

8. Supports for Learners

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Introduction

Student support is integral to the educational experience at ELI Schools. Quality teaching and assessment must be complemented by comprehensive support services that enable students to succeed academically, settle into life in Ireland, maintain their wellbeing, and address difficulties they encounter.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this section is to articulate ELI Schools' philosophy and commitment to learner support, to define the range of support services available to students and to establish principles and standards for learner support.

Regulatory Context

ELI Schools' approach to learner support is informed by and complies with:

- QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016
- Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of English Language Education to International Learners
- Child Safeguarding (Children First Act 2015):
- Data Protection Act 2018

ELI Schools' Learner Support Philosophy

Core Beliefs: ELI Schools' approach to learner support is founded on the following core beliefs:

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| Students Are Whole People: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' academic success depends on their overall wellbeing • Academic, personal, social, practical, and emotional dimensions are interconnected. Supporting the whole person, not just the learner |
| Support Enables Success: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate support enables students to focus on learning and achieve their potential • Students facing difficulties (accommodation problems, homesickness, financial stress, health issues, etc.) struggle academically • Proactive support prevents problems from escalating |
| International Students Have Unique Needs: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students studying abroad face specific challenges: language barriers, culture shock, being far from home, visa/immigration issues, unfamiliar systems. ELI Schools has duty of care to international students. • Support services designed for international student context |
| Early Intervention: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and addressing issues early prevents escalation • Proactive support and accessible services encourage students to seek help before crises. Prevention better than crisis management |
| Student-Centered and Responsive: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support responsive to individual student needs • Students' voices heard; students involved in identifying solutions |
| Confidentiality and Trust: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support services confidential (within appropriate limits) • Trust essential for students to feel comfortable seeking help |
| Partnership and Collaboration: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support is collaborative: student, support staff, teaching staff, external services working together • Students taking responsibility for own wellbeing • Signposting to external services when needs beyond ELI Schools |
| Inclusive and Accessible: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support services accessible to all students • Diversity welcomed and supported • Particular attention to vulnerable groups (under-18s, students with disabilities, students experiencing discrimination, etc.) |

8.1 Policy for Learner Support

QA Area(s)	• Support for Learners		
Applies to	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff only	<input type="checkbox"/> Learners only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff and learners
Policy Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Director (overall student welfare); • Senior Academic Manager (academic support); • Student Services Officer (pastoral and practical support) 		

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish ELI Schools' commitment to providing comprehensive, accessible, and effective support services that enable all students to succeed academically, settle successfully, maintain wellbeing, and address difficulties encountered during their studies.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students at ELI Schools
- All staff with roles in student support
- All programmes and locations

Policy Statement

Commitment to Learner Support:

ELI Schools is committed to providing high-quality support services that address students' academic, practical, personal, and social needs. We recognize that international students studying in Ireland face unique challenges and that appropriate support is essential for their success and wellbeing.

ELI Schools will:

- Provide a comprehensive range of support services
- Ensure support services are accessible, responsive, and effective
- Take a proactive approach to identifying and addressing student needs
- Exercise duty of care, particularly to international students and vulnerable groups
- Respect students' dignity, autonomy, confidentiality, and diversity
- Work in partnership with students, staff, and external services to support student welfare

Principles Of Learner Support

Holistic Support:

Principle: Support addresses the whole student - academic, practical, personal, social, emotional, physical wellbeing. All dimensions interconnected; addressing all enables success.

Implementation:

- Range of support services covering diverse needs
- Academic support (tutorials, study skills, academic guidance)
- Practical support (accommodation, immigration, banking, transport, etc.)
- Pastoral support (emotional support, homesickness, adjustment, crisis support)
- Health and wellbeing (first aid, healthcare information, mental health signposting, wellbeing promotion)
- Social support (activities programme, building community, friendships)

