

Candidate Brief: TU699 Access Foundation Programme

Duration: 1 Academic Year (September to May)
Location: TU Dublin, Aungier Street
Qualification: Foundation Certificate in Higher Education (Access Foundation Programme),
Minor Award Level 6 – National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

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1. Programme Overview

The Access Foundation Programme (AFP) is a preparation-for-higher-education course. It helps students develop the personal and academic skills needed to progress to undergraduate programmes across TU Dublin—including Science & Health, IT & Computing, Engineering & Built Environment, Social Sciences, Business, Hospitality, Arts, and Tourism.

The AFP is designed as an entry route for (i) mature students and (ii) young adults who have experienced socio-economic and educational disadvantage. Students who successfully complete the AFP are offered a place on a suitable undergraduate course at TU Dublin. During the year, the AFP team provides support to help students identify the best options.

2. Entry Requirements

2.1 Mature Students

There are no standard educational requirements, such as the Leaving Certificate, but all applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Must be 22 on January 1 of the year of entry.
- Must show motivation and suitable learning ability.

- Must demonstrate appropriate English communication skills.
- Candidates are **Ineligible** if already holding a Level 6+ qualification without evidence of academic deterioration.
- Non-EU/EEA candidates must be ordinarily resident in Ireland and have Visa/GNIB stamp 4 status or have international protection status in Ireland for 3 out of the last 5 years.
- Be ordinarily resident within the EU/EEA/Swiss Confederation for 3 out of the last 5 years

2.2 Young Adults (socio-economic disadvantage)

- This programme offers opportunities to young adults who have experienced socio-economic disadvantage. To be considered eligible, applicants must satisfy at least three of the following indicators:
- Parents/guardians without higher education.
- Attended a DEIS school for at least 2 years.
- Family income in 2025 was below the thresholds shown in the table below.
- Belong to a socio-economic group underrepresented in higher education.
- Live in an area of urban or rural disadvantage.

Family received a means-tested payment from the Department of Social Protection for at least 26 weeks in the tax year two years prior to the year of application (e.g., for 2026 entry, provide financial documentation for 2025).

Household Income Thresholds (2025):

Household size	Income threshold
Less than 4	€45,790
4–7	€50,325
More than 8	€54,630

Add €4,670 to the total income limit for every sibling/parent enrolled in a full-time college, university, or PLC course.

3. What You Study

Students study 8 modules each semester (6 core modules + 2 option modules). Core modules include Applied Writing, Maths, Digital Study Skills, Destination Planning, Communication Skills & Research Skills, Maths is offered at three levels—Fundamental, Intermediate, or Advanced.

Optional modules (choose two each semester):

Semester 1	Semester 2
Introduction to Humanities	Approaches to Humanities
Introduction to Social Science	Applied Social Science
Introduction to Marketing	Introduction to Management
Introduction to Financial Accounting	Introduction to Economics

Computer Science Fundamentals (Networking Technologies)	Computer Science Fundamentals 2 (Programming)
Engineering (Electronic and Electrical)	Mechanical Engineering
Introduction to Chemistry	Applied Chemistry
Fundamental Physics	Applied Physics
Human Biology	Cell Biology and Genetics
Art Portfolio Preparation (year-long)	Art Portfolio Preparation (year-long)
Introduction to Irish History	Cultural Tourism

Note: Modules offered on the AFP are subject to change.

4. Time Commitment & Expectations

4.1 Time commitment

- Full-time programme with 24 hours of classes per week, plus 10-15 hours of independent study.
- Classes run from September to May, Monday to Friday, typically between 9:00 and 16:00.

4.2 Expectations

- **Participation:** Regular attendance at lectures, tutorials, and support sessions. Engage in class discussions and come prepared.
- **Time Management:** Manage workload across modules and meet assessment deadlines. An assessment schedule is provided at the start of each semester.
- **Assessments:** A mix of essays, reports, MCQs, presentations, in-class assessments, formal exams, and group work. Significant independent study is required.
- **Stay Connected:** Check TU Dublin email and Brightspace regularly. The IT module will help you get set up with college systems.
- **Engagement:** Where appropriate, engage with programme and college supports, including one-to-one and group meetings with the programme coordinator.
- **Successful Completion:** You must pass all assigned modules to progress to an undergraduate course through the AFP route.
- **Respect:** TU Dublin promotes a positive teaching and learning environment. Respect for peers and staff is expected.

