

**Madison Koehler '14**  
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Journal #1

My name is Madison Koehler. I am studying at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth as a part of a program Saint Mary's has had for around 38 years. It is a wonderful partnership that really helps you feel like a part of the community from the moment you arrive. We live in apartments on campus that are in a flat-style arrangement. This year we are in River Apartments. We each have our own bedroom and bathroom and share a kitchen and living room area with 4 or 5 other people.

We are only a short walk into town, which has all the basic stores, tons of restaurants, and of course the pubs. Maynooth is a little town, and I feel totally safe walking around it, not that I ever go without someone, but I don't fear what may happen walking around town either.

The weather is basically the stereotype of Irish weather. I have had only one day that it has not rained at all. 'Clear blue skies' is not in the weatherman's vocabulary, and it never gets much below 50°F or above 65°F. Surprisingly I really don't mind it though. If it downpours, it doesn't last long, there has yet to be an actual thunderstorm, and there isn't much humidity.

Classes here are a major adjustment. They are all large lectures with tutorials starting in the second and third weeks. Tutorials split the class into smaller groups that work with a post-grad student to better understand the material and ask questions. There are no daily assignments besides reading, but even this is not checked. It is your own responsibility to study and understand the material. In most of the classes the grades depend on a single paper, attendance to tutorials, and the final.

Our first weekends here we take trips with Roberta, our coordinator here, and we go to numerous sites around Ireland to get a feel for the culture and history. This also gives you time to get used to the country and figure out how things work before you travel on your own.

Ireland is a wonderful country and our program here makes it an amazing experience! I have already done and seen so much in just my first two weeks here! I am glad I am staying the full year so I can do as much as possible off my growing list of wants. It is the experience of a lifetime and it has only just begun...