Accessibility:	<p>Principle: Support services accessible to all students. No barriers to accessing support. Students know what support available and how to access it.</p> <p>Implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support services widely communicated (handbook, website, induction, posters, regular reminders) • Clear, simple processes for accessing support • Multiple access points (Student Services Officer, teachers, Programme Leaders, office staff all can signpost) • Support available in multiple formats (in-person, phone, email, online) • Accessible locations (Student Services Office easily findable, welcoming) • Support available in English at appropriate language level for learners • Free (support services at no additional cost to students) • Confidential • No stigma (seeking support normalized, not seen as weakness)
Responsiveness:	<p>Principle: Support services responsive to individual student needs. Timely, appropriate responses. Flexibility in approach. Students' voices heard.</p> <p>Implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Services Officer and support staff responsive (reply to student contacts promptly - typically within 24 hours on working days) • Urgent issues prioritized (crisis support immediate) • Individual approach (not one-size-fits-all; tailored to student's situation) • Active listening and empathy • Students involved in identifying solutions • Flexibility (adapting approach based on what works for each student)
Proactive Support and Early Intervention:	<p>Principle: Proactive identification of students who may need support. Early intervention prevents escalation. Prevention better than crisis management.</p> <p>Implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and Programme Leaders monitor attendance, participation, performance, mood - identify students who may be struggling • Welfare checks for vulnerable students (under-18s, students living alone, students showing signs of difficulty) • Accessible support encourages students to seek help early before problems escalate • Orientation and induction set students up for success from start • Pre-arrival information prepares students • Addressing minor issues promptly prevents them becoming major problems
Duty of Care:	<p>Principle: ELI Schools has duty of care to students, particularly international students far from home and support networks, and particularly vulnerable students (under-18s, students with disabilities, students experiencing crisis).</p> <p>Implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELI Schools takes responsibility for student welfare seriously • Reasonable steps taken to ensure student safety and wellbeing • Appropriate responses to welfare concerns • Enhanced duty of care for under-18s (safeguarding - Section 15) • Liaison with parents/guardians for under-18s (with appropriate balance of student autonomy and parental involvement) • Emergency procedures in place (see Section 18) • Insurance (students required to have health insurance; school has liability insurance)

Confidentiality:

Principle: Information about students' support needs and personal circumstances treated confidentially. Trust essential. Privacy respected. GDPR compliant.

Implementation:

- Information shared only with those who need to know (on need-to-know basis)
- Sensitive information stored securely with restricted access
- Students can speak to Student Services Officer or support staff in confidence
- Staff trained in confidentiality and data protection

Limits to Confidentiality: Students informed that confidentiality cannot be absolute in cases where:

- Safeguarding concern (child at risk, or adult student at serious risk of harm) - information must be shared with Designated Liaison Person and potentially statutory authorities
- Legal obligation to disclose (e.g., court order)
- Serious safety risk (e.g., threat to harm others)

Respect for Diversity and Inclusion:

Principle: Students come from diverse backgrounds, cultures, identities, abilities, circumstances. All students welcomed, respected, and supported. Inclusive environment. No discrimination.

Implementation:

- Culturally sensitive support (awareness of cultural differences in communication, expectations, attitudes to seeking help, etc.)
- Interpreter/translation support if severe language barrier (though students are learning English, so English is primary language; in emergencies or complex matters, interpretation may be provided)
- Respect for diverse identities (race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, etc.)
- Awareness of specific needs of different groups (e.g., Muslim students may need information on prayer facilities, halal food; students with disabilities need accessible support; LGBTQ+ students need safe, affirming environment; etc.)
- Anti-discrimination (discrimination not tolerated, complaints procedures available)
- Inclusive language and imagery
- Celebrating diversity

Collaboration and Signposting:

Principle: ELI Schools cannot provide all support in-house. Collaboration with external services essential. Signposting students to appropriate external professional services when needs beyond ELI Schools' capacity or expertise.

Implementation:

- ELI provides front-line support (listening, initial guidance, practical assistance, pastoral care) For specialist needs, signpost to external services:
- Medical: GP, hospitals, A&E, mental health services, counselling
- Legal: Solicitors, Citizens Information, immigration advisors
- Financial: Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), Citizens Information
- Housing: Threshold (housing charity), local authority
- Crisis: Samaritans (suicide prevention), rape crisis centres
- Disability: AHEAD, disability support organizations

Student Responsibility:

Principle: Support is partnership. ELI Schools provides support; students take responsibility for own wellbeing and for seeking help when needed.

Implementation:

- Students encouraged to take proactive role in own welfare
- Students expected to:
 - Attend induction and engage with orientation
 - Read information provided (handbook, notices, emails)
 - Seek help when having difficulties (not suffering in silence)
 - Engage with support offered
 - Follow advice and guidance where appropriate (while respecting student autonomy)
 - Treat support staff respectfully
 - Take responsibility for own choices and actions
- Students are not passive recipients of support but active partners

Continuous Improvement:

Principle: Learner support continuously improved based on feedback, data, and reflection.

