

## MATURE STUDENT INFORMATION





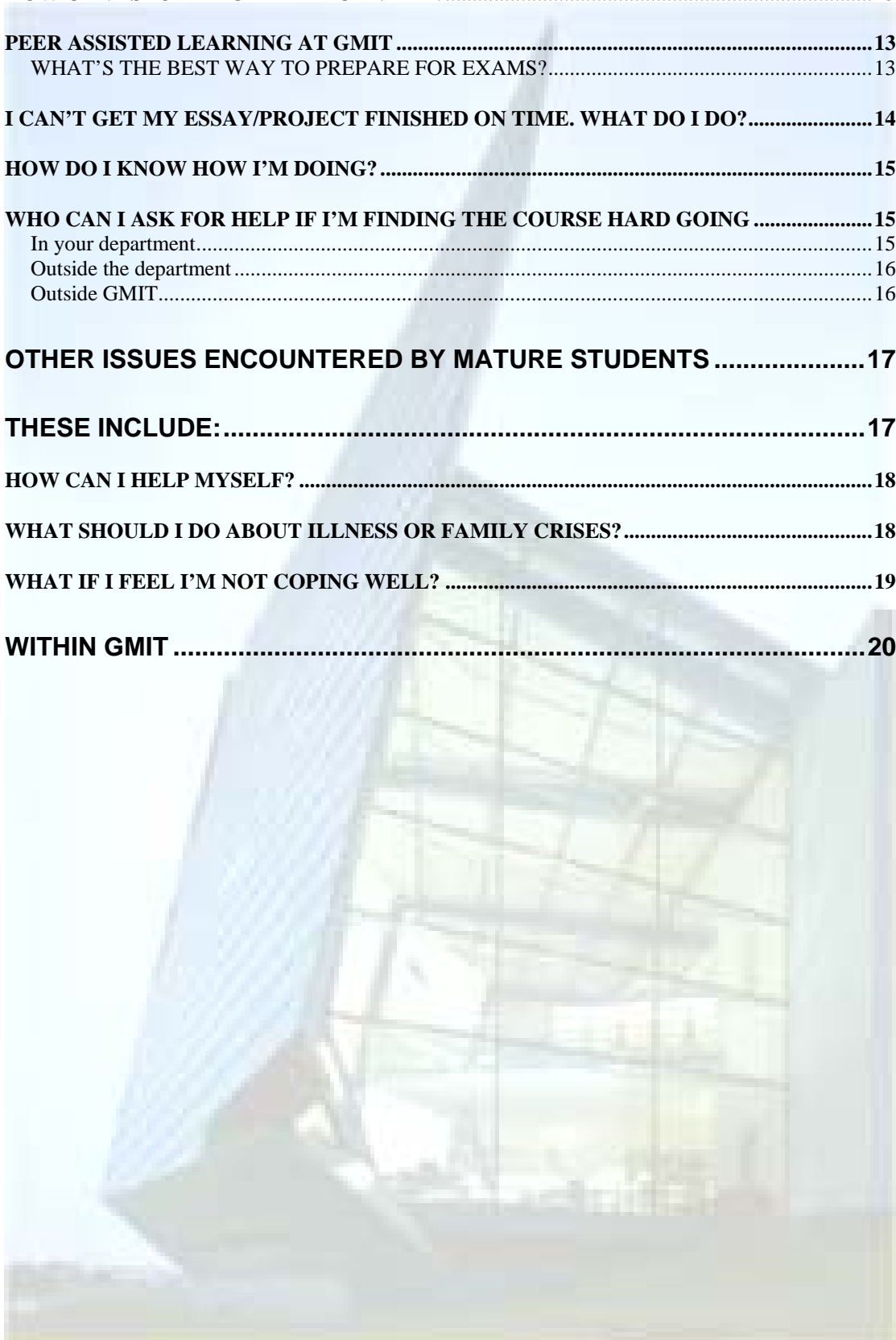
## **FOREWORD**

*GMIT is committed to a comprehensive policy of equal opportunities for mature students and prospective mature students in its admission policy, in all aspects of its teaching and assessment and in its provision of student services and related facilities. It is also committed to a programme of continuous review and action to ensure that these policies remain effective.*

