Full Time
Undergraduate Courses
2019

MATURE STUDENT GUIDE
Your Future Your Choice
### CIT COURSES CAO LEVEL 7

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### CIT COURSES CAO LEVEL 6

- CR655  Culinary Studies
- CR657  Hospitality Studies

### CIT COURSE DIRECT ENTRY

- CR_BBUSE_6 Higher Certificate in Business for Mature Students (Level 6)
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* Early Assessment Procedures apply

Detailed course information is available at www.cit.ie or in the CIT Full-time Handbook.
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Please visit www.cit.ie and www.cao.ie for specific dates

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As you embark on your journey towards higher education you may have many concerns about taking up full time study as a mature student. You may lack confidence in your academic ability, you may be worried that it is too late in life for you to return to full time education and much more. Concerns such as these are very common among mature applicants and it is absolutely natural to have them. However, more and more adults are availing of the range of opportunities that are open to them to enter higher education on a full time basis. Thousands of mature students who have shared these concerns have completed full-time courses in CIT and have subsequently pursued very successful progression routes be it in further study or employment. Read about the experience of two of these students at the end of the guide. The mature student brings with him/her life experience along with determination and focus, all of which are conducive to successful learning. There are a whole range of supports available to you as a mature student in CIT to assist you through your course of study. The Mature Student Support Programme aims to support you in your journey through your studies and strives to ensure that it will be a positive experience for you.

As the Mature Student Officer in CIT I work at a pre-entry, entry and post entry level providing support to full-time undergraduate mature students. Further details of this support are provided throughout the guide.

Christine Nolan
T: 021 433 5109
E: maturestudent@cit.ie
Access Service, Ground Floor, Student Centre, Bishopstown Campus
ARE YOU A MATURE STUDENT?

To be eligible under this category, applicants must be 23 years or older by the 1st of January of the proposed year of entry into a full time undergraduate course.

HOW TO APPLY FOR COURSES IN CIT AS A FULL-TIME MATURE STUDENT

First step; prospective students should become familiar with available CIT courses and the application process;
- Course information www.cit.ie/courses
- Application process information www.cit.ie/maturestudent

- Applications to CIT are to be submitted via the CAO; online at www.cao.ie or by paper application.
- Applicants should follow the procedures as laid down in the CAO Handbook paying particular attention to the guidelines for non-standard/special category applicants. CAO handbooks are available at www.cao.ie or from: The Central Applications Office, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway.
  T: 091 509 800
- The CAO deadline for non-standard/special category applicants is February 1st each year. Late applications are not accepted from applicants who wish to be assessed based on mature status. However, mature applicants can apply up to May 1st using a Leaving Certificate, QQI (formerly FETAC) qualification or equivalent but will not be assessed on the basis of mature status.
- CAO non-standard/special applications will be assessed under the following three categories:
  1. Non-standard/special category application (Mature Student status); offers to such applicants are made in the first two rounds of CAO offers- Round A (early July) and Round 0 (early August).
     If a candidate is not successful in receiving an offer on the basis of mature status then they may still receive an offer based on points if they have submitted the following;
  2. Leaving Certificate results,
  3. QQI (formerly FETAC) results or equivalent.
     If a candidate has submitted both Leaving Certificate and QQI results, the CAO will select the stronger of the two results to assess the application.
• Mature applicants may be interviewed for a place on a course. If you have enquiries about CIT’s admissions procedures, please contact:

Admissions Office,
Cork Institute of Technology,
Bishopstown, Cork.
T: 021 433 5037 E: admissions@cit.ie

Applications for Advanced Entry (post Year 1 of a course) are made through the CAO - www.cao.ie

SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED COURSE FOR MATURE STUDENTS- DIRECT ENTRY

CIT aims to provide an accessible and supportive route to a higher education qualification. The below course is offered with family friendly timetabling, together with on-going support during your time in education. Application for this course is not through the Central Applications Office (CAO). Direct application to CIT is required.