Implementation:

- Student feedback gathered (surveys, Programme Boards, informal feedback)
- Student support data monitored (usage, issues, outcomes)
- Staff reflection on what's working and what needs improvement
- Regular review of support services
- Acting on feedback and data
- Innovations and best practice from sector
- Continuous enhancement of support

Support Services Available

Induction And Orientation

Pre-Arrival:

- Pre-arrival information pack (practical information about Dublin/Drogheda, what to bring, what to expect, contact details, etc.)
- Response to pre-arrival questions (email/phone)
- Accommodation arranged if booked through ELI Schools
- Airport transfer arranged if booked

First Day:

- Welcome and registration
- Orientation session covering:
 - Introduction to ELI Schools (history, values, staff)
 - Programme information (schedule, teachers, expectations)
 - Assessment and progression

First Week:

- Settling-in check (Student Services Officer or Programme Leader checks in with new students, particularly international students, to see how settling in)
- Opportunities to ask questions
- Social activities to help students meet each other

Ongoing:

Student Services Officer available for any questions or issues as students settle in

Accommodation Support

Pre-Arrival:

- Accommodation options explained (host family, residence)
- Preferences taken (dietary, special needs, location, etc.)
- Accommodation arranged
- Accommodation details provided (address, host family details, check-in)

Arrival:

- Airport transfer to accommodation (if booked)
- Introduction to host family or residence

During Stay:

- Accommodation Officer (or Student Services Officer) monitors accommodation quality
- Regular check-ins with host families (ensuring student settling, standards maintained)
- Student feedback sought
- Issues addressed promptly (if student has problem with accommodation - conflict with host family, facilities inadequate, etc. –
- Accommodation Officer investigates and resolves, moving student if necessary)

Practical Support and Guidance

Immigration and Visa Support:

For Non-EEA Students:

- Pre-arrival: Information on visa application process, Letter of Acceptance provided for visa application
- On arrival: Information on registration with GNIB (Garda National Immigration Bureau) / IRP (Irish Residence Permit)
- Assistance with registration process (what documents needed, how to book appointment, completing forms)
- Monitoring visa status (ensuring students maintain legal status, renewing registration as needed)
- Information on visa conditions (permitted to work part-time, must attend minimum percentage of classes, etc.)

Banking:

- Information on opening bank account in Ireland (which banks, what documents needed, process)
- Assistance if requested (letter from school confirming student status if bank requires)

PPS Number (Personal Public Service Number):

- Information on what PPS number is, when needed, how to apply
- Assistance if requested

Academic Support

Academic Guidance:

- Programme information clear (learning outcomes, assessment, expectations)
- Teachers available to answer questions, provide guidance
- Feedback on progress (formative assessment, teacher feedback, progress reports)
- Advice on progression and next steps

Support for Struggling Students:

- If student struggling academically, teacher or Programme Leader identifies and offers support
- One-to-one tutorials or small group sessions (additional teaching/practice)
- Study skills guidance (notetaking, revision, time management, exam technique, etc.)
- Encouragement and motivation
- Identifying barriers to learning (are there personal issues affecting study? If so, signpost to pastoral support)

Pastoral And Welfare Support

Student Services Officer - Primary Contact for Pastoral Support:

Availability:

- Regular office hours (posted and communicated)
- Drop-in (students can drop in during office hours)
- Appointment (students can book appointment for longer conversation)
- Contact outside office hours for urgent matters (emergency contact)

What Student Services Officer Provides:

Listening and Emotional Support:

- Confidential conversations
- Active listening, empathy, non-judgmental support
- Helping students process feelings and think through issues
- Emotional support for homesickness, culture shock, adjustment difficulties, loneliness, anxiety, stress, relationship problems, family issues, bereavement, etc.

Practical Problem-Solving:

- Helping student identify problems and solutions
- Connecting student to resources and services
- Advocacy and liaison (e.g., liaising with landlord on student's behalf if issue, contacting home institution if student is exchange/pathway student, etc.)