*GMIT welcomes applications from people on the grounds of Mature Years and the Institute is fully committed to increasing the participation of mature students on all of its programmes. A quota of places is reserved for mature students each year on all courses.*

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## INTRODUCTION

### ***WHO IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?***

This is for you if you are aged 23 or over on the 1<sup>st</sup> January in the year of entry to an undergraduate course because you are then a mature student.

This handbook has been designed for both prospective mature students applying to GMIT and existing mature students within the Institute. We hope that the information and advice given here will be useful for you.

Whether you are 23 or 90, studying full-time or part-time, for pleasure or for career reasons. You may have come to GMIT to satisfy a lifetime ambition, or through a vague sense of unfinished business. You may never have dreamed of studying at this level until now!



## ***WHAT IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?***

The handbook aims to provide a basic framework for you to find the information you need in response to frequently asked questions. Usually, some initial information and advice is offered, along with suggestions for further help. Knowing where support is available means that you can tackle problems early, and prevent small problems turning into bigger ones. The handbook aims to point you in the right direction.

Although much of the information here is about solving problems, you will also find information here about linking up with other students, planning for the future and facilities and , which will help you to enjoy your time at this college. The handbook includes tips, comments, and examples of the methods other students use to cope with, and get the most out of, their studies.

## **WHY STUDY AT GMIT?**

GMIT is a modern Institute offering full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses in a wide variety of subjects which welcomes and has facilities for mature students.

### ***Courses offered at GMIT***

A full list of full time courses currently available can be found at [www.gmit.ie](http://www.gmit.ie) and in the prospectus available from GMIT.

Applications Department

GMIT

Dublin Rd

Galway

GMIT also offers a number of **Part-Time** undergraduate qualification courses.

Using the national Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects (ACCM) system, in a range of subjects, students are able to follow each course of study at their own pace, 'banking' credits as they progress.

The Lifelong Learning Centre offers a series of short courses and part-time professional qualifications. These courses vary in duration between 6 and 10 weeks and are offered three times a year. A significant number of people undertake these courses to add to their qualifications, up-date their knowledge, or improve their technical expertise. [www.gmit.ie/lifelonglearning](http://www.gmit.ie/lifelonglearning)

### **Additional Services in GMIT**

GMIT has full-time Counsellors, Chaplain, Careers Officer, Access Officer and a Health Unit that all registered students can avail of free of charge.

All full-time students can set up student bank accounts with either AIB or Bank of Ireland. Both banks are located on the GMIT campus. Full-time students can also avail of an ISIC (International Student Identity Card) and travel to the USA during the summer months on a J1 Visa.

### ***CAO OPEN INFORMATION SESSIONS***

In order to support adults wishing to return to education, each year the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology hosts an Open Day for Mature Students in the Galway campus, Castlebar campus and Letterfrack campus. These information days provide people with information on the range of full-time and part-time programmes available at GMIT, application procedures and the financial supports available to mature students while attending the Institute. Support is also provided on how to complete the CAO application form.

### **APPLYING TO GMIT**

#### ***Entry Routes for Mature students entry to GMIT***

#### **Undergraduate programmes**

There are three separate entry routes for mature students which can be used simultaneously



1. Through CAO using previous qualification - Leaving certificate, FETAC level 5 or 6 in competition with all other entrants on points. Places awarded in August.
2. Through the CAO using the mature students route as a special category – (candidates must be 23 on the 1st January in the year of entry to the course) applying through the CAO and filling in pages 3 & 4 of the application form.
  - a. Applicants who are 23 on 1<sup>st</sup> of January in the year of entry are automatically called for interview in the disciplines they are called for and whichever campus they have applied for in May and assessed on the basis of
    - i. previous education work,
    - ii. experience and demonstrated ability,
    - iii. competence to undertake the programme.
  - b. Candidates are ranked in order from the interviews and places will be awarded in July and August, through the CAO
3. Through successful completion of one of the Access courses run by both NUIG and GMIT followed by a mature student's interview.