• Higher Certificate in Business for Mature Students – Level 6
  This course is designed to provide mature students with skills and knowledge to avail of new business-related employment opportunities and an opportunity to progress to degree level following completion of the course. For further information and an application form, contact Louise Byrne, Dept of Management & Enterprise,
  T: 021 433 5806 or by E: louise.byrne@cit.ie.
MATURE STUDENT INFORMATION EVENING

The Mature Student Information Evening is relevant to prospective full time undergraduate Mature Students for entry to programme of study in CIT in September 2019.

Information on the following will be provided on the evening;

- Course content
- Introduction to CIT
- Taking steps to third level education
- Fees & Financial Supports
- The Mature Student Experience
- Brief information on the Application Process
- CIT Maths for Matures Programme
- Student Services & Supports available

For further information please contact
Emily Clifford T: 021 433 5138 E: emily.clifford@cit.ie or
Christine Nolan T: 021 433 5109 E: maturestudent@cit.ie

FEES & FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

It is important to consider the financial implications of becoming a full time student. Early preparation is key to minimising financial issues that may arise during the academic year. This involves researching the cost of fees and other expenses associated with college life and familiarising yourself with any financial supports that you may be entitled to. It is important however that you engage in further research on this in relation to your own individual circumstances.

Student Fees include the following;

- Higher Education Student Contribution
- Union of Students in Ireland (USI) Levy
- Tuition Fees

Higher Education Student Contribution

The Student Contribution Charge for the academic year 2018-19 is €3,000. This is an annual charge which is set by the Government for all full-time students in higher education.

Students can apply to Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) for a grant which, if approved, may cover 100% of the Student Contribution Charge. For information on grants please visit www.susi.ie.
Union of Students in Ireland (USI) Levy
The USI membership levy of €7.00 has been introduced as a result of a referendum where students opted to affiliate to the national Students’ Union. This Levy is not covered by a SUSI grant and must be paid in September before the start of Semester 1.

EU Tuition Fees
Many undergraduate students attending publicly funded higher education courses do not have to pay tuition fees. Under the terms of the Free Fees Initiative, the Government will pay these fees to the colleges instead.

Students undertaking a second undergraduate course, non-EU students, students studying by ACCS mode and students taking a year of a course for a second time (i.e. repeating a year/level) may be liable for tuition fees.

Non-EU Fees
Any student who does not meet the conditions of Free Fees or EU Fees will be liable for Non-EU Fees, regardless of nationality or citizenship. Students classified for fee purposes as Non-EU will not be permitted to change their fee status following admission.

Payment of Fees
Students are notified of their fees by e-mail to their CIT student e-mail account, therefore it is important that students check their e-mail accounts regularly. Students who are awaiting grant approval can apply to pay their fees in monthly instalments pending the outcome of their SUSI application. Simply go to www.mycit.ie/susi and complete the instalment application form.

Students can make fees payments online via www.cit.ie/pay.

For further information on tuition fees please visit www.cit.ie/fees

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT
All students who are successful in obtaining a place are required to complete the official CIT Registration Form before commencing or continuing their studies.
SUSI- STUDENT UNIVERSAL SUPPORT IRELAND

The student grant is the main source of financial assistance available from the Irish State for students in full-time higher education courses. The grant may cover 100% of the Student Contribution Charge (€3,000 in 2018-19) as well as providing a monthly maintenance grant which is paid directly into the student’s bank account.

For eligible students, the grant is intended to assist with the various costs of participating in higher education. Students on part-time courses, access or foundation courses (in higher education institutions) and short courses are not eligible to apply for a student grant.

Family and/or personal income is a key factor that will be assessed when applying for a student grant but there are also some other conditions. There is a facility on the SUSI website that can assist you to assess your eligibility and guide you through the application process.

If you think you are eligible for the student grant, you should apply for it as soon as possible. You do not need to wait until you receive an offer of a place or enrol in college. Only when your application has been completed in full and submitted to the grant-awarding authority can your eligibility be determined.

All new grant applications should be made online to Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). Students can access the online system through www.susi.ie or www.studentfinance.ie.

SUSI Support Desk

The SUSI Support desk is the single contact point for all e-mail and telephone queries. For opening times visit www.susi.ie.

