

Your Complete Guide to the Mature Student Evaluation (MSE)



Contents

Welcome	3
Eligibility	4
When and How to Apply	4
Reasonable Accommodations	4
MSE Structure	5
Completing the MSE	6
UCC Skills Centre Sessions	7
Before, During and After the MSE	7
What to Bring to the MSE	8
Rules	9
After Completing the MSE	11
Marking	11
Results	11
Appeals	11

Welcome!

We are delighted that you are considering UCC's College of Arts, Celtic Studies, and Social Sciences (CACSSS) for your studies.

This information booklet provides you with essential information for the Mature Student Evaluation (MSE). The Mature Student Evaluation is an in-person assessment for mature student candidates applying for certain undergraduate degree courses in UCC's College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences (CACSSS).

Adult Continuing Education, UCC, are delivering the MSE on behalf of CACSSS, with the support of Access UCC and UCC Skills Centre. The UCC Skills Centre will offer workshops in preparation for the assessment. Links to register for these workshops and to register for the MSE are available on the MSE website.



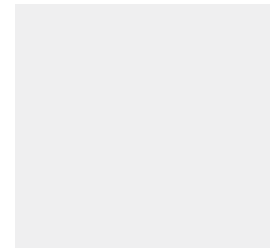
[MSE Website](#)

At UCC, we recognise that returning to education as a mature student can be a big decision and we congratulate you for making it. We understand that not all applicants will feel comfortable starting their university experience with a form of written assessment, therefore we would like to assure you that we have made every effort to ensure the MSE is learner-centred, and we are very willing to discuss any concerns you have about it, and hopefully offer you some reassurance.

This booklet includes information about the MSE structure, rules, procedures, and other important details. Please read it carefully and refer to it as you prepare for the MSE.

We hope that this information is clear and leaves you feeling one step closer to becoming a fully registered UCC student. We believe the UCC community will be enriched by having you on board, and we look forward to supporting your return to education over the coming years.





Eligibility

A list of courses that require the MSE for entry [are listed here](#). Your course may also have additional requirements, which are also listed on that link.

When and How to Apply

Candidates should apply for the MSE only after they have completed their [CAO application](#). You will be required to enter your CAO application number in your MSE application.

Reasonable Accommodations

During the MSE application, candidates will have the opportunity to let the MSE team know that they may require reasonable accommodations during the MSE. If you request this, a member of the MSE team will follow up with you to discuss the process and required documentation to support your application for reasonable accommodations. If you wish to discuss this before submitting your MSE application, please contact us on mse@ucc.ie

MSE Structure

The MSE is 2 hours long. We suggest you use that time as follows:

Reading time: 5 minutes

Section 1: 30 minutes

Section 2: 50 minutes

Section 3: 30 minutes

Review time: 5 minutes

The paper has three sections.

A sample paper is available via the [MSE website](#).



Section 1: 30 minutes

Personal motivation

You are required to answer **one question** which may include your motivation to study as a mature student/your interest in the subjects you wish to study/ other personal motivations.

Section 2: 50 minutes

Current Affairs

You are required to answer **two questions** out of a choice of three. Questions may include writing an essay in response to a quote by a government minister on a current affairs issue, examining an image and writing about the themes it captures, arguing one side of a debate on a current challenge in current affairs. Answers for this section should be essay style. The purpose is to demonstrate that you can clearly express your point of view, reflect on a theme, and present your thoughts in a coherent, convincing, and informative way. See tips below in completing the MSE.

Section 3: 30 minutes

Contemporary poem or text

You will be provided with a contemporary poem or text. Questions will be asked on the themes it contains, on the central message, and on your own personal response to it. You will answer **all questions** in this section.

Completing the MSE








Do ensure that you read the questions carefully and that you answer the correct number of questions. Where you have a choice of questions, take time to select the question you are going to answer.

Decide which section you will answer first. You do not need to answer the sections in order and may feel better starting with a section you are more comfortable with.