5. Progression After the Programme

Students who successfully complete the programme are offered a place on a suitable undergraduate course at TU Dublin. Offers are made by an Admissions Board (through the CAO) based on academic performance on the AFP. Mature students may also apply to other higher education institutions through the CAO.

6. Places & Fees

6.1 Places available

There are 150 places on the programme and demand is high each year.

6.2 Fees

The programme is free of charge. Students on the course are not eligible for Further Education/Higher Education grants such as SUSI Grant. Students may be eligible for the Back to Education Allowance (see <https://www.welfare.ie> for more information).

7. Student Supports

TU Dublin offers a wide range of supports, including:

Financial Support	https://www.tudublin.ie/for-students/student-services-and-support/financial-support/
Laptop Loan Scheme	https://www.tudublin.ie/for-students/student-services-and-support/financial-support/laptop-loan-scheme/
Disability Support Service	https://www.tudublin.ie/for-students/student-services-and-support/student-wellbeing/disability-support-service/
Counselling Service	https://www.tudublin.ie/for-students/student-services-and-support/student-wellbeing/counselling-service/
Pastoral Care/Chaplaincy	https://www.tudublin.ie/for-students/student-services-and-support/student-wellbeing/pastoral-care-chaplaincy/
AFP Programme Page	https://tudublin.ie/study/undergraduate/courses/access-foundation-programme-tu699/

8. How to Apply & what you need to apply:

8.1 Application Process

Apply online TU Dublin via the online form (not through CAO):

<https://tudublin.ie/study/undergraduate/courses/access-foundation-programme-tu699/>

After submitting your application, you will be required to provide the following documents to access.foundation@tudublin.ie :

- Copies of Qualifications
- Provide any available certificates or transcripts.
- Proof of Identity
- Non-EU/EEA citizens must include: Copy of GNIB card showing Stamp 4 status, or proof of international protection status.

8.2 Assessment & Selection Process

Applications are reviewed for eligibility and suitability. The process includes shortlisting, an interview, and an English language assessment.

8.3 Shortlisting & Offer Criteria

Shortlisted applicants are invited to:

- An interview
- An English language assessment

Offers are based on:

- Eligibility: Meeting mandatory entry criteria
- Application Quality: Completeness and relevance
- Interview Performance: Suitability, communication, and motivation
- English Proficiency: Results of the language assessment

9. Key Dates

Please see the programme webpage for the latest closing dates and timelines:

<https://tudublin.ie/study/undergraduate/courses/access-foundation-programme-tu699/>

10. Contact Information

Programme Coordinator: Susan Benson

Email: access.foundation@tudublin.ie

Phone: 01-220 5083

Admissions Office

Email: admissions@tudublin.ie

Phone: 01-220 6100

Mailing list: To receive updates on the application process and events, email

access.foundation@tudublin.ie

11. Student Success Stories

“This programme changed my life for the better.”

The course gave me the confidence and the skills to progress with my studies.

— Nioiclín Ní Mhurchú

“If you have a dream for a career and a brighter future... never give up.”

The TU Dublin Access Foundation Programme is a stepping-stone to a greater future.

— Funmilayo Olajumoke Olalere

“A fantastic stepping-stone for anyone who wants to go to university.”

It gave me confidence in my abilities and some good friends.

— Dee Poole

“Words cannot express how wonderful the Access Programme is...”

I am now in the process of completing my PhD in Knowledge Management.

— Paul McManus

“I was impressed with the design of the programme and the support I received.”

Not just during the course, but afterwards too.

— Katerina Gaydova

“Now with a degree under my belt...”

I am currently a software engineer. The Access Programme changed my life—and my family’s.

— Dee Conway