

The world in their hands

CASE STUDIES Widening their horizons – looking east, going west and London calling



DCU student Moira Campbell.

'I'll study in Boston for the last two years of my course'

Moira Campbell will spend third and fourth year of her Dublin City University (DCU) degree course in Boston, USA.

The 18-year-old former head girl of Bush Post-Primary School, on Co Louth's Cooley Peninsula, "got a wonderful feeling about" DCU during an Open Day visit.

But the real clincher for Moira was its four-year "completely unique" European Business (Transatlantic Studies) programme, giving her the option to broaden her horizons in every sense of the term.

The course combines international business with intercultural experiences and paid work placements and the wide range of subjects Moira is studying, includes law, economics, business practice, accounting, finance and both US and German history.

Because she has picked the Transatlantic Studies option, Moira will spend her final two years in North Eastern University, Boston, doing a combination of study and work placements. Other options allow for a two-year placement in a European country.

"Going to America won't cost me any more in fees, all I have to do is pay my Irish registration. At the end of four years, I will graduate with two degrees, one from DCU and one from Boston – and I will have lived in a different country," she said.

A few months into college and Moira said the course was "really living up to expectations".

The high-achieving Leaving Cert student notched up 495 CAO points, but even that impressive tally was shy of the 530 cut-off in CAO Round One last August.

However, Moira got a points waiver because she had applied to the CAO through Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme, which offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.



Niamh Ni Ghoill is studying languages at UL. DON MOLONEY/PRESS 22

'Not a lot of people have Japanese, so it will be useful'

Gaelscoil past pupil Niamh Ni Ghoill is proof of how going to college opens your mind. Soon after she arrived in the University of Limerick (UL) in the autumn, she made an unplanned leap into the study of Japanese.

"I was always interested in languages, especially since going to an all-Irish secondary school," said Niamh, from Turloughmore, Athenry, Co Galway.

She was in the first Leaving Cert class to graduate from the local Colaiste an Eachraidh, last June and it was there that her skill in, and love of language was nurtured.

"I want to travel and language opens a lot of doors," she said

When she selected Applied Lan-

guages UL for her third-level studies, Niamh presumed Irish would be one of her chosen subjects.

She also had French in her pocket from the Leaving Cert and was simply planning to add Spanish to the two languages with which she was already familiar.

That all changed when she arrived in UL: "I wasn't going to do Japanese, I was going to do Irish, but before making our choices, we were advised to try every language: German, French, Irish, Japanese, Spanish

Japanese was an instant hit. "It was so different and the lecturer is amazing. Not a lot of people have Japanese so it will be useful".

The course, which aims to produce graduates with a high level of compe-

tence in at least two languages combined with a specialist knowledge of the societies in which those languages are spoken, also includes other electives such as politics, marketing and international relations.

Niamh is still not 100pc sure what she will do when she graduates "but it will something along the lines of translation or interpretation.

"I'd love to work in Brussels or the UN, or some other global organisation, or an international company".

Niamh describes studying in UL as "brilliant".

She is one of six sharing a purpose built student house. "They put you with other first years, so it is easy to make friends. I now have friends from everywhere."

How to apply to colleges in the UK

Mary O'Donnell

THOUSANDS of Irish students usually apply to the British Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) system each year. Of these, a couple of thousand are offered and accept places.

Early figures (up to December 19) to UCAS for 2012 show Irish applications are down to 1,899 from 2,352 at the same time last year. The British government's decision to increase tuition fees in English universities in 2012-13 is no doubt partly responsible.

English universities may now charge £6,000 (€7,260) a year, with some universities permitted to charge as high as £9,000 (€10,900).

Students do not pay fees upfront. Under the new structures, graduates will be expected to pay back their loans when they start earning more than £21,000 (€25,400).

Universities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not introducing the same fees increase. Practices will differ between them.

The annual normal closing date for applications to UCAS is January 15. An earlier deadline of October 15 exists for medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and veterinary medicine and for any course at Oxford or Cambridge universities.

Applications should be made online, at www.ucas.co.uk, for a maximum five different courses/institutions. Universities usually convey their decisions through UCAS to applicants in the spring.

An applicant may receive an unconditional offer (if they already meet the academic requirements of the course), a conditional offer (conditional on their meeting the grades specified when they sit their exams) or their application may be unsuccessful.

'Skype makes it easy to keep in touch'

When Mary O'Connell graduated in civil engineering from Trinity College Dublin in 2008, the construction boom in Ireland was on the verge of collapse.

That wasn't what drove her to move to London in search of work. A summer internship with construction giant Laing O'Rourke the previous year had already made her mind up.

"I got to know London and decided it was where I wanted to be once I graduated," said Mary of Clonmel, Co Tipperary,

and a former pupil of Rockwell College, Cashel,

In the three years since, she has worked on projects including the City of Westminster Magistrates Court on Marylebone Road, and last year as site engineer at the Farringdon Station redevelopment works.

"It is planned that 140 trains per hour will pass through the station when works are completed in 2018. It will then be one of the busiest train stations in Britain, linking the city to Canary Wharf and Heathrow. It is a



Mary O'Connell: outside Farringdon Station in London

fascinating project and I am lucky to be working on it".

Since returning after Christmas, she is on a design secondment with structural engineering

company Aecon, currently working on a schools project in north London.

Beyond the job, Mary loves living in London and finds herself in the company of many college

friends who moved to the city to further their careers.

"We have a close-knit community. In many ways, London is a home from home. Because of low air fares, the internet and Skype it is cheap and accessible to maintain contact with family and friends on a regular basis. It helps us to keep in touch with what's going on at home."

She enthuses: "London is a great place to be. It is a multicultural and fun city and still, it is only a few hours from home. Already the excitement has started to build with the Olympics coming up in the summer. All in all, it is a fantastic time to be living and working as an engineer in London."