Welfare Checks:

- Proactive check-ins with vulnerable students or students known to be going through difficulties
- Checking if student is okay, has what they need, knows where to get help

Crisis Support:

- Immediate support in crisis (serious illness, accident, bereavement, assault, mental health crisis, etc.)
- Coordinating response (medical help, contacting family if appropriate, arranging support, etc.)
- Staying with student, providing reassurance

Health And Wellbeing

Healthcare System in Ireland:

- GP (General Practitioner / family doctor) - primary healthcare;
- Hospitals and A&E (Accident & Emergency)
- Emergency: 999 or 112 (ambulance, police, fire)
- Pharmacies - for minor ailments and medications; pharmacist can advise
- Dentist - dental care not free; private dentists available
- Mental health services - see below

Health Insurance:

- Students required to have health insurance
- Insurance should cover medical emergencies, hospitalization, repatriation
- ELI Schools checks students have insurance (part of enrolment)

Registering with GP:

- Students encouraged to register with local GP
- List of local GPs provided
- Assistance with registration if needed

In Event of Illness/Injury:

Minor Illness:

- Student can rest, self-care
- Visit pharmacy for over-the-counter medications and advice
- Inform teacher/office if missing class due to illness
- Student Services Officer can provide support (checking on student, providing information, arranging GP appointment if needed, etc.)

Serious Illness/Injury:

- Student should seek medical help (GP or A&E depending on severity)
- Student Services Officer informed
- Student Services Officer provides support (accompanying student to hospital if needed, contacting family if appropriate, liaison with medical services, arranging support during recovery, considering academic implications - extenuating circumstances, etc.)

First Aid:

- Trained first aiders on staff (names posted)
- First aid kits available
- First aid provided for minor injuries at school
- Serious injury: Ambulance called, first aid provided until ambulance arrives

Mental Health Services in Ireland:

- Counselling services (private counsellors available, typically €50-80 per session; some low-cost counselling available; list provided)
- HSE (Health Service Executive) mental health services (public mental health services; accessed through GP referral; free but may have waiting times)
- Crisis services: Samaritans 116 123 (24-hour helpline for anyone in distress or considering suicide), Pieta House (suicide and self-harm crisis counselling), Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, Women's Aid (domestic violence), etc.

If Student in Mental Health Crisis:

- Immediate support from Student Services Officer
- Emergency services called if risk of harm to self or others (999/112)
- GP or A&E if urgent mental health support needed
- Family contacted if appropriate and with student consent (unless emergency where student unable to consent)
- Ongoing support arranged

Social And Cultural Support

Types of Activities:

- Cultural activities (museum visits, theatre, concerts, cultural festivals, etc.)
- Social events (international food nights, film nights, games nights, etc.)
- Excursions (day trips to Howth, Glendalough, Cliffs of Moher, Belfast, etc.)
- Sports and outdoor activities (hiking, sports, etc.)
- Conversation clubs (informal English practice)
- Celebrations (Christmas party, Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, students' own cultural celebrations, etc.)

Purposes:

- Friendships and social connection (reducing loneliness, building community)
- English practice (authentic contexts outside classroom)
- Cultural immersion (experiencing Irish culture, visiting famous sites)
- Fun and relaxation (balance to academic work, stress relief)
- Inclusive community (students from all backgrounds mixing, celebrating diversity)

Building Community:

- Welcoming culture (new students integrated, everyone included)
- Student mix encouraged (students from different nationalities, ages, levels mixing - broadens experience, improves English)
- Common rooms and social spaces (spaces for students to relax, chat, make friends)

Cultural Orientation:

- Information about Irish culture, customs, social norms (helping students understand and navigate cultural differences)
- Addressing culture shock (normal adjustment challenges for students studying abroad)

Safeguarding (For Under-18 Students)

Enhanced Duty of Care:

- ELI Schools in loco parentis for under-18s
- Higher duty of care than for adult students
- Comprehensive safeguarding measures (see Section 15 for full policy and procedures)

Key Safeguarding Supports:

- Designated Liaison Person (DLP) - Student Services Officer - point of contact for safeguarding
- Deputy DLP appointed
- Child Safeguarding Statement (policy on protecting children)
- Vetted staff (all staff working with under-18s Garda vetted)
- Vetted host families (host families accommodating under-18s Garda vetted, trained, monitored)
- Supervision (under-18s supervised appropriately - accompanied on activities, checked on regularly, contact with DLP)
- Safe activities (risk assessments for all activities involving under-18s)

Complaints And Feedback

Complaints Procedures:

- Fair, accessible procedures (Section 3)
- Students can complain if unhappy with aspect of provision
- Complaints investigated and addressed
- Students informed of right to complain

Feedback Mechanisms:

- Regular opportunities to provide feedback (course review surveys, Programme Boards, informal feedback)
- Feedback valued and acted upon
- Continuous improvement based on student input

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Related legislation, regulation or guidelines:

- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016 (QQI) - Section 2.4: Supports for Learners
- Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of English Language Education to International Learners
- Children First Act 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015, Equal Status Acts 2000-2015, Disability Act 2005