

Ireland feedback

English language schools in Ireland enjoy a high level of agency bookings and attract a wide range of student nationalities, as the results of this issue's Feedback Survey of students studying English there reveal.

Ireland feedback at a glance

Total number of students:	80 - female 40, male 38 (unknown 2)
Average age:	25.04 years
Top nationalities:	1 Italian (25%) 2 Japanese (18%) 3 Spanish (11%) 4 Chinese (10%) 5 French (6%)
Average length of programme:	7.6 weeks
Average number of students per class:	11
Average no. of hours of language tuition per week:	21.8
% of students who found their course via an agency:	39%
% of students who booked through an agent:	54%
% of students who had been on another language programme:	34%
% of students who would recommend their school:	89%

Respondents by world region of origin

Africa (1%)
Asia (29%)
Central & Eastern Europe (9%)
Western Europe (60%)
Middle East (1%)

What was the standard of your social programme?

Excellent (16%)
Good (46%)
Satisfactory (21%)
Poor (9%)
Unsatisfactory (1%)
Unknown (7%)

Standard of your accommodation?

Excellent (31%)
Good (49%)
Satisfactory (11%)
Unsatisfactory (1%)
Unknown (8%)

In my class there are...

Too many students (19%)
Too many students who speak my language (14%)
Too many students from one other country (15%)
None of these (51%)
Unknown (1%)

The fact that Ireland is attracting a wider range of nationalities – largely owing to the overseas marketing efforts of individual schools and the school organisation, MEI~Relsa – is reflected in this issue's Feedback survey, which looks at students studying English in Ireland at the end of August/beginning of September this year. Although Western Europeans continued to make up the lion's share of students, accounting for 60 per cent of our respondents, closer analysis by individual nationality reveals that Asian students are becoming more significant to Irish schools. Behind Italians – who accounted for a quarter of students – were Japanese students, while Chinese were fourth in the league table of top nationalities. The rise of the Chinese, who this year made up 10 per cent of students, reflects the popularity of studying in Ireland owing to the relatively liberal visa regulations (see *Language Travel Magazine*, August 2001, page 25). Spanish students, who, with 32 per cent, made up the largest nationality last year (see *Language Travel Magazine*, December 2000, pages 20-21), accounted for only 11 per cent of respondents this year.

Agents play an important role in the Irish market, as evidenced in our Feedback survey. Thirty-nine per cent of students first found out about their language programme through an agent or educational adviser. An additional 28 per cent of students chose their school through the recommendation of friends and family. Only 13 per cent of respondents said they had seen an advertisement for the school, and 16 per cent had found the school on the Internet. We also asked respondents whether they had booked through an agent, and 54 per cent said they had. This included 38 per cent of those who had found the school on the Internet and 18 per cent of those who had chosen their school through the recommendation of friends or family. Interestingly, 16 per cent of the respondents who had said they had found out about the school through an agency had booked directly via the school.

The average length of stay for the students in our survey was low this year. Average course duration in Ireland reached a high of 38.5 weeks in our 2000 Feedback survey – a figure boosted by a number of long-term students – up from 13.3 weeks in 1999 (see *Language Travel Magazine*, August 1999, pages 20-21). This year, the average fell to 7.6 weeks, with 69 per cent of students studying for six weeks and under.

In contrast to last year, when more than 40 per cent of students were over 31 years old, students over the age of 31 made up only 15 per cent of respondents this year, and the overall average age was just over 25 years, in stark contrast to 41 years old last year. Our survey only included over-16 year olds, and although Ireland is a popular junior study location, 16-to-19 year olds accounted for only 19 per cent of our total survey respondents. Twenty-nine per cent of our respondents this year were business people or other professionals. Half of our respondents said they were learning English for their current or future work, while a further 21 per cent said they were learning it for their college studies at home. Eleven per cent said they intended to continue studying in Ireland and another seven per cent said they were going to continue their studies in another English-speaking country.

Although class size among the schools that took part in our survey was in some cases as low as four students, the number of students in some classes went right up to 15 and the average, at 11 students per class, was relatively high. As a result, 19 per





cent of students said there were too many students in their class, 78 per cent of whom were in classes of 10 students and above. We also asked students to indicate if there were too many students who spoke their own language in their class, and of the 14 per cent who said yes, all but one were Italian, the single largest nationality to take part in our survey. A further 15 per cent said there were too many students from one other country in their class.

Notwithstanding, most students appeared to be satisfied with their course. Ninety-five per cent of students rated the standard of the teaching as excellent or good, while 89 per cent said the standard of their academic programme was at least good. The social programmes were rated either excellent, good or satisfactory by 83 per cent of students, while the accommodation was graded at least good by just over 90 per cent of students – testimony to the high standard of host family accommodation in Ireland, as 81 per cent of students were staying with an Irish family. One of the highest accolades a school can receive, however, is its recommendation to others by past students. In our survey, a healthy 89 per cent said they would recommend their programme to others (five per cent indicated they would not and six per cent did not reply to this question).

Although a language travel programme in Ireland is less expensive than in the UK – students were typically paying around US\$250 per week for their language course and accommodation – 56 per cent found the cost of living in Ireland to be more expensive than in their home countries. This included all German students, 80 per cent of Chinese, 70 per cent of Italians and 67 per cent of Spaniards. A further 34 per cent of students found the cost of living in Ireland to be about the same as their home countries, while only eight per cent found it to be lower. Compared with our Malta Feedback survey, in which 55 per cent of students had been on a previous language travel programme (see *Language Travel Magazine*, November 2001, pages 20-21), only 34 per cent had been on a previous trip in this survey. Of these, 38 per cent had been to the UK to learn English, while 18 per cent had learnt German in Germany and six per cent had taken a French language course in France. Nine per cent said they had already taken an English course in Ireland before. Other language travel destinations mentioned were Malta, Australia, Russia and Korea.

The attractiveness of the Irish countryside made a big impression on students. When we asked students to put certain features of Ireland into order of preference, this aspect came in at first place overall, while the people were the second-most favoured aspect of the country, followed by the language and the culture.

Thank you to the following schools for taking part in our survey:

Bluefeather School, Monkstown, Dublin; Centre of English Studies, Dublin; Clare Language Centre, Ennis, Clare; Geos English Academy, Dublin; International House, Dublin; Languages and Leisure International, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin

What do you like most about Ireland?

1 Countryside	5 Nightlife
2 People	6 Shopping
3 Language	7 Food
4 Culture	8 Sport

How will you use your English in the future?

For college study in Ireland (11%)
For college study in another country (7%)
For college study in my home country (21%)
For current or future work (50%)
For pleasure only (9%)
Unknown (2%)

How easy was it to practise English with native speakers?

Very easy (6%)
Quite easy (38%)
Quite hard (44%)
Very hard (8%)
Unknown (4%)

Before looking for your course, did you know where you wanted to study?

Country	Yes (72%)
	No (28%)
City/town	Yes (50%)
	No (49%)
	Unknown (1%)
School	Yes (28%)
	No (71%)
	Unknown (1%)

Did you book your course through an agent?

Yes (54%)
No (41%)
Unknown (5%)

What was the standard of your academic programme?

Excellent (14%)
Good (51%)
Satisfactory (24%)
Poor (1%)
Unsatisfactory (1%)
Unknown (9%)

How did you choose your programme?

I saw it advertised (13%)
I found it on the Internet (16%)
It was recommended by an agent (39%)
It was recommended by a friend/relative (28%)
Unknown (4%)

What was the standard of the teaching at your school?

Excellent (56%)
Good (39%)
Satisfactory (4%)
Poor (1%)