

## **JOURNALISM AT DCU: ADVICE TO MATURE APPLICANTS**

The BA in Journalism at Dublin City University is the leading undergraduate journalism course in Ireland, and there is keen competition for places. Mature students who have not achieved the required CAO points in a Leaving Cert exam must demonstrate that they can cope with a very demanding three-year programme of lectures, readings, assessment projects and exams.

In recent years, only about one in ten mature applicants has been called for interview, and not all of those interviewed are offered a place in the course. The following suggestions may help you.

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- 1) Make it a habit to read a lot, devouring a wide range of material, including newspapers, magazines, and books (fiction and non-fiction). You cannot write well if you do not read much.
  - 2) Keep up with the news every day, using newspapers, TV and radio as well as the internet. Discuss the news with your friends. Think about the different needs and audiences served by different outlets.
  - 3) Seek opportunities to write or get production experience in any medium: approach your local newspapers, community radio or even websites.
  - 4) Make sure your grasp of written English is flawless: if called for interview you may be given a simple test of usage, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Use a basic text such as *English for Journalists* by Wynford Hicks.
  - 5) If you have not got an excellent Leaving Cert you might consider doing a third level diploma before applying to DCU. It does not have to be media-related (though this would help), and we expect to see the equivalent of at least five subject distinctions at FETAC award level 5 or higher.
  - 6) An additional English qualification is vital if you have not achieved a B in Honours English.
  - 7) Study the BAJ programme details at <http://tinyurl.com/DCU-BAJ-options>, and think about which optional subjects you would choose.
  - 8) Become an expert on some aspect of life or current affairs other than music, entertainment, travel and sport: these topics are heavily over-subscribed.
  - 9) Be prepared to talk about the career you would like, and to suggest some news stories you would like to work on.
  - 10) Fill in both application forms carefully, one for the CAO, one for DCU. Grammar or spelling mistakes here are very likely to mean you will not be called for interview.
  - 11) Make sure to include with the DCU application form a sample of your writing, about 750 words, aimed at a named publication. Failure to include this is almost certain to mean you will not be called for interview.
  - 12) If called for an interview, bring with you a portfolio of any journalism you have done.

***Patrick Kinsella, BAJ Chairman 2009-10***