- Email support@susi.ie
- Telephone 076 108 7874
- Facebook: Search susisupport
- Twitter: @susihelpdesk

Continuing Students - Grant Renewals 2018-19

Students who are currently in receipt of a grant and are progressing to the next year of their course will have their grant record reapplied to their account. Therefore, you will only be liable to pay the €7 USI Levy in September if SUSI are funding 100% of your fees. SUSI will notify the college directly if your grant has been renewed.
If your grant is not renewed by 31st October you will then become liable for the Semester 1 Fees of €1,500.

The Student Fees Office is located on the ground floor of the Administration Building adjacent to the Admissions Office, Bishopstown Campus.

T: 021 433 5440
E: fees@cit.ie

BACK TO EDUCATION ALLOWANCE
The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) allows people in receipt of certain social welfare payments to retain those payments whilst participating in approved full-time courses.

• Approved programmes range from foundation courses to postgraduate courses. You can work part-time without affecting your BTEA payment.
• Students entering a new course who are in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance can apply for the fees element of the SUSI grant but will not be eligible for the maintenance element of the grant. Such students can apply under the Student Grant Scheme to have the Student Contribution Charge and any tuition fees payable for the course paid on their behalf. Visit www.susi.ie.
• Although you are not entitled to the maintenance component of the student grant, you must still submit a student grant application form to be assessed for a fee grant to pay your Student Contribution Charge, field trip costs and tuition fees (if payable).
• If you are receiving a One Parent Family Payment or a Disability Payment (Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension or Illness Benefit) you can choose to stay on your current social welfare payment and apply for a student grant or you can choose to transfer to the BTEA, depending on which option benefits you most. In general, people who are studying full-time are not entitled to Rent Supplement unless they are getting BTEA.

For further information visit www.welfare.ie or contact your local Intreo Office.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND
As part of an initiative to tackle educational disadvantage, the European Social Fund aided Student Assistance Fund has been made available to CIT by the Department of Education and Skills.
The objective of the fund is to provide financial assistance to students in need of such support. The fund is intended to support students whose participation in higher education would otherwise be at risk as a direct result of financial difficulties.

**Who can apply?**
Applicants must be students registered with CIT participating on a higher education course of not less than one-year duration. Applicants on the Back to Education Allowance will also be considered.

Application forms are available from the Accommodation Office, 1st Floor, Student Centre, Bishopstown Campus and are available to pick up at various other locations across the Institute.

For further information see:
www.mycit.ie/saf
T: Deirdre Falvey 021-4335750 or E: student.assistance@cit.ie.

**1916 BURSARY**
The purpose of this funding is to encourage participation and success by students from sections of society that are significantly under-represented in higher education due to socio-economic disadvantage.

The South Cluster of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) has been awarded 35 bursaries in total. Up to seven bursaries will be made available for CIT students. The bursaries are to the amount of €5,000 for each year of an undergraduate programme. The South Cluster Partnership of HEI's consist of Cork Institute of Technology, University College Cork, Institute of Technology Tralee and Waterford Institute of Technology.

For eligibility criteria and application information, log onto
www.cit.ie/1916bursary
If you are a new student or are already studying in CIT and feel like you may need some extra support due to your learning difference, disability, or health condition, you may need to contact us and register with us for supports. As part of the Access Service, the CIT Disability Support Service (DSS) is fully committed to students' equal access to an inclusive education. We can guide and support you to access your courses and achieve your academic goals. We work hard to ensure that the DSS is a place that students can go to in confidence to look for support and help.

Please see the Student Guide to the DSS which is available on our website - www.mycit.ie/dssstudentguide

If you have any queries please contact dss@cit.ie. For details on how to make an appointment, please see the DSS Student Guide or email dss@cit.ie for information. Please note that September/October are particularly busy months and email is the best way to contact us during those times.

Laura Coleman  
Disability Support Officer  
T: 021 433 5107  
Text: 087 177 6755

Ruth Murphy  
Disability Projects Officer  
T: 021 433 5137  
Text: 087 138 9772
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is where formal recognition is given for what you already know prior to starting on any CIT accredited programme or module. Programmes which are accredited by professional or any external awarding bodies may have their own procedures for RPL which you should refer to.

