
Frequently Asked Questions [FAQs]
Updated July 2015

Where is the school located?

Castel International [Education] is based in Tralee, Co. Kerry, one of the most scenic counties in Ireland. The school is within walking distance of Tralee town centre.

Will I get the opportunity to experience Irish culture?

Yes, Irish culture is a key component of our programmes. You will get the opportunity to partake in a variety of excursions allowing you to explore and experience the Irish people and our culture. Of course, the best way to truly experience Irish life is by staying with a host family. Not only will you get to practice your English every day but you will also gain key insights into the Irish way of life.

Are there extracurricular activities available?

Yes, there is a wide selection of clubs and societies that students can join catering to a variety of interests. Clubs and societies incorporate people of many different nationalities and are a great way to meet new people. Students receive information on these during Registration & Induction.

Will you help me look for suitable accommodation?

We provide you with a list of accommodation, prior to arrival which includes host families and suitable student apartments / houses within easy commute to the school. We also include tips on living in the various accommodation options. If you have any questions in relation to accommodation please contact our Accommodation Overseer: yasmin@casteleducation.com

How many students will be in my class?

Classes have a maximum of 15 students with an average of 12.

What is the Castel International [Education] policy on Absenteeism and Expulsion?

Absenteeism

Attendance is reviewed on a weekly basis and highlights those students whose attendance is below satisfactory i.e. 85% or lower. This report captures all punctuality and attendance issues. The Sanctions System, outlined in the Student's Handbook, is applied to any student whose attendance is 85% or lower. Students receive a copy of this Handbook at Student Induction & Registration and are required to sign a copy of the Sanctions System. A copy of the signed agreement is kept in each student's file. In cases where a student has 25% or more uncertified absence in the first six weeks of the programme, Castel International (Education) inform the GNIB and INIS.

Expulsion

Each of our programmes has slightly different expulsion procedures as determined by the programme partners.

International Medical Commencement Programme & International Pharmacy Commencement Programme

Deregistration of students from the IMCP & IPCP is the responsibility of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. This can take place for persistent poor attendance, persistent examples of unacceptable student behaviour and persistent academic performance issues as outlined in detail in the IMCP & IPCP Sanctions System Policies.

English Language Programme

If a student reaches the final stage of the ELP Sanctions System Policy and their attendance or behaviour continues to fall short of requirements, a proposal is put forward for deregistration.

Criteria for deregistration is outlined in detail in the ELP Sanctions System Policy and include:

- Persistent poor attendance;
- Persistent examples of unacceptable behaviour; and
- Persistent academic performance issues

A copy of the ELP Sanctions System Policy is available in the ELP Student Handbook and students are asked to sign it at Induction and Registration Day. A copy of the signed agreement is kept in each student's file.

How does Castel deal with Admissions?

Each of our programmes has slightly different admissions procedures as determined by the programme partners.

International Medical Commencement Programme & International Pharmacy Commencement Programme

Student application procedures are determined by RCSI and NUIG admissions office. The Student Supports Coordinator liaises closely with RCSI, NUIG and IT Tralee to ensure that the registration process runs smoothly.

English Language Programme

The individual governmental sponsors source students based on individual student Higher Education programme objectives. Applications include students' passport details, high school transcripts, confirmation of scholarship and IELTS certificates or equivalent, if any.

Student applications are forwarded directly to Castel International (Education) by the governmental sponsor. Castel International (Education) issue an offer letter to each student. Students attend Registration and Induction in IT Tralee prior to commencing the ELP. During registration, they are provided with all of the information they need to actively engage in the programme and also to settle in to the local area [e.g. timetables, course books, a tour of the college, map of Tralee, details of local bus services, etc].

What will my English classes involve?

English classes are interactive and you will regularly take part in pair work and group work activities. Each week classes focus on a different topic or theme allowing you to practice newly acquired language skills in all of your English classes.

When will I receive my timetable?

You receive a copy of your timetable during Registration & Induction.

What is the Castel International [Education] approach to Attendance and Punctuality?

Student attendance and punctuality are monitored on a daily basis. Each week, a live attendance record is set up for each student group. The ELT Programmes Administrator, Head of English Language Studies, English Language Coordinator and Student Supports Coordinator have access to the attendance record. Teachers complete this record at the commencement of each class. A student's presence is marked with 'Y' in the attendance record. Students are expected to arrive on time for class. If a student is up to ten minutes late, they are permitted to enter the classroom but their late entry is noted in the attendance record by marking 'L'. If a student is more than ten minutes late, it is at the teacher's discretion as to whether they are allowed enter the classroom.

Please note: If a student is marked as late (L) in the attendance record, it is not counted towards their overall attendance. The Student Supports Coordinator reviews attendance on a weekly basis and identifies students with poor punctuality and those whose attendance is below satisfactory (i.e. below 85%). Poor punctuality can lead to poor attendance rates. The policy for poor attendance and absenteeism is outlined below.

Approved Holidays and breaks for each academic year are determined in advance by Castel International (Education). These dates are outlined in the annual academic calendar (contained in the Student's Handbook) and various information emails sent to students throughout the year. Unscheduled breaks during class time are not permitted. In exceptional circumstances, however, Castel International (Education) may excuse a student from class. These circumstances include:

- Documented cases of personal illness.
- Bereavement of a close family member.

If a student is absent from the programme for either of the above reasons, they must contact the Student Supports Coordinator immediately on leaving class: yasmin@casteleducation.com

Students are expected to attend 100% of assigned classes.