For sections 1 and 2 you may wish to write a rough plan before you start writing your answer. Your plan can include key points you want to make, a flow that your essay will follow, and examples you may wish to include. No marks are given for this plan – it is simply a suggestion that you may wish to write one.

The markers know that your answers are not polished, and you are not expected to follow any prescribed structure. However, your thoughts should be coherent, organised and form an argument/tell a story. The MSE is designed to evaluate the candidate's capacity to comprehend and assess content, while engaging in critical thinking. It is not designed to assess knowledge in a specific academic area.

Some Tips

-  Read the questions carefully to ensure you understand clearly what you are being asked.
-  Use an essay structure to guide your answers rather than writing everything you know about the topic in question. The UCC Skills Centre will offer guidance on essay structure at their MSE preparation session. See information on the next page.
-  It helps to have a rough plan of what you are going to write.
-  Outline your argument and back it up with examples. (Either hypothetical or from your knowledge of the topic)
-  Consider the other side of the argument and whether you need to counter those points.
-  You may bring in personal experience but should anchor it in the wider context.
-  The marker will be correcting the same questions from a lot of candidates, so try and make yours stand out.



UCC Skills Centre Sessions

The UCC Skills Centre will host a session to help candidates prepare for the MSE. The session will be delivered twice – once in person on the UCC Campus, and once online. We strongly encourage you to attend one of these sessions. There is no additional charge to do so. These sessions can be booked on the [MSE website](#).

Before, During & After the MSE

Before

- Try and get a good night's sleep. We all feel better after this!
- Eat a healthy breakfast and remember that no food is permitted during the assessment unless prior permission is given.
- Wear comfortable clothes: Whatever is most comfortable for you to sit in for a few hours.
- Arrive early: Arrive at the MSE location with plenty of time to spare. This minimises stress and ensures you have time for unexpected delays.
- While you may use the facilities during the assessment, you want to avoid missing time unnecessarily, so we suggest you use the facilities before the MSE starts.
- Bring the required materials: See the list on page eight.

During

- Stay calm: Take deep breaths if you feel anxious. Remind yourself that you've prepared for this, and you're very capable of handling it. In just a couple of hours, you'll be done.
- Read the instructions and questions carefully: Before you start, read the MSE paper thoroughly. Make sure you understand the format, time limits, and any specific requirements.
- Manage your time: Plan how much time you'll allocate to each section or question. Stick to your schedule to ensure you have time for all parts of the MSE.
- Start with what you know: Begin with the questions or sections you feel most confident about. This builds your confidence and helps you gather momentum.
- Answer all required questions: There's no penalty for guessing.
- Stay focused: If you find your mind wandering take a moment to refocus.
- Review your work: If time allows, review your answers for errors or overlooked questions. This can catch simple mistakes.
- Stay positive: Maintain a positive attitude throughout the assessment. Negative thinking can be counterproductive.
- Stay hydrated: Bring a water bottle and take short sips when needed.
- Follow the rules: Adhere to the MSE rules and guidelines. Cheating or violating any rules can have severe consequences.

After

- After the MSE: Try not to dwell on it. Avoid discussing the assessment with others right after you finish. It can create unnecessary stress. Once it's over, it's out of your hands. Focus on relaxing.

What to bring

1. A pen and a spare pen. You may wish to bring a pencil and eraser too for rough work.
2. Bottled water.
3. Identification: One of the following must be brought as proof of identity:
 - A valid passport
 - A current Driver's License
 - Temporary Residence Certificate
 - Irish Residency Permit
 - An Irish Public Services Card (along with another ID that has your date of birth on it)

If you do not present the above ID you will not be permitted to sit the MSE.



Rules

Candidates are expected to abide by these rules and follow the instructions of the invigilators, at all times.