Applications for year one of all full-time Higher Certificate (Level 6), Ordinary Bachelor Degree (Level 7) and Honours Bachelor Degree (Level 8) courses are made to:

Central Application Office (CAO)  
Tower House,  
Eglinton Street,  
Galway.  
Tel: (091) 509800

Fax: (091) 562344

Web: [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)

The CAO handbook gives details of application dates and procedures.

Full information on courses available in GMIT are also contained in the GMIT Prospectus and on [www.gmit.ie](http://www.gmit.ie)



## ***Graduate Programmes.***

GMIT offers a number of programmes to progress from a level 7 (Pass degree or diploma) to a level 8 (Hons degree). The applications for these courses are made directly to the admissions department via an online process, details are on the web.

## ***Post Graduate Programmes:***

GMIT offers a number of taught masters programmes as well as research programmes. These can be applied for directly to the department concerned.

## **INDUCTION WEEK**

Mature students are able to familiarise themselves with the institute during induction week. Guided tours of the institute and library will be organised so as to familiarise students with their new surroundings.

During this week, all students will meet with academic staff, who will outline their chosen course details, what is required of students and answer any questions that mature students may have.

Mature students will also have an opportunity to meet with staff in Students Services, including the Student Counsellor, Careers Officer, Chaplain and Access Officer as well as the Access Co-ordinator who will outline the facilities available for mature students.

## **PREPARING FOR THIRD LEVEL**

### ***THINGS YOU MAY NEED TO CONSIDER***

Mature Students return to study for a wide variety of reasons: for some, it is to enhance career prospects, for many it is simply for personal development or fulfilment. Whatever the reason, preparation is essential and you will need to think carefully about the effect it will have on you, your family, your time and your financial situation.

- You will need to think through exactly why you want to study *these* subjects at *this Institute*: what is it about *this* course, *this* Department, that makes you want to spend the next three or four years of your life studying.
- You need to take a good hard look at the course and the Department – is it going to suit you?
- If possible, investigate where you stand in terms of grants, childcare etc. *before* you apply to GMIT

Information on the current financial assistance and how to apply can be found on [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie)

Here you will find information on all the current supports available, eligibility criteria and information on the application process for these financial schemes. Students should also contact their local VEC/ County Council and in some cases the local Social Welfare Office for further information. A fees policy document is also available directly from the GMIT Fees Office.

## **Access Office Accelerated Entry Programme.**

GMIT has designed a pre-training course to prepare mature students for entry into mainstream programmes. The advantages of this course are that it gives adults confidence, the necessary academic knowledge, study skills and an opportunity to create a group of friends to work with and who you will probably keep for life. The course will be a full time course over 10 weeks.

## ***SUBJECTS***

Students study a selection of the following:

- Mathematics
- Information Technology
- Communications & Study Skills
- Project
- Law
- Business Studies
- Science
- Electronics and Computer Engineering
- Languages

## **ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

No formal education qualifications are required. Applicants must be 21 years or over on 1<sup>st</sup> January in the year of entry.

The selection process includes the completion of an application form and an interview.

## **OUTCOME**

The Certificate is a recognised entry requirement for progression onto the mainstream courses offered at GMIT, therefore, students who successfully complete this course will be supported in their application onto the mainstream degree programmes offered, subject to availability.

Additional courses are run in conjunction with NUIG, prospective students apply for this to NUIG.

An additional course will be run in conjunction with VTOS and applications for this are through the ACCESS office in GMIT.

