normal to feel anxious when facing a stressful situation.
- Don't try to cope alone. You don't need to do this on your own when there are supports to help you.
- Seek support immediately for any worry - the earlier the better.
- Consult your Student Adviser, one of the Chaplains, a member of the Student Health Service or one of the Student Counsellors as soon as a problem arises. They can ensure that you get the help you need.
- Read all the literature given to you and check out all the website information and support services.
- If you have parents who can help get their support.
- Talk to your Peer Mentor. Peer Mentors have been through first year and may have had exactly the same doubts you have. They can be a great source of support.



Other things that can help:

- Join societies and get involved
- Play sport or get exercise - you don't have to be a committed athlete to be involved. Call to the Sports Centre for information about the 'Get in Gear Programme'
- Accommodation issues can be stressful. If you are sharing accommodation work out the rules of living together at the very start.
- Anticipate and talk through complex family emotions that might arise (such as homesickness or financial support).

So you still want to change your course or leave university?

You've DROPPED IN – availed of support, talked through the issues, got involved – but you may still want to change course or leave university. Some of the things to consider then are:

- Know WHY you want to withdraw or why you decide to stay; the decision to leave and the decision to do something else should be two distinct processes.
- Get in touch with your Programme Office who can put you in touch with the relevant academics to augment the online information and answer any questions you might have. Also the Programme Office staff are vital if you finally decide that withdrawal is your best option. They will ensure that you have all the paperwork in order so that you don't compromise any future course choices.
- Remember there are deadlines and fee implications to dropping out and the Programme Office will send you in the right direction to make sure that all is in order.
- Research other courses. For courses in UCD you can log on to http://www.ucd.ie/students/course_search.htm to access all the courses you want to research. It will allow you to look at what is in each year of the course, what the learning outcomes are and how you will be assessed. Other colleges will have similar course pages.
- Drop into the UCD Career Development Centre (www.ucd.ie/careers) for advice on course choices related to a specific career.

So think it through, be proactive and give yourself the best chance!

DON'T DROP OUT UNTIL YOU DROP IN