The RPL system allows for learning to be measured and recognised regardless of where it was gained. This means that credits and/or exemptions from modules on CIT courses can be granted where you can show that you have achieved sufficient prior learning.

**There are two main categories within RPL**

1. The recognition of learning which has already had formal certification within the higher education system in Ireland or abroad, often referred to as formal learning;
2. The recognition of learning which has been gained through experiences in the workplace, in voluntary work or elsewhere, usually referred to as experiential learning.

In CIT RPL can be used to gain:
- An exemption or mark for a module or for a number of modules;
- Entry to a course in first year where an applicant may not meet the standard entry requirements;
- Advanced entry to a course at a stage other than first year;

Support for the application process is provided through the RPL Coordinator in CIT.

**Enquiries can be made to**

T: 021 433 5132
E: RPL@cit.ie
RPL Coordinator,
CIT Extended Campus,
Cork Institute of Technology,
Bishopstown.
www.cit.ie/rpl
CORK COLLEGES PROGRESSION SCHEME

CIT has a special scheme for the admission of students who successfully complete courses in Further Education (FE) Colleges in Cork. Under this scheme a number of courses in CIT are linked to certain courses in the FE colleges. CIT reserves a number of places on its linked courses for applicants achieving the specified levels & other requirements in their awards. If successful students will receive an offer to CIT through the CAO at Round 2 (end of August).


CCPS Linked Colleges
- Cork College of Commerce
- Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa
- CityNorth College of Further Education
- St John’s Central College
- Kinsale College of Further Education
- Mallow College of Further Education

TIPS FOR PROSPECTIVE MATURE STUDENTS

- Complete your CAO application in plenty of time. DO NOT LEAVE IT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!
- Don’t put all your eggs in one basket! Keep your options open when applying for courses. Applying for one course does not necessarily mean that you will be successful in securing a place on that course.
- Establish your interest in a course.
- Research the course(s) that you are applying for, so that you know exactly what you are undertaking. Talk to current students or graduates about subjects and courses which you have an interest in and consider where your strengths lie.
- Become familiar with the application process. Visit the CAO website and read the information carefully relating to mature student applications.
- If submitting a Statement of Interest as part of a CAO application, ensure that it provides a comprehensive account of your skills and qualifications and their relevance to the course(s) being applied for. If you are applying to more than one college or for more than one course then you will need to provide a more general Statement of Interest.
- Contact the Course Coordinator or Head of Department about your course of interest and discuss with them what information they seek in an application from a mature applicant.
• Check the following:
  ✔ Is there a requirement to have a background in specific subjects for entry to the course?
  ✔ How many hours a week will the timetable require?
  ✔ See http://courses.cit.ie

• Be aware of the implications that returning to full time education will have on your life, particularly in the following areas:
  ✔ Financial 
  ✔ Work 
  ✔ Family 
  ✔ Social outlets

This will allow you to organise and prioritise commitments prior to beginning your course. Where applicable, it is strongly advisable to apply for financial assistance in advance of taking up a programme of study.

MATURE STUDENT SUPPORT

The Mature Student Officer is located in the CIT Access Service, Ground Floor, Student Centre, CIT which is open Monday - Friday from 8.30am-4.30pm. Prospective students and current students are welcome to make an appointment to speak with the Mature Student Officer during these times.

Alternatively, call into the office for the Mature Student Drop In Service every Wednesday from 2pm-4pm.

PRE-ENTRY SUPPORT FOR PROSPECTIVE MATURE STUDENTS

Mature Student Information Evening – The Mature Student Information Evening is held in mid-end November annually to provide information on courses available in CIT, the CAO application process, supports available to mature students and fees & financial support.

CAO Information Session – The Mature Student CAO Information Session is held each January to provide a step by step guide to the Mature Student CAO application process.

Information Sessions – The Mature Student Officer visits Further Education Colleges, Community & Training Organisations, and participates in adult education events to provide information on educational opportunities for mature students in CIT.