## **BECOMING A STUDENT AT GMIT**

### ***THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A MATURE STUDENT***

Mature students are usually highly motivated dedicated students who do well. Many mature students possess traditional qualifications but, increasingly we are seeing students coming to GMIT via non-traditional routes (given above). The extra level of social and life/work experience they bring can be invaluable and helps them learn from and contribute to lectures and tutorials.



## STUDYING

### ***HOW WILL I FIND ENOUGH TIME TO STUDY?***

For mature students finding the time to study is often about finding time away from everything else, as much as it is about using time effectively when you are studying. The key point is that you have to find out what works for you, and for those close to you, the same pattern of work won't suit everyone, some people find it useful to stick to a work-style 9 to 5 pattern, others have to be (of prefer to be) much more flexible.

Some quotes from mature students:

- “Planning is essential. Use a day planner – a week at a time.”
- “Organise study time to suit you – no hard and fast rule. Try and maximise free time (non-timetabled periods) or when children are in bed, at school etc. Whatever formula arrived at – stick to it.”
- “You have to be flexible, but having a system organised in the first place makes it easier to manage changes.”
- “Find out what can be completed during holiday periods, instead of being limited to the term time, e.g. dissertations.”

It is important to discuss study plans with family/friends. Make sure everyone sees it as your ‘work’.

It is also important to learn from your experiences. Do your study plans work? Do you need more/less time to complete tasks? Do you work best at a particular time of day?

## **HOW CAN I STUDY MORE EFFECTIVELY?**

Developing ‘study skills’ – such as skills in reading, listening, taking notes and writing – is an essential part of what you do at GMIT. Perhaps because it may be a number of years since they studied formally, some mature students may feel that their study skills are rusty or not as good as other students. In fact, there is no evidence that mature students have less effective study skills than school leavers. At GMIT mature students will be offered the opportunity to complete a study skills profiler and discuss their individual study techniques.

Many courses also have a module called Learning to Learn designed to help students with study and presentation skills.

**Peer support:** Fellow students are an invaluable source of information and advice about what works and what doesn’t.

### **PEER ASSISTED LEARNING AT GMIT**

- Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) has been introduced at GMIT and has been found to be very useful by many mature students.
- PAL is a scheme that offers cross-year support between students on the same programme, it encourages first year students to support each other and learn co-operatively under the guidance of a trained student from the second, third or fourth years of your programme.
- PAL aims to help first year students to quickly adjust to college life, improve their learning and study skills, enhance their understanding of the subject matter of their programmes and prepare better for assignments and exams.
- (See more on Study at GMIT on [www.gmit.ie](http://www.gmit.ie))

### **WHAT’S THE BEST WAY TO PREPARE FOR EXAMS?**

This is another ‘study skill’, but probably one that causes more anxiety than anything else. Ask your lecturers about the format of the exam, what will be expected of you, and any tips for revision, it is very important to note that many courses have a practical element that is awarded significant marks. Some courses have compulsory attendance for practical aspects and the majority of courses have the final mark

broken into continuous assessment and a final exam. Students can have achieved a significant portion of their marks before the final exam so ensure you achieve the maximum marks available before the exam.

When doing exams:

- First stop would be to get access to previous year's exam papers for each subject. These will help you have an idea of the type of questions that will be asked. Past papers are available for most courses in the library.
- Try and revise as you go along.
- Stick to what you feel most comfortable doing. Revision plans don't suit everybody.
- Taking a step-by-step approach to revising and studying is more beneficial than trying to do everything at once.
- Try not to panic! Don't think you should revise everything – pick a few topics that you are most confident about.

### ***I CAN'T GET MY ESSAY/PROJECT FINISHED ON TIME. WHAT DO I DO?***

Completing written work on time is one of the 'disciplines' you take on board when you become a student, that said, life sometimes disrupts work plans and make it difficult to meet deadlines. If you do find yourself falling behind with a particular piece of work, the important thing is to contact the relevant lecturer immediately to discuss the situation. Don't wait for the deadline. If you cannot contact your lecturer directly, leave a message with the departmental office asking him or her to contact you.



