

THE SUNDAY TIMES UNIVERSITY GUIDE 2011

thesundaytimes.ie/universityguide

Edited by **Alastair McCall**

Written and compiled by **Colm Murphy, Kate Butler, Alastair McCall, Zoe Thomas, Nick Rodrigues** and **Sue Leonard**

IRISH UNIVERSITIES/COLLEGES

Colleges wise up to boost job prospects	4
The 2010 Sunday Times league table	5
Profiles of Irish third-level institutions	6-12
Most money for research	7
Lowest dropout rate	8
The best degrees	9
Highest dropout rate	10
Fewest top degrees	11
Other colleges offering degrees	12
Honours degrees for 2011 entry	13-15

UK UNIVERSITIES/COLLEGES

Profiles of UK universities	16-62
Fewest in graduate-level jobs	17
Best for sport	18
Top in the Southwest	21
How the Cambridge colleges rate	23
Lowest dropout rate	24
Lowest entry points	26
The best degrees	29
Top in Scotland	30
Fewest top degrees	32
Fewest unemployed	33
Top in the Midlands	35
Top in the Northwest	37
Top in the North	38
Highest entry points	40
Fewest from state schools	41
Top in London	42
Most applications	44
Most working-class	46
How the Oxford colleges rate	47
Top modern universities	48
Most unemployed	49
The most satisfied students	50
The least satisfied students	51
Most from state schools	52
Most from clearing	54
Highest dropout rate	55
Cheapest places to live	58
Top in Wales	59
Worst for research	61
Best for research	62



INTERNSHIPS AND JOB PLACEMENTS WERE ONCE CONSIDERED THE PRESERVE OF THE NERD POPULATION, BUT NOW MOST STUDENTS ARE TRYING TO SECURE A PLACEMENT AND THEY DON'T CARE IF ITS UNPAID, DECLAN HARMON, PAGE 7

Cover: students at Cork IT
Photographer: Fergal Phillips

It's young gifted and on track

Academic excellence has seen Dublin City quickly establish itself among the higher education elite, says **Colm Murphy**

International recognition for its academic innovation and achievement, research excellence and a 20-year outstanding track record for widening access to third-level education have won Dublin City University (DCU) our Irish University of the Year award.

The republic's youngest university and second smallest won the award after 12 months that have witnessed the north Dublin campus lauded by an international panel for its continuous upgrading of academic quality. DCU "can fairly claim to be at the cutting edge in terms of academic quality improvement", an Irish Universities Quality Board inspectorate reported. Its international panel had spent a week looking at the institution's internal quality assurance procedures.

The university has developed apace since it last won our award in 2004 and more ambitious plans are afoot. Professor Brian MacCraith, inaugurated in July as DCU's third president, said he has a vision of creating the "University of Enterprise" during his 10-year-term. The 53-year-old physicist from Dundalk, an inventor of devices to detect diseases such as cancer, is to appoint an advisory committee that will include renowned former Intel chief Craig Barrett.

The aim is to "keep DCU ahead of the game" in its portfolio of degrees, its research agenda, and in identifying and honing the most sought-after attributes in graduates such as leadership, initiative and enterprise.

MacCraith is planning an innovation campus near to its main site where companies, small businesses, start-ups and the university's research centres and expertise can cluster.

Once viewed by students as a soulless Glasnevin base, DCU has spent millions providing some of the best standards in Irish third-level. The university's 7,618 full-time and 1,965 part-time students are able to relax in facilities usually found in a five-star hotel. Along with a sauna, spa pool and a 25m swimming pool there is the "tepidarium" warm room where they can relax surrounded by radiant heat and atmospheric lighting. To finish off the evening they can see a top-name act in the campus's Helix entertainment complex. They can then retire to one of the 300 student residences or pop back to the late opening library for more swotting.

We award the university's sports facilities a four-star rating, the second highest of our rankings. They received a national award last November also, further evidence that DCU's extracurricular facilities match its established academic record. It is achieving on the sports fields, too, and gives academic credit for involvement in extracurricular activity. The mens' and ladies' GAA teams are the current Sigerson Cup and O'Connor Cup holders, making them the first male and female football teams from a single university to hold such honours in one academic year.

