# EXPICIT MTU STUDENTS' UNION MAG



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NAVIGATING THE WINTER BLUES

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**MTU CHRISTMAS FAYRE** 

**SURVIVING THE HOLIIDAYS: AN MTU STUDENT'S GUIDE** 

**NAVIGATING THE WINTER BLUES** 

A GEN Z'S CORK CHRISTMAS

**FLYNNERS FLYING COLUMN** A NOSTALGIC JINGLE THROUGH TOYLAND

**TIS THE SEASON...** FOR COUGHS, COLDS, FLU



HGHLIGHT

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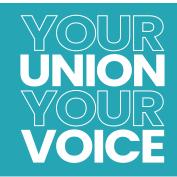


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or college students, the holidays can feel like a strange mix of relief and chaos. On one hand, exams are finally over, and a well-earned break beckons. On the other, the festive season brings its own pressures: the scramble for gifts, the tug of family obligations, and the quiet guilt of wondering if you're doing enough to prepare for next semester. It's easy to feel like you're stuck in a snow globe of swirling demands, with no way out. But with a little perspective and some practical strategies, you can turn this winter break into something meaningful — and maybe even magical...

### The Art of Budget-Friendly Gifting

Gifting is one of the most universal stressors of the holiday season. You want to give thoughtful presents, but let's be real—your wallet is barely holding on after months of canteen coffee and overpriced textbooks. The key is to rethink what "thoughtful" means.

Handmade gifts, for example, can go a long way. A batch of cookies or a custom playlist might seem small, but it shows effort and care. Another trick? Suggest a Secret Santa exchange with friends or family. Not only does it cut costs, but it also lets you focus on crafting or choosing something truly special for one person. And don't underestimate the power of your student ID during holiday sales those discounts might save you enough to splurge on a little gift for yourself, too.

### Managing Holiday Stress

The holidays are supposed to be joyful, but let's face it—they're often anything but. Between long family dinners where everyone asks about your course progress and the looming question of whether you've done enough this semester, it's easy to feel overwhelmed.

The first step is learning to set boundaries. If family time gets too intense, don't hesitate to step away for a breather. Even a short walk can help you regain your balance. And while it's tempting to let your break become a blur of Netflix binges, prioritising selfcare — whether through exercise, journaling, or simply catching up on sleep — can make a world of difference.

Most importantly, give yourself permission to be imperfect. The holidays aren't about performing for others; they're about finding moments of peace and connection in the chaos.

### Making the Most of Your Christmas Break

Christmas break is a rare gift: a few weeks without lectures, assignments, or deadlines. However, for many students, it's also a time to clock in extra hours at a part-time job. Balancing work with relaxation can feel tricky, but it's all about striking the right equilibrium.

If you have a job, try to schedule your shifts in a way that still leaves room for downtime. Use the flexibility of your break to save some money without burning yourself out. Beyond work, carve out time for hobbies you've neglected, like painting, baking, or finally reading that book you bought months ago.

This is also an excellent time to get ahead for next semester.

Dedicate a few hours each week to something constructive, such as updating your cv, or reviewing your class schedule. Balancing work, rest, and preparation will help you head into the new year feeling both refreshed and productive.

If you're feeling really ambitious, use the quiet moments of break to set intentions for the new semester. Reflect on what worked (and what didn't) over the past few months, and think about small changes that could make your life easier next term.

### Finding Joy in the Small Things

It's easy to get caught up in the idea that the holidays have to be grandiose to be meaningful. But often, it's the small, simple moments that stick with us the most.

Maybe it's sipping hot chocolate while watching your favourite holiday movie, or laughing with friends as you attempt (and fail) to build a gingerbread house. Maybe it's starting a quirky tradition, like a midnight walk to admire neighbou rhood lights. These small joys remind us that the holiday season isn't about perfection — it's about presence.

### **Embracing Imperfection**

Not every holiday is going to feel like a Hallmark movie, and that's okay. Some years are quieter, lonelier, or more complicated than others. But even in the messiest of seasons, there's room for gratitude.

Take a moment to reflect on what you're thankful for — whether it's the warmth of a loved one's laugh, the relief of finally finishing that brutal statistics course, or simply the promise of a fresh start in the new year.