## **HOW DO I KNOW HOW I'M DOING?**

A common concern among all students beginning a course in GMIT is that they are not sure what is expected of them, and whether they can meet those expectations. For most of us this uncertainty diminishes as the course progresses but, lack of confidence in what you're doing can also happen at other times during your studies.

There are two issues here.

One is your confidence in yourself and your abilities. Lots of us find it difficult to recognise our own academic strengths as well as our weaknesses. Your course tutor may be able to help you to identify what you are doing well, and what you need to work on. Other tutors and students can also provide reassurance and support.

The other issue is whether you are sure about what is expected of you. Lecturers try to be as clear as possible about what they are asking students to do, but you can always ask them to clarify what is expected of you in seminar presentations, written work etc. This might be something as simple as how to present your essays, or be more complex academic issues. *Don't assume that everybody else knows what they are doing* – other students will be very glad you've asked the question! Equally, if you are not sure why you have been given the marks you get for written work, ask your lecturers for more feedback.

## **WHO CAN I ASK FOR HELP IF I'M FINDING THE COURSE HARD GOING?**

Where you go for help depends on what you think the 'problem' is, and who you feel most comfortable talking to. The important point here is that there are always people you can turn to for advice and support, to help you make informed decisions.

### **In your department**

Your course tutor is a good person to talk to, they can suggest others who you should talk to, and advise on the requirements of your course. They can also outline the other services available in the college and make suggestions of who to talk to about non-academic problems.



Student representatives for the students union are there to represent the views of students in the department. If you have questions about the way your course is organised, it may be appropriate to feed this through the student course representatives.

## **Outside the department**

GMIT has a professional Student Services Department with a range of people available to help. The Counselling Service provides confidential, individual counselling for anyone who wants help with personal problems affecting their work or general well-being. 'Academic' issues are often difficult to separate from 'personal' issues. A counsellor can help you to talk through various ways of coping with, or thinking afresh about choices, experiences or difficulties of any kind.

The Access Office is also located by the exams office. Within it a team of people who provide support and services to mature students in the form of study skills training, one to one support, assistance with the application for financial supports, or liaising on your behalf with staff or external organisations.

## **Outside GMIT**

Many mature students say that they find it helpful to discuss 'academic' concerns with people outside the Institute, and that family and friends can give them a valuable sense of perspective. In addition, external organisations such as the Citizen's Information Centre, the Galway People's Resource Centre and the Galway Literacy Centre etc can provide you with assistance. The most important thing when you need help is to ask... And you will be helped or pointed in the right direction.

## Other ISSUES ENCOUNTERED BY MATURE STUDENTS

This section is about the relationship between your 'other life' and your studies. Mostly it is about the balance between your study commitments and your work and family life.

Mature students typically face life circumstances that from time to time interfere with academic commitments.

These include:

- The demands of various 'life' roles. Roles as Parents, Partners, Income Earners and Caretakers of elderly relatives are difficult to juggle on top of study. These demands can be unpredictable. Care and concern for a sick child the day before an assignment is due can place overwhelming pressure on a mature student.
- Choosing to study may mean financial sacrifices. Pressure to pay the rent, mortgage, food, electricity and telephone bills as well as having enough money for unexpected expenses can create on-going anxiety.
- The demands of single parenting as a mature student can be especially difficult. Being the only parent available to attend to children's needs may mean that mature students who are single parenting are constantly 'giving out' with less likelihood of receiving support and 'time out' themselves.
- Beginning tertiary study after a long break from academic work can be scary. Mature students often face fears of 'not being able to make the grade'.
- The risk of burnout can be high for mature students. Pre-existing time commitments can make study at GMIT a pressured experience.