Meg O Riordan, the university's

THE SUNDAY TIMES University of the Year Dublin City University

RUNNER-UP

Trinity College Dublin

Institute of Technology of the Year

Cork IT

RUNNER-UP

IT Sligo

Based on league table position

BEST UNIVERSITY

Trinity College Dublin

BEST INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Dublin IT

UK UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR

King's College London

RUNNER-UP

Nottingham

SHORTLISTED

Exeter
London School of Economics
Oxford Brookes

HOW TO MAKE THE GRADE

This is the ninth edition of The Sunday Times University Guide — a unique survey of third-level education in Ireland and higher education in the UK. It is an invaluable first reference point for all prospective students and their parents.

Our definitive league table of Irish universities and institutes of technology is on page 5 and also online at thesundaytimes.ie/universityguide. Constructed to a unique formula, we rank institutions on the issues that count: the average number of entry points required for admission to honours degree courses; graduate unemployment rates; the proportion of students who gain firsts and 2:1s; the proportion who fail to complete their studies; staffing levels; and the amount of research income secured.

All Irish universities and ITs are profiled on pages 6 to 12, followed by our exclusive list of new courses for 2011 and the entry points needed for all honours degrees in 2010.

From page 16 we profile all the UK universities with even more detail for both countries online.

students' union president, said: "The spirit of social life balanced with the integrated academic advances at DCU make the college what it is meant to be — a hugely enjoyable and fulfilling experience. You will find yourself at DCU and go anywhere you want after."

The university was one of the first in Ireland to organise work placements and periods of study abroad for all students. Placements ranging from two to 12 months are mandatory on 26 undergraduate programmes and are assessed as part of the course by both employers and the university. It gives students vital experience and skills to augment their academic studies and is instrumental in producing an exceptional calibre of graduate, primed and ready to face the future. They also perform better at interview.

Even in the present brutal economic conditions, just one in 10 of DCU's graduates remain out of work six months after leaving the university.

MacCraith says that the placement has a maturing effect on students, and helps improve final grades. The figure for DCU students getting a top grade, a first or a 2:1, is now up to 69%.

These smart graduates have helped lift Dublin City from sixth to fifth place in the Irish universities league table, published on page 5 of this guide.

But our award is not determined solely on league table position. If it were, Trinity College Dublin would win almost every year as would Oxford or Cambridge in England, chiefly because they consistently have the highest academically rated intake and earn the most research income per academic.

In addition to our league table measures (Leaving Certificate points gained for entry, research income, graduate employment, degree outcomes, student/staff ratios and dropout rates), we assess a range of qualities: chiefly exam results and robustness of the institution; the quality of the student experience; and the university's role on the regional, national and world stages.

In all these areas, DCU is among the top performers. It is a cosmopolitan university with a good student mix with 27% being mature, 13% from overseas and 23% entering without the standard Leaving Certificate results.

The access scheme it started 20 years ago has had an excellent track record, putting 1,165 students through the university. There was a 92% completion rate among these students and no difference in grades to those admitted through standard procedures. Many were funded through the university's charity, the DCU Educational Trust.

About 6,000 secondary students are taking part in the university's access programmes, including maths campus and Easter revision courses. The university aims to have a quarter of its intake admitted through these schemes and this year joined the Higher Education Access Route, operated via the Central Applications Office.

"We have a pilot in Ballymun where undergraduates volunteer to do maths tuition. It brought up their grades significantly," MacCraith said.



High achievers: 69% of students at DCU get a first or 2:1

The university's embryonic days, first as the National Institute for Higher Education (NIHE), founded in 1975, and then a university in 1989, were reminiscent of today with mass unemployment, emigration and few funds. Its raison d'être was to help drag Ireland into the next century by

building a high-tech base through providing technical degrees and research facilities.

Thirty-five years and several hundred million euros later, every inch of the campus north of Dublin city is a hive of activity. Dublin City University's four national research

centres have captured global niches in high-tech research generating just over €48m last year, a 48% increase.

Many of its graduates are playing key roles in technological companies upon which Ireland is dependent for its economic recovery. The university's former president, Professor Ferdinand

von Prondzynski, was one of the key people behind the Your Country, Your Call initiative to generate ideas to help Ireland's economy to recover.