The holidays don't have to be perfect to be meaningful. With a little planning and a lot of grace, you can transform this winter break into something truly special. And isn't that what the season is all about?

Happy holidays, and here's to a restful, joyful, and balanced winter break.

### Navigating the Winter Blues:

# A Guide to Exam Worries, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), and Financial Strain

As the holiday season approaches, many students find themselves juggling multiple stressors: the looming pressure of exams, the impact of shorter days on their mood, and financial worries that make the festive period less joyful. These challenges can feel overwhelming, but with some practical strategies, you can manage this stressful time and even enjoy the winter season. Here's how:

### 1. Coping with Exam Worries

Exams can feel like a heavy cloud hanging over the run up to the holidays, making it difficult to enjoy the festive season. This stress often stems from self-imposed pressure to perform, fear of failure, or simply the volume of material to study. Here are some ways to handle this:

- Break It Down: Tackle your study material in smaller chunks. Create a schedule that covers all topics, but ensure each session is focused and manageable. The "Pomodoro Technique," where you study for 25 minutes followed by a 5-minute break, can boost productivity and prevent burnout.
- Practice Mindfulness: Engage in mindfulness activities like deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or meditation. Apps like Headspace or Calm offer guided sessions that can help you stay grounded and reduce anxiety.
- SilverCoud is free for MTU students and contains programmes to help you create positive changes that allow you to reduce stress and increase resilience through various techniques drawn from Positive Psychology.
- Stay Active: Physical exercise releases endorphins, which help reduce stress. A brisk walk, yoga session, or even dancing around your room can be a quick mood booster.
- Visualize Success: Spend a few minutes each day visualizing yourself confidently taking the exam. This positive reinforcement can help shift your mindset from fear to capability.

### 2. Managing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Winter's shorter days and longer nights can lead to a drop in energy and mood, known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Symptoms of SAD affect many students, making it harder to concentrate and stay motivated.

- Maximize Natural Light: Spend as much time as possible outside during daylight hours. If you're studying, choose a spot by a window or invest in a light therapy lamp, which mimics natural sunlight and can help regulate your mood.
- Maintain a Routine: Keeping a regular schedule for sleep, meals, and activities can stabilize your internal clock and combat SAD. Aim for consistent wake-up and bedtime, even on weekends.
- Stay Connected: It's tempting to retreat into isolation when feeling low, but social interaction is vital. Reach out to friends, attend campus events like the Active Chats Coffee Club, or even schedule online meetups with friends. Being around others can lift your spirits and reduce feelings of loneliness.
- If connecting in person feels tricky, Togetherall can be of great use to MTU students. It is a digital mental health support service which is available online, 24/7, and is completely anonymous so you can express yourself freely and openly. In addition to Togetherall's online community, you will have access to a wealth of useful resources and can work through tailored self-help courses covering topics such as anxiety, sleep, depression and many more.
- Engage in Activities You Enjoy: Set aside time for hobbies and interests, whether it's reading, cooking, playing an instrument, or watching a favourite show. Doing things you love can provide a sense of purpose and joy during the darker months.



By Sam Lynch

### 3. Easing Financial Strain

The festive season often comes with financial pressures that can add to stress, especially when trying to juggle the costs of gifts, travel, or social activities on a student budget.

- Create a Budget: Start by identifying your essential expenses (e.g., rent, bills, groceries) and then allocate what's left over for holiday spending. Tracking your spending can help you stay on top of your finances and avoid overspending.
- **DIY Gifts and Celebrations:** Instead of splurging on expensive gifts, consider creating personalized, handmade items like baked goods, crafts, or framed photographs. These thoughtful gifts can be more meaningful and are often appreciated even more.
- Take Advantage of Student Discounts: Many retailers offer student discounts, especially during the holiday season. Check out apps and websites that compile these deals, and don't be afraid to ask about discounts when shopping.
- Remember the Bigger Picture: It's easy to get caught up in the material aspects of the season, but the true value lies in spending time with loved ones. Focus on creating memories rather than purchasing items.