To request a visit, please email maturestudent@cit.ie
Maths for Matures Programme

CIT delivers a Maths for Matures Programme to provide prospective mature students with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability in mathematics when applying for science/engineering courses in CIT. The programme, which is typically delivered over 6 evenings, consists of an elementary mathematics course followed by a brief exam on the work covered and a feedback session. Students who undertake the programme can include the results of the exam with their CAO application for CIT courses.

The purpose of the programme is to:
(1) acquaint prospective mature students who are applying for entry into Year 1 of a full-time undergraduate programme of study in CIT, with some of the elementary mathematics that they will encounter in the first year of an engineering/science programme;
(2) provide an opportunity to prospective mature students to demonstrate their ability and aptitude in mathematics;
(3) provide the Head of Department with a test result which would demonstrate if the prospective student has a suitable aptitude for mathematics in relation to the course(s) being applied for.

For further information please visit: www.cit.ie/mathsformatures or contact
Christine Nolan, Mature Student Officer, T: 021 433 5109
E: maturestudent@cit.ie or
Dr David Goulding, Head, Department of Mathematics, CIT,
E: David.Goulding@cit.ie

ENTRY SUPPORT FOR MATURE STUDENTS
Preparatory Maths Programme

This programme is open to mature students who have accepted a place on a course in CIT. It is an interactive taught programme run over several days prior to the commencement of the academic year. The aim of this programme is to offer an introduction in the following topics to mature students embarking on a course in CIT:
- Algebra
- Statistics and Probability
- Functions
- Trigonometry
- Calculus

These topics form a good base for students starting mathematics in first year. The programme is intended to familiarise students with the basic mathematics
required for their programme of study and to increase confidence in engaging with maths in a classroom environment.

**Mature Student Orientation Programme**

An Orientation Programme is delivered to incoming mature students, which provides the opportunity to:

- Meet fellow mature students
- Hear the experiences of current & past mature students in CIT
- Become familiar with the CIT Campus
- Be introduced to the CIT email and IT system
- Receive information and advice on student supports and meet student support staff.

A general Induction Programme is provided to all incoming students in CIT at the beginning of the academic year.

**Get off to a Good Start at CIT**

The Good Start Programme is delivered during the first 4 weeks of semester 1 and the 1st week of semester 2. The programme offers a range of academic, social activities & events which aim to ensure that you successfully make the transition into third level education.

Look out for the Good Start Ambassadors on campus, they are here to help you settle in. For more information log onto www.mycit.ie/goodstart

**POST ENTRY SUPPORT**

**Mature Student Support Network**

This is a support programme for mature students. A specific programme of events is organised annually to provide relevant supports to mature students in CIT.

Examples of support workshops include:

- Academic Writing Skills
- Use of the Scientific Calculator
- Financial supports

**Mature Learning Support Service**

The Mature Learning Support Service provides support to full time, undergraduate mature students regarding research, reports and assignments for their course of study in CIT.
The service provides a tutor to work with students on a one to one basis or with small groups, assisting students to develop research, planning and writing skills, proofread, edit and organise course work, and manage deadlines and priorities required for their course of study.

To avail of this service email mature.support@cit.ie to set up an appointment with the tutor.

For further information please visit: www.mycit.ie/maturestudents

**Student Services**

CIT Student Services aim to support the student community and provide opportunities for students to grow and develop in non-academic areas.

Student Services also assist students during periods of personal difficulty that may occur during their time in CIT.

Student Services include;
- Access & Disability Support Service
- Academic Learning Centre
- Medical Centre
- Counselling Service
- Careers Service
- Library
- Students Union

For all available student services, log onto www.mycit.ie

**EVENING AND WEEKEND COURSES**

If full time study is not an option for you, there is a wide range of evening and weekend courses available in CIT, Applications for these courses are made directly to CIT, not via the CAO.


**Kathryn Carey**  
Secretary  
T: 021 433 5902 E: opd@cit.ie

**Eileen O’Mahony**  
Secretary  
T: 021 433 5903 E: opd@cit.ie
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training. QQI is also responsible for the maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

At third level, the Framework describes and links all the qualifications awarded by Institutes of Technology and Universities.