The hard times in which the institution was founded saw it adopt a market-savvy strategy of identifying fast-growing global niches for research and then trying to build capacity in them. It is still proving successful.

Today, the 501 DCU academics attract on average €95,781 each in research funding. The university is also globally ambitious. It hosted the first Ireland-India Science and Technology Forum in February to promote collaborations in science, technology, engineering and biomedical research.

MacCraith, who joined the staff in 1986, was involved in establishing three of the university's most successful research centres, the Optical Sensors Laboratory, the National Centre for Sensor Research and the Biomedical Diagnostics Institute.

One of the other university research centres, for image processing and analysis, licensed in May a diagnostic device which assists in the early detection and treatment of colon cancer to Biotronics3D, a UK company. Another, the €20m SmartPM programme, is looking at increasing efficiency in appliances.

This commercial focus is one of the characteristics that differentiates Dublin City's research strategy from the older universities. The campus's Invent business incubator centre also aims to help commercialise the institution's research findings and has put on a new programme to assist technology start-ups.

Innovation in courses has been its hallmark. This month DCU introduced Ireland's first degree in aviation management with pilot studies to help the growth of Ireland's aviation industry, and it was oversubscribed. Other courses, such as horticulture, education and training, and health and society start next year.

However, the campus is near capacity so DCU is starting to look for more room to expand elsewhere. More flexible and online learning and continuous professional development are also part of its future plans.

A leap in performance across the board saw Trinity College Dublin (TCD), widen its lead at the top of The Sunday Times league table. This academic excellence, coupled with its ambitious plan to open early next year a €57m bioscience facility to make Ireland a world centre in the field, helped it to the runner-up spot for The Sunday Times Irish University of the Year title. The award also recognises the plan to take 22% of the TCD intake from non-traditional students, including those from a socioeconomically disadvantaged background, those with a disability and mature students. The previous target of 15% was exceeded in 2008. TCD's public outreach schemes were also deemed excellent, with its Science Gallery being nominated for European Museum of the Year Award.

Its similarly strong access programme saw Cork IT capture the Institute of Technology of the Year award. It moved up two places from 11th to 9th on The Sunday Times Irish University league table. Innovations such as having software millionaire Kieran Moynihan start this month as

one of Ireland's first entrepreneurs in residence were key to the institute securing the award.

A partnership was also forged with the University of Pune, one of India's leading universities. Pune is huge, with 650,000 undergraduates in its affiliated colleges. The agreement will see a series of initiatives in research, and student and staff exchanges.

Cork IT enjoys strong rates of student satisfaction and its student services have been enhanced with a new access and disability support centre, while its involvement with the arts increased with the opening of a new city centre art gallery.

The award also recognises the contribution that Cork IT's on-campus business incubation centre, the Rubicon, is making and how this is being linked with teaching. The institute has the highest concentration of start-up companies on the island of Ireland, and houses more than 40 knowledge-based start-up companies.

This year 25 undergraduate and postgraduate projects and case studies have been undertaken with firms in the Rubicon. In addition, staff and students undertake collaborative research and contract research with organisations. This not only enriches their experience but also provides

ONCE VIEWED AS SOULLESS, IT HAS SPENT MILLIONS BRINGING ITS FACILITIES TO SOME OF THE BEST IN IRISH THIRD-LEVEL

expertise and skills to businesses at a vital stage in their development.

Another innovative initiative is Cork IT's Discovery Zone. The programme is designed to assist experienced professionals who find themselves at a time in their careers where they want to develop new ideas, start a business or explore ways of using their skills in exploiting other commercial opportunities through partnerships with other entrepreneurs or academic institutions.

The runner-up award in the institute of technology sector went to one of the most remote colleges in the republic, Institute of Technology, Sligo. It saw the biggest move up The Sunday Times Irish University league table, from 21st to 11th place, due to improved performance across most of our league table measures. Over the past 40 years, IT Sligo has earned a reputation as one of Ireland's most innovative third-level colleges. So much so that multinationals such as Coca-Cola and Abbott Laboratories use it to train their staff around the globe online in specialist areas. Its campus has been transformed with €12.5m of new facilities in the past two years.