



# *The DCU Autism Summer Programme*

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# AsI Am Autism Friendly HEI Award



*“Every autistic child needs the opportunity to grow up confidently autistic”*

*DR Mary Doherty - Irish Consultant Anaesthetist and Clinical Associate  
Professor*

# Understanding the Autistic Student Experience



In 2016, Dublin City University (DCU) began an 18 - month research study which aimed at creating a learning environment that would allow autistic students and staff to take part fully in college life and gain employment afterwards.

Additional supports are needed:

Communication, Socialisation, Information processing, Life skills.

- Navigation (of the physical campus)
- Accessing quiet spaces and quiet times at events.
- Knowledge and awareness raising across the whole DCU community
- Securing Internships and Employment



# 9 Principles of an AsI Am Autism Friendly HEI



# AsI Am Autism Friendly Award



Third level institutions which receive the AsI Am Autism Friendly HEI award are understanding of the needs of autistic students and staff, open to making adaptations to being more accessible, have a positive celebratory culture towards autism, and invite a whole campus approach to being autism friendly.

AsI Am were designated DCU the world's first autism-friendly university,



# Understanding the Autistic Student Experience - Transition to Higher Education



- The first principle of the award aims to remove barriers for autistic students transitioning into higher education.
- Moving away from support systems in Secondary School
- Reduced structure and routines
- Embarking on new friendships
- Worries about accommodation and fees
- Balance between academic demands and self-care





# Understanding the Autistic Student Experience - Transition to Higher Education



- Relationship between students stress level during their transition and 6 months later during their studies (S. M. Pancer, B. Hunsberger, M. W. Pratt, and S. Alisat, 2000).
- Encouraging early connection with the third level students and institute.
- Experience of college so students are prepared for new teaching and learning experiences.
- Experience physical and social environments



# Thank you



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