- Becoming a student at a mature age can be lonely. Friends and family may not always be supportive and offer less than useful advice. The dominant age group of other students on campus may create a sense of isolation or ‘not fitting in’ however; there are an increasing number of mature students in GMIT. Other people’s circumstances may seem very different from your own.

## **HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?**

- Establishing *support networks* with friends, family and other students before you need them. Support networks involve people available to help out when necessary. This might include a baby-sitting club, which works on a reciprocal basis.
- Developing *connections* with other mature students in order to share experiences. For information about the Mature Students’ Society, contact the Clubs and Societies Officer through the Student’s Union.



- Fine tuning *time management skills* to ensure work is kept up to date as much as possible. This helps avoid getting behind because of unexpected events.
- Give yourself *permission to study*. Sometimes study comes last on the list of ‘things to do’ because of a belief that other people come first. Study is part of your work and you are entitled to give it the attention it requires.
- *Believe in yourself*. Remember that mature student often do very well in college. This success reflects their commitment, enthusiasm and vast life experience.
- Ask for *help* if you need it. You deserve to be supported.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT ILLNESS OR FAMILY CRISES?**

All courses at GMIT are based in part at least on compulsory attendance of classes, and completion of written work, but of course, ill health (your own or a family

member's), changing patterns of work, pregnancy, bereavement or other crises may disrupt your life and your studies.

If you are unable to attend tutorials or complete written work because you are ill, or someone in your family is ill, you must contact your departmental office immediately. Follow up with short note to the tutor concerned, if you can. For ill-health lasting more than seven days you may have to supply a medical certificate from your doctor.

If your difficulties are more long-term, make sure someone sympathetic is involved in helping you to work out how to cope with your studies. Your course co-ordinator is the best person to talk to about this. Illness does not give an exemption from course work and marks cannot usually be awarded in lieu of illness. However, it is essential that your course tutor knows and can advise on the possible courses of action.

Your department will generally be supportive but, you will need to know what the minimum requirements are for you to progress successfully. You may want to consider the option of taking some time out from your course and perhaps repeating part of it. This isn't 'failure' – it's often a sensible way to continue your studies when a lot of work has been missed. If ill-health or a disability disrupts your studies, the Health Unit, Student Counsellors or the Access Office personnel may be able to give you advice and support. The Access Office are responsible for the provision of supports to students with disabilities or students with significant illness attending the Institute it is important that you register with this office as soon as possible if you require support.

### ***WHAT IF I FEEL I'M NOT COPING WELL?***

'Academic' problems are not always easy to separate from other personal issues. Sometimes it may just seem that you are not coping well with one or the other, without you quite knowing why. Talking to someone will usually help, if only to make the problem clearer or to find out that others have the same feelings. Fellow students, lecturers, and other staff may all be supportive, as well as family or friends. Sometimes mature students are faced with the frightening realisation that they have some genuine difficulty with learning. You may perhaps suspect that you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia. The Access Office can provide

invaluable support, advice, screenings and referrals for assessments if your difficulties are having a major impact on your study.

**The Counselling Service** also provides confidential, individual counselling for anyone who wants help with personal problems affecting their work or general well-being. You don't have to be in crisis to seek help, and you don't have to know what the problem is. No problem is too small or unusual – it often helps to talk something through in a safe and confidential setting early on before it gets out of hand. The counsellor can help you to talk through various ways of coping with, or thinking afresh about choices, experiences or difficulties of any kind

### **CONTACT DETAILS**

[www.gmit.ie](http://www.gmit.ie) or for a copy of the prospectus write or call into

Admissions office  
GMIT  
Dublin Rd  
Galway

### **Within GMIT**

Access Office	091 742129/742182
Counsellors	091 742301/742563
Chaplain	091 742226
Student's Union Office	091 742264
Admissions Office	091 742305/742262
School of Humanities	091 742412
School of Business	091 742046
Hotel School	091 742343
School of Science	091742178
School of Engineering	091 742201