The third level major award types (Level 6 to Level 10) are as follows:

- **Level 6**: Higher Certificate
- **Level 7**: Bachelor Degree
- **Level 8**: Honours Bachelor Degree
- **Level 9**: Higher Diploma
- **Level 10**: Master’s Degree
- **Level 9**: Postgraduate Diploma
- **Level 10**: Doctoral Degree (PhD)
Modularisation & Semesterisation
CIT operates a Credit Based Modular System. This is compliant with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The academic year is divided into two equal halves, and each semester will normally consist of six modules each worth five credits.

What is a Semester?
A semester is half of an academic year. Each semester is of 12 weeks duration for which learners can earn 30 credits. Typically Semester 1 begins in September and ends in January while Semester 2 starts in January and ends in May.

What is a Module?
A module is a standalone unit of learning and assessment and is completed within one semester. A full-time student will normally study six modules in each semester; part-time and ACCS (Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects) students will have flexibility as to the number of modules taken.

What are Credits?
Credits are a measure of the amount of learning within a module. They are awarded to learners who successfully complete the assessments in a module. A full-time year of study is worth 60 credits; this is the European norm under the ECTS system.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS- FAQ’S

What about childcare while I am studying?
CIT does not have a childcare facility on campus. However, there are some childcare providers in the area. The Student Assistance Fund may provide some financial support towards the cost of childcare. Funding is awarded on a case by case basis.

What will my timetable be like?
Timetables vary between courses but entering Year 1 of a full time undergraduate course of study in CIT will require commitment for class contact time from Monday to Friday and generally from 9.00am-5.00pm. You will also need to set aside study time for coursework outside of these hours.

How will I manage college work and family life?
There is no doubt that beginning a full time course in higher education is a big commitment. Time management is key. Use your time wisely and ensure to reserve time to relax and spend time with family. There are a range of supports available that will help you to manage your workload and optimise your time. One such support is the Mature Learning Support Service. It is highly recommended that you avail of these supports particularly in the early stages of your course to enable you to gain the skills necessary to undertake academic work as efficiently as possible and to maximise these skills in helping you to get course work submitted.

I am worried about my ability in maths and some other subjects, will there be assistance available to me while studying in CIT?
Yes. The Academic Learning Centre provides free academic support sessions across a broad spectrum of disciplines including Science, Engineering, Computing, Business, and Building & Architecture. Students can drop-in to the Academic Learning Centre at allocated times where a lecturer will be available to discuss any queries they might have on a subject. Log onto alc.cit.ie for further information.

Is there any assistance with using computer packages?
There are short courses in IT skills offered specifically for mature students through the Mature Student Officer. These offer assistance with packages such as Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint. It is advisable however that you develop your IT Skills as much as possible before embarking on a full time course in CIT be it through a short course or seeking help from a friend, relative or other resource.
I graduated from CIT in October 2017 with a Bachelor of Business (Honours) Degree. If you had asked me years ago what I thought of school, I more than likely would have rolled my eyes and groaned! It wasn’t for me and I didn’t really have an interest in any of the subjects apart from Art.

After leaving school while working part time, I did a couple of Post Leaving Cert courses but they never really came to much. I travelled for a bit, living in Paris, London and Dublin for a few years but decided to come back to Cork when my eldest son was about to start preschool.

I worked for many years in semi-skilled jobs which I enjoyed and gave me the chance to meet many people but I always knew I could do better. By 2012, I found myself in the position of being a single parent of two boys and in a job where my hours were being cut drastically. I was worried that I would end up with no job and I didn’t have any qualifications that I could fall back on.

So I decided to do a FETAC Level 5 General Studies course in a Further Education College. I really didn’t think I would be able to do it and was very anxious about going back to education. To my surprise, I was definitely well able for it and my ‘inner nerd’ was released after being suppressed and totally ignored for decades! I had the bug for learning and continued on to CIT, in 2013, through a link from my FETAC course and I began a two year Level 6 Higher Certificate in Business Studies course.

When I completed the Higher Certificate in Business Studies, I was determined to get a degree. We were given a choice of either going down the routes of Management, Accounting or Marketing. I chose Marketing as I felt I could use my creative side in this field. I have now received my Honours Degree.