The following items are not permitted in the MSE Venue:

- ⊘ Mobile phones/electronic devices
- ⊘ Smart watches
- ⊘ Smart glasses
- ⊘ Headphones/earbuds
- ⊘ Pets or other animals (Guide dogs will be permitted if Reasonable Accommodations are requested on application)
- ⊘ Recording devices
- ⊘ Dictionaries
- ⊘ Food
- ⊘ Notes/notebook/sheets of paper (we will provide an answer book and rough paper)
- ⊘ You cannot be accompanied by anyone into the MSE Venue.

Checks for unauthorised material may be carried out during the MSE; candidates may be asked to empty their pockets at any point.

Arrive Early

Arrive at the MSE Venue with plenty of time to spare. This minimises stress and ensures you have time for unexpected delays. We suggest you arrive at least 30 minutes before the MSE starts. The venue will open 45 minutes before the MSE start time.

Unless permitted to do so by the Senior Invigilator, candidates will not be:

- ⊘ Admitted to the MSE venue if they are more than fifteen minutes late.
- ⊘ Permitted to leave the MSE venue until one hour after the start time.
- ⊘ Allowed to return to the MSE venue having handed in their answer book(s) and left the MSE venue.
- ⊘ Permitted to leave the MSE venue within the last twenty minutes of the MSE. Any candidate who wishes to leave the MSE venue before the final twenty minutes of the assessment period must raise their hand to notify an invigilator and hand their answer books to the invigilator.

Candidates must not, under any circumstances:

Turn over the question paper cover sheet until instructed to do so by the Invigilator

Commence writing on their answer book(s) until instructed to commence writing by the Invigilator

Continue writing after the end of the MSE.

Silence: Candidates should maintain silence during the assessment to prevent disruption to others. Talking or any form of communication among candidates during the assessment is prohibited.

Raise Your Hand: If a candidate needs assistance, has a question, or requires a comfort break to use the facilities, they should raise their hand to get the invigilator's attention.

Return All Materials: Candidates must assemble all answer books received, whether used or unused, into the script answer bags provided. No answer book(s) or part of an answer book, whether used or unused, or any other supplied material may be taken out of the MSE venue. Candidates cannot leave the MSE venue until the Invigilators has collected the candidate's answer book(s).

Illness: If a candidate feels unwell during the assessment, s/he should inform an invigilator.

Smoking: Smoking breaks are not allowed.

Candidates will not be allowed to sit the MSE and no alternative arrangements will be made when they arrive:

- late for the assessment, but after another candidate has left the MSE venue.
- after the MSE has finished
- the day after the MSE
- In such cases, the student will be accommodated at a subsequent MSE sitting e.g. the following year.

Any candidate found violating these regulations or undertaking any irregularities of conduct within the MSE venue will be reported and may be deemed to have breached MSE regulations. A candidate, who, in the opinion of the Senior Invigilator, is disruptive to the proper conduct of the MSE for other candidates, may be required to leave the MSE venue.

After Completing the MSE



Marking

When your paper is being marked, the people marking it will concentrate on the content and level of thought demonstrated by the writing, rather than on spelling. No marks will be deducted for misspellings. The pass standard for each section is 40 marks.



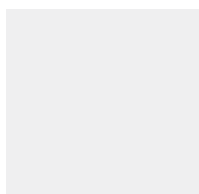
Results

UCC will contact candidates by email with their result approximately 4 weeks after the assessment.

Appeals

ACE will not enter an appeals process against MSE test results, unless there is evidence of substantive irregularity in the conduct of the MSE. If a candidate feels on the day of the MSE that there is a substantive irregularity, they should bring this to the attention of the Senior Invigilator, with minimal interruption to the other candidates. Any appeal based on substantive irregularities in the conduct of the MSE should be submitted to mse@ucc.ie within 72 hours of the conclusion of the assessment.

Candidates should note that an appeal of an MSE result does not involve a reassessment of the MSE paper or other submitted material.



CONTACT

Web: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ace/mastudentevaluationapp/>

Email: mse@ucc.ie

