

Dear future Maynooth student reading this in eager anticipation of a study abroad experience, Let's cut to the chase. First, let me say, it's worth it. For the last semester I've spent my time in Maynooth University in Ireland which is located in a village about 45 minutes away from the capital city of Dublin, and I can tell you that IT. IS. WORTH. IT. Luckily for you, here I will detail a few pointers specific to my Maynooth experience that will help you out with some logistics.

- Housing

- o You will be receiving housing information via email a lot before your stay, but just in case you haven't, or want to start preparing early, here is a list of stuff that the university recommends bringing. I should note that a duvet and pillow is included in on-campus apartments for international students, and while they recommend bringing a lot of kitchen equipment, it is normal for roommates to share cooking equipment (and since some of you're roommates will probably be Irish, they don't have to worry about packing all of the equipment in airline travel luggage and thus they will normally bring a lot. I only brought a skillet and I was fine).

- o Bedroom:

- Single duvet cover

- Pillow case

- Single bed sheet

- Blanket for colder weather

- o Kitchen:

- Crockery: dinner plate, side plate, bowl, cup, water glass.

- Cutlery: knife, fork, spoons

- Cooking equipment: saucepan, frying pan, baking tray, roasting pan, oven dish

- Utensils, potato peeler, grater, colander, wooden spoon, mixing spoon

- Orientation

- o For study abroad students, there are two days between the official move-in date and the orientation days. If you're living on campus, the international students move in before all of the other students, so you might have some time to yourself. If you get lonely and want to start meeting people already, then make sure to keep up to date with the MU International Society/Group via their facebook pages and they should have a few events going on where everyone is trying to meet people just like you.
- o To be completely honest, most of the official orientation schedule consists of dull powerpoint presentations with very limited opportunities to meet the other international students. I would say that the "dullness" is only my opinion, but the sentiment was definitely shared by all of the other international students with whom I spoke. That said, if you are wanting to meet people, you might try to get to the information sessions early and sit by the people that are already there. The presentations consist of basic information about the international department, the university, and the teachers advertising their classes. Aside from that, there are tours of the campus/library and, on the last day, preliminary class registration. Luckily, international students get to attend their classes for a week before the final class enrollment is necessary; this way you are able to get an idea of the class before fully committing to taking it for the semester.

- Student services/activities

- o Student Buddy Program: You should receive an email about this program a few weeks before you arrive on campus. I was a little disappointed with their lack of events (maybe 4 all semester) but they are still worth going to. Events include bowling, board games, and parties.
- o International Society: The society hosts events/parties (especially in the first few weeks) and trips in Ireland throughout the semester. For the semester that I was there, they planned about 3 trips; however, i'll warn you now that it is normally fairly difficult to sign up for these trips, as they have a person-limit and fill up fast. It is a good idea to like their

facebook page and adjust the settings so you'll get a notification every time they post, because I found that sometimes there were really late posts like "We're selling tickets to the Cork trip for the next hour and a half so come down to the Arts Building now!" that aren't very convenient.

- o A lot of others: within the first two weeks, there will be a club and societies fair where you can select from MU's HUGE selection of clubs. Sign-up costs 2 euro each and clubs provide a fantastic way to meet people.
- o This isn't exactly school-related, but I thought I'd mention some details about the social life in Maynooth. I was incredibly surprised (and a little disappointed) when I realized that almost all of Maynooth's students are gone from Friday afternoon to Sunday (they go home). That said, campus can seem like a bit of a ghost town on weekends so it's good to either know people that ARE going to be on campus, or use the weekends to plan trips for yourself. I should mention that there are plenty of opportunities for going out/partying on weekdays (if that's what you're into); there are two nightclubs (The Roost and The Cathedral) and one traditional pub (Brady's) in town, and here's the typical weekly schedule (yes, they actually have a schedule): Monday - the Roost, Wednesday - the Roost/the Cathedral, Thursday - The Cathedral. Since they aren't around campus on weekends, the students tend to make up for it by going out (a lot) on weekdays.

- Ireland Immigration:

- o Since you're staying in Ireland for over 3 months (a semester is just longer than 3 months), you'll have to register with Irish immigration. The immigration service requires a letter from the international office giving the details of your stay at the university (you should hear about this at orientation) and you'll have to fill out a form on the international department's website in order to request your letter. Along with this letter, you'll need your passport and a bank statement (either print this off from online banking or bring it with you from the US to make it easier) showing your balance, which must be over 1500 euro for one semester or

over 3000 for two semesters. Being a poor college student, I did not have this money. I was able to get my parents to transfer money into my account and then print off the statement, then have them transfer it out; I mention this because it is a very valid way of doing it if you find it necessary, the international office even suggests it to some who have trouble showing the money. Then, you'll have to email the Leixlip immigration center at (Leixlip.ImmigrationUnit@guarda.ie) to set up an appointment. When the appointment date arrives, take the Dublin Bus to Leixlip (the second stop of the first city you go through on the 66 route) and find the Garda station (a brown brick building which shouldn't be too hard to find) on the left side of the road.

- Public transportation

- Dublin Bus: The Dublin Bus is a great way to get around Dublin, and luckily it goes all the way to Maynooth, giving you an easy way to explore the city. First thing you'll want to do is get yourself a student LeapCard - this is an easy-to-use card that gives you discounted rates on Dublin Bus trips (with the leap card, the trip from Maynooth to Merrion Square is 3.30 euro one way) that is issued to you by the school. To get the leap card, simply go to the SU in the desk area to the left of Cafe Chill, tell them you want a student LeapCard, and pay a 15 euro fee. If you do not have the LeapCard, then you are forced to pay in exact change (without the discounted rate) each time you use the bus, and that can be difficult. If you plan on using the Dublin Bus even semi-regularly, it is a good idea to download the award-winning Dublin Bus app, which gives you route timetables/maps as well as real-time information. The bus stop in Maynooth is on the left side of the main road (Parson Street), about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down and in front of the pharmacy. The bus runs very regularly, so if you don't want to check the time table before going to the stop, the stop has real-time information displaying the next bus (and regardless of the time you get to the bus, you won't have to wait for more than 20 minutes for the next one). For Dublin, you'll want to use route 66 - Merrion Square. This takes you through the city centre (O'Connell street - you might

need to ask others to point it out to you on your first time) before going across the river liffey and over to St. Stephen's Green and Merrion Square parks.

- o Around Ireland: Since Ireland has such great public transportation, there are plenty of options to get everywhere. Normally you'll have to take the route 66 bus to Dublin and then leave from there. A great website to use is Transport for Ireland (<http://www.transportforireland.ie/>), which will give you multiple routes and cost information depending on your inputted destination. Generally, you can use public transportation to get anywhere in Ireland for less than 15 euro. Aside from Dublin, I'd personally recommend visiting Galway, Belfast, and the Cliffs of Moher (beautiful!).

So there you have it. Hopefully these tips will help you get prepared. After you do so, there's only one thing left to do: get really, really excited.

-Matt