### **Final Thoughts**

The festive period is meant to be a time of joy and connection, but it's normal to feel overwhelmed by exams, the winter blues, and financial worries. By adopting practical strategies — such as managing your time, seeking natural light, staying socially connected, and budgeting wisely — you can navigate these challenges and find some calm amidst the chaos.

Take a moment to breathe, reflect, and remember that you're not alone. There's always support available, whether it's through friends, family, lecturers, TogetherAll, Silver-Cloud or MTU Counselling Service.

Wishing you a happy, healthy, and balanced holiday season!

Details of MTU Cork Student Counselling Service can be found here...

MTU Cork Student Counselling



## **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY**& INCLUSION (EDI)





### What does EDI mean at MTU?

Munster Technological University (MTU) is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) throughout and beyond our University community.

MTU welcomes diversity and is committed to inclusiveness, valuing the perspectives and contributions of all members of our community, working together to enhance a culture of inclusion and belonging within which all can flourish and reach their full potential.

To contribute to creating a safe, inclusive campus culture, we encourage students to Speak Out to anonymously disclose incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, discrimination, hate crime, coercive behaviour/control, stalking, assault, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape. The Speak Out tool will also help you to find relevant supports and highlight formal reporting procedures, should you wish to use them.

Learn More & Make a Report Here:















For Cork students, Christmas is a glorious mix of cozy traditions, digital shenanigans, and trying to explain to your Nan what "going viral" actually means. It's a time for mince pies, fairy lights, and that sweet, sweet sensation of being home—where the heating is finally someone else's problem.

### Traditions, but Make Them Trendy

Sure, Gen Z loves a bit of nostalgia. Decorating the tree? Absolutely. Singing along to "Fairytale of New York"? Try stopping us. But we like to spice things up. The annual "12 Pubs of Christmas" is less about the tradition these days and more about curating the perfect Instagram Story as you hop from pub to pub in your dodgy Christmas jumper.

And let's not forget about gift-giving. Forget overpriced tat—we're all about thrifted treasures and DIY creations (translation: panic-baking cookies at 2 a.m. the night before). Sustainability is in, and Cork students are here for it.

### Home Sweet Home (For Now!)

Going home for the holidays is a vibe. Your Mam greets you with hugs and an entire fridge of leftovers, while your siblings immediately ask if you've brought back anything useful from college (translation: booze). It's comforting, it's chaotic, and it's full of those classic family debates—like whether Home Alone is the ultimate Christmas movie (it is) or if you can skip the Toy Show this year (you can't).

But for some, home isn't necessarily where the heart is. Many students celebrate with their "college families" in rented flats or shared houses. Picture mismatched fairy lights, Lidl prosecco, and a slightly burnt frozen turkey dinner. It's chaotic, but it's also Cork Christmas magic.

#### Here's what's on every Cork student's Christmas stream watchlist:

Ah, the real reason we're all here: downtime equals binge time. Between naps and the occasional board game, there's nothing better than curling up with the TV remote and a tin of Celebrations (though someone's already nicked the Galaxy Caramels).

#### What will you watch?

"Elf" – Because Will Ferrell screaming "SANTA!" is a vibe we all need to get behind.

"Love Actually" – For some reason, we can't stop watching this trainwreck of a rom-com.

"Harry Potter" Marathons – Because no one's ready to admit it's not actually a Christmas movie.

"The Toy Show" (on RTÉ Player) – If you missed it live, you're morally obligated to catch up.

"The Young Offenders" Christmas Special – Local humour that hits differently when you're from Cork.

"Hot Frosty" – This quirky festive indie flick is gaining cult status among students.

"The Holiday" – Pure cheesy goodness that makes us want to escape to the countryside.

And, of course, hours of scrolling TikTok, because there's always room for one more trending Grinch meme.

### Balancing Work, Rest, and Letting Loose

For most Cork students, winter break isn't all lazy days and festive frolics. Many pick up extra shifts at part-time jobs, because let's face it, Christmas isn't cheap. But we still manage to squeeze in some downtime, whether it's catching up on hobbies, getting a head start on next semester (ha, as if!), or plotting next year's 12 Pubs route.

The trick is balance. Work a bit, rest a lot, and save some time for spontaneous plans, like meeting friends at the Christmas market or grabbing hot chocolate by the Ferris wheel on Grand Parade.