Certified absences are allowed, subject to a maximum certified absence of 15% of scheduled teaching days. Students absent due to illness are required to submit a medical certificate on return to class or in the case of an extended absence, within three days of commencing sick leave. Certs must be signed by a doctor and include dates of absence. Students who do not submit a medical cert will be marked absent for all classes missed. This will affect their overall attendance. Where a student's attendance is lower than 85% in any review period, the student will be interviewed to determine appropriate support or other interventions. This may include recommending, in consultation with programme partners and the student's sponsor, a leave of

absence (deferral) of the academic year. Where the absence is uncertified, the Sanctions System, as outlined below, is triggered.

How does Castel International [Education] deal with Student Complaints and Grievances?

Castel has a confidential process for dealing with students complaints.

Students can make a complaint in a variety of ways:

1. Issues / grievances with individuals

- a) Students are encouraged to discuss their complaint directly with their teacher in the first instance. They may speak with the teacher in person or email them with their concerns.
- b) If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of this discussion, the English Language Coordinator meets with the student in question to explore concerns raised by the student.
- c) If they are having issues with a particular individual/(s), the student is asked how they would like the matter to be resolved and Castel facilitates where appropriate.
- d) The matter should initially be dealt with on an informal (verbal/conversational) basis. If it remains unresolved, the Student Services Coordinator meets with the student above and, separately, the student/(s) who a complaint has been made against.
- e) The Student Services Coordinator follows up with the student to ensure that their concerns have been addressed.

Issues concerning individuals, are addressed within five working days from the receipt of complaint.

2. Joint Academic Workshops (JAWS)

These are held three to four times per semester. They provide a generic forum for complaints made on behalf of a class group. JAWS meetings are attended by class representatives nominated by their peers, the English Language Co-ordinator and class teachers. Issues raised at JAWS meetings are usually resolved within 3 – 4 working days from the date of the meeting.

3. Student Questionnaire

Students have an opportunity to air a particular grievance through the end of semester questionnaire.

Where issues arise that are not resolved between the student and the host family the Student Services Co-ordinator will review the issues. Students who are unhappy with any aspect of their host family arrangements are advised that they should:

- Discuss any issue with the host family directly;

- If no resolution can be found by taking this approach, students are advised to contact the Student Services Co-ordinator;
- The Student Services Co-ordinator investigates the complaint by speaking to both the students making the complaint and to the host family;
- In some cases, the Student Services Co-ordinator may advise the student to relocate to alternative accommodation if no resolution can be found and we would generally expect the problem to be resolved by taking this approach;
- In the case of serious issues arising with accommodation, the Student Services Coordinator may discontinue using the accommodation.

How does Castel International [Education] treat Student fees?

Castel International (Education) does not collect any fees directly from students. Students on our programmes receive funding through their respective governmental sponsor. Should Castel International (Education) be unable, at any point in the academic year, to continue to provide English language tuition, the governmental sponsor or programme partners in the case of the IMCP & IPCP will determine which English language school would meet the student requirements in that year.

Does Castel International [Education] provide Health Insurance to students?

All students receive medical insurance from their government sponsor.

How are students assessed at Castel International [Education]?

Whilst the precise schedule and number of formal assessments may vary between our programmes, every student on a Castel International [Education] programme sit a mandatory two IELTS exams throughout the programme: one at the end of each semester. Where IMCP & IPCP students meet their language requirements at the end of semester I, they take the Advanced Language Module approved by RCSI in semester II. The specific assessment strategy of each programme is outlined in the respective Student handbook, including the dates of assessments. On commencing the programme, students are required to sign an agreement where they acknowledge that end of semester exams are mandatory. By signing the agreement, students are agreeing that they will sit the exams.

All IELTS examinations are externally operated, designed, monitored and graded by Cambridge English Language Assessment, British Council and IDP IELTS Australia. The ELT Programmes Administrator liaises closely with the relevant IELTS exams centre to ensure that all entries for the IELTS exams are completed and submitted on time. The ELT Programmes Administrator facilitates students as they complete the online application form and submit necessary documents.

A Tracking Report is used to record entrance IELTS scores, in-house assessments and end of programme summative assessments. The report also includes:

- Mini Mock Exams
These are conducted throughout the programme and consist of 1 writing assignment, 1 reading passage and 2 listening sections. Official IELTS past exam papers are used for all mini mock exams.

- Full IELTS Mock exam

This takes place once per semester and consists of a full exam in each of the skills. Past IELTS exam papers are used for full mock assessments. These are corrected by teachers and detailed feedback is provided to students.

After each assessment, time is given by teachers to speak with students individually on their progress and address any areas of concern. Written feedback is also provided to students on in-house assessments.

How do I register for the IELTS exam?

During your programme, you are required to sit IELTS examinations. The dates of the exams are outlined in your Student Handbook. Our ELT Programme Administrator will assist you in registering for the exam. If you have any questions about IELTS exam registration, please contact our ELT Programmes Administrator: donna@casteleducation.com

Do I have to sit the final exam?

Yes, it is a requirement of your course to complete all components of the programme. During Registration and Induction, you must sign an agreement acknowledging that the end of year examinations are mandatory. By signing the agreement, you are agreeing to sit the exams.

When do I get holidays?

Holidays and breaks for each academic year are determined in advance by Castel. These dates are outlined in the Annual Academic Calendar, contained in the Student Handbook, and various information emailed to you throughout the year.

What do I do in the case of an emergency?

In the case of emergency within office hours then please phone 00353-66-7129720 and outside office hours please phone 00353-86-8265953 or 00353-87-2438913.

Contact Details

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