

Exchange experience report Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, Autumn 2019

Your study programme

There was quite a wide choice of modules available for foreign students. My study programme in the Law department at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) comprised 3 modules of 10 ECTS each: European Human Rights Law, Intellectual Property Law and Food Law.

All modules were very stimulating and interesting and did not have an examination as a method of assessment, but rather essays and assignments.

European Human Rights Law was a very interesting module with a lot of students, both Erasmus and full-time TCD students. It covered detailed explanations of the ECHR articles and Protocols and the cases concerning these provisions. The teacher was very kind and left a large margin of discretion to the students, as she allowed us to basically pick any topic related to the module we were interested in and write first a short Blog Post and then a longer Essay. This allowed us to cover topics that we were truly interested about in much more depth than we would have if we had to study for an exam covering all provisions and topics. However, this also meant that the other topics were just superficially touched upon in class.

Intellectual Property Law was a very engaging module: the teacher was extremely knowledgeable and clear when explaining not only the module's content itself, but also what the module concerned and what it required. His passion for the topic was very clear and transmitted to all the students. The module covered all fundamentals of intellectual property law, including copyright, trade-marks, patents and designs, as well as how to enforce these rights and what they entail. I found this module particularly relevant and I was extremely happy that I could take it in TCD. Here, we were asked to actively participate, as they used a partially socratic teaching method. This meant that we were put in panels of 2 to 4 students (we were given the list at the beginning of the term so we knew when our panel was) and we had to simply interact more with the teacher who would ask us questions based on the literature and readings that we were assigned for that day's class. I thought this was a clever way to encourage students to speak up without adding the stress of having to fully prepare for an oral exam at every class, since we knew the date and readings before-hand. The largest percentage of the grade came from a final Essay. We were given three questions of which we had to choose one. This allowed us to have a guideline and a general research question given by the teacher (so it was not too broad) but also to choose a topic that interested us the most.

Food Law was a demanding but fascinating module. Although complex, the topics were all extremely relevant, especially in the current era. All the knowledge I acquired in this class I could immediately put in good use, even at the supermarket, and it helped me realize how much Food Law is connected to our daily life. The module focused on free movement of food in the EU, food and nutrition labelling, designation of origins and geographical indications, food safety, nutrition and health claims, GMOs, ethical and environmental aspects of food law and animal welfare. The teacher was extremely knowledgeable and passionate but talked really fast. The assessment method comprised of 3 assignments: a Case Study, an Essay and a Legislation Appraisal. The teacher provided us with research questions to choose from, literature, readings and good explanation in class. He also made himself very available to students before and after class, in his office hours, and even cancelled the class before our deadline to give us more time to work on the assignment and to answer our questions individually.

Overall, all modules required a certain level of study: European Human Rights Law was the most easy-going in the sense that attendance was not always mandatory and we could choose all the topics we wanted to write about. Intellectual Property Law was more demanding, especially for the final essay, but the teacher provided us with a lot of materials, literature and clear explanations of all the elements, concepts and case law. Food Law was perhaps the most demanding module because of the triple assessment method and because of the highly relevant but complicated topic. Nevertheless, I

think Food Law was also one of the most stimulating modules on offer. I would definitely recommend all modules, they were very interesting, compelling and engaging.

Language

The language spoken in Ireland is English. If Erasmus students have a good level of English, there absolutely are no language barriers, other than the amazing signs in Gaelic.

Finance and other conditions

Ireland and Dublin itself are quite expensive. Rent is the most expensive thing: it can range between 600 and 900 (and higher) euros per month depending on how far away from the city center you live and whether you live with a host family. Moreover, public transportation are also quite expensive, although there are city bikes that are quite helpful. Other than that, there is a wide range of choices of supermarkets, pubs, restaurants and stores so it is easy to live on a student budget if one decides to.

Preparation and contacts with the faculty abroad

TCD is a stunning university that offers many facilities: multiple libraries, dining halls etc and the application and registration process is quite simple to follow. Everything is explained very well online and they reply very fast to your emails should you have any enquiry.

Housing

Rent is quite high depending on how far away from the city center you live and whether you live with a host family or a student house. It can range between 600 and 900 (and higher) euros per month. I would recommend looking for a room in a safe area of Dublin (which is a safe city but best not to walk for a long-distance home alone at night). I would recommend Smithfield, which is a nice area very close to the city center and not too expensive. The area around Phoenix park is also quite in the center and less expensive but harder to reach with public transport.

Guidance / reception at host university

TCD starts off the new academic year with an introduction week with events for Freshers and for Erasmus students. They will also organize student to student meetings so that TCD senior students can help you out if needed and show you around campus. Freshers' week is filled with social events, parties and fun adventures, you'll have some craic! The other wonderful thing about TCD is that they have hundreds of societies and clubs, whatever you are looking for they have it! It is a fun way to make new friends easily and find new people that have your same interests (from the basketball or athletic club, to the trampoline society, Law society, Knitting society and Art Workshops). TCD also offers free gym membership to every TCD student, which is a great opportunity to get in shape! Lastly, they offer free health services at the health center for all TCD students.

Culture, free time and travelling

The Irish culture is fantastic: they are very kind, friendly and easy to talk to. They have a very strong pub culture: everyone goes to the pub for a couple of pints, live music and a fun night! There are also a lot of events that students can attend: if you like live music look out for concerts, there are hundreds of them in Dublin! Stand-up comedy is also big in Ireland. Depending on the modules chosen, students have a fair amount of free time, there are not many hours of lectures, so there is time for

Erasmus students to visit the city, travel and bond with other students. There is also a reading week in mid-October that can be used to travel, and exams tend to finish in mid-December so there is time between then and Christmas to travel around Ireland. Ireland is gorgeous anywhere you go!

Other

I would absolutely recommend going to TCD for your Erasmus. It is a stunning university that offers very stimulating and detailed law modules that can also help you understand what legal field you would like to deepen your knowledge in in the future. Dublin itself is a gorgeous city filled with culture and fun, and it does not even rain that often! It is also very well connected with all the other cities in Ireland and Northern Ireland: it is easy to organize weekend trips or day trips. My only suggestion would be not to go to the Cliffs of Moher in December as it can get foggy and you'd miss out on a stunning view. If you want to spend your exchange in a good university with stimulating modules, but at the same time enjoy your exchange with good friends, pubs and live music, TCD is for you!