I was given so many opportunities in CIT to throw myself into various student roles such as Student Leader and being a Class Representative. These roles gave me the chance to work with various staff members in different departments as well as working alongside students who were much younger than me.

As a mature student, I was initially worried about mixing with younger...
students, that I would have nothing in common with them and that I would not be at the same level as them but I soon realised that I had plenty of life experience and age is not a barrier between friends.

There were obstacles along the way such as managing financially and being a parent at the same time as being a student. Financially, I had to make a few sacrifices but I always looked at it as short term slump. As for my two boys, they always come first and they are my inspiration to continue to better myself. I have been known to be studying in the car at the side of a pitch while one of them is playing a match; one of my solutions to mixing family and college life!

Looking back, I can’t believe I have come so far in my educational journey and the time seems to have gone so fast. I have enjoyed every minute of it and if I had to do it all again, I would.

John Dunlea, Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Care Graduate, talks about his experience of returning to full time education.

I graduated from CIT in October 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts, First Class Honours Degree in Social Care. I came to CIT via a FETAC Level 5 course in Social Studies at the tender age of 48. Before applying for the course at CIT I had put a lot of serious thought and research into what I really wanted to do. Social Care ticked all the boxes for me.

The first challenge at college was accepting that of all of the mature students, I was the ‘most mature’, in age at least! It did not stop at that, the challenges just kept on coming.

But college is just like everything else in life, what one puts into it, one gets out of it. Other challenges faced were the volume of work, and the quality that work needed to be to achieve the grades I wanted to record. I always bore in mind that I was not going to get another swing at this. This was my one shot at this degree, and I wanted to give it my best. With six modules in a semester the assignments are issued at a steady rate and the best way to get them done is by not procrastinating. Hit the ground running and you stay on top of things. There are many supports at the college
to assist any student who identifies that they need them. The trick is to recognise the need early enough and go seek it. Personally I utilised many of them; I found the supplementary academic writing skills classes for mature students to be invaluable; I visited the wonderful people in Chaplaincy for a cuppa and a natter; I attended counselling to gain the skills to help me manage when balancing college, work and home life was becoming a challenge. Joining one of the many societies is a great way to socialise. And before I left college, the CIT Careers Service educated me in how to prepare a CV and cover letter; I have never been short of work since. Bear in mind the staff in the Access Service are only too willing to try and put in place supports to assist students if they are identified and reported.

The greatest resource for any student though is the lecturers. The lecturers at CIT want students to flourish. They will readily assist any student who shows commitment. That means, turn up for lectures and tutorials and engage.

Although I found the work very challenging at times, I loved my course and never doubted that attending CIT was exactly where I was supposed to be at that time in my life. What I liked about the college is that it is not an impersonal place, even with so many students it is so easy to get to know a vast amount of people, staff and students. Although I was never short of company within my own group of classmates, the monthly coffee mornings arranged for mature students was a fantastic opportunity to meet fellow matures and trade stories.

I am grateful to CIT for the education that I received there and the employment I was afforded due to it, which commenced following practice placement in year one. Today I am employed as a Youth Worker with Cloyne Diocesan Youth Services and I am also employed by Cork Education and Training Board as an Assistant Coordinator with a Local Training Initiative based in Mallow.

Truthfully, I have made some dodgy choices in my life (be honest, haven’t we all) but choosing to attend CIT was not one of them. If I had to go around again it would be my first choice! If you choose to go there I have no doubt that you will enjoy the experience that Cork Institute of Technology is.
USEFUL CONTACTS AND WEBSITES

CIT Mature Student Officer, Christine Nolan
T: 021 433 5109 E: maturestudent@cit.ie

CIT Access Officer, Deirdre Creedon
T: 021 433 5140 E: deirdre.creedon@cit.ie

CIT Disability Officer, Laura Coleman
T: 021 433 5107 E: dss@cit.ie

CIT Admissions Office
T: 021 433 5041 / 5042
E: admissions@cit.ie

CIT Fees Office
T: 021 433 5440 / E: fees@cit.ie

Recognition of Prior Learning
T: 021 433 5132 E: rpl@cit.ie

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