#### The True Spirit of Christmas

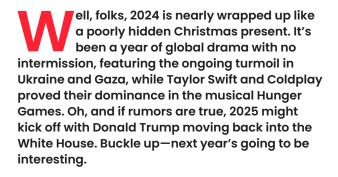
At the end of the day, Christmas for Cork students is about connection—both online and IRL. It's laughing until you cry at Father Ted's Christmas Special, swapping thoughtful (or hilariously bad) Secret Santa gifts, and staying up way too late catching up with friends.

It's the mix of old-school Cork charm, like a walk through Bishop Lucey Park's Winter Wonderland, and the modern Gen Z twist of sharing every moment with your Snapchat streak. It's imperfect, it's messy, but it's yours.

Merry Christmas, and may your Wi-Fi stay strong and your Galaxy Caramels plentiful.

### Flynner's Flying Column

By James Flynn





But hey, that's for January. Right now, the season of cheer is here! Christmas is looming closer than a professor's deadline, and for many in Ireland, the festive vibes officially begin with The Late Late Toy Show on Friday, December 6th. What better way to dive into the holiday spirit than a nostalgic stroll through the toy aisles of history?

Grab your cocoa (or your spiked eggnog), and let's explore the must-have toys Santa's sack has schlepped through the decades.

# A NOSTALGIC JINGLE THROUGH TOYLAND

### 1910s – Teddy Bears: The OG Cuddly Companion

Before Squishmallows dominated dorm beds, there was the classic teddy bear. Born out of a 1902 hunting trip where President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt refused to shoot a tied-up bear, the humble plushie took the world by storm. Now, over a century later, teddy bears remain timeless, from comforting kids to acting as emergency armrests during Netflix marathons.

### 1920s – Rag Dolls & Yo-Yos: Vintage Vibes

Think of Raggedy Ann and Andy as the Barbie and

Ken of the Roaring
Twenties. Toss in
the yo-yo—an
ancient invention
revamped for
modern mischief—
and kids had
everything they
needed to annoy
their parents.
Turns out,
nothing says
"fun" like yoyos thwacking
furniture or siblings.

### 1930s – Monopoly: The Family Feud Starter Kit

Sure, Monopoly brought joy to Depression-era homes, but let's not ignore its darker side: turning Christmas family gatherings into marathon sessions of bankruptcy and board-flipping rage. If you survived playing Monopoly without lifelong grudges, consider yourself lucky.





### 1940s - Slinky & Lego: Simple but Brilliant

Slinky was invented accidentally when a spring decided to strut instead of fall. Meanwhile, Lego's Danish origins brought infinite creativity-and infinite opportunities to step on sharp plastic bricks. Ah, festive foot pain!

### 1950s - Mr. Potato Head & Barbie: A Potato with **Personality**

Forget TikTok filters; kids of the '50s had Mr. Potato Head to experiment with funny faces. And then there was Barbie-launched in 1959—shattering stereotypes and rocking careers before #GirlBoss was even a thing.

### 1960s - GI Joe & Frisbees: **Action and Airtime**

GI Joe let boys channel their inner action hero, while Frisbees became a staple on college campuses. Let's be real: nothing bonds a group of students faster than a midnight Frisbee session under questionable sobriety.



1970s - Star Wars: The **Merch Empire Strikes** 

> The late '70s brought the Star Wars craze, launching action figures that were hotter than Tatooine. Still got an original Darth Vader? That dusty plastic dude might fund your next semester's tuition.

> > 1980s -Cabbage **Patch**

#### Kids & Rubik's **Cube: The Iconic Duo**

The '80s gave us cabbagescented dolls and the brain-busting Rubik's Cube. Both caused mass hysteria, though only one sparked toy-store brawls (hint: it wasn't the cube).

### 1990s – Gaming Galore

Enter the Gameboy, PlayStation 1, and the rise of video gaming. But if tech wasn't your thing, Tickle-Me-Elmo and Beanie Babies had you covered—until your parents

> realized they'd been duped into collecting fabric animals worth pennies today.



### 2000s – Bratz & Wii: Sassy and Sporty

Bratz dolls brought a spicy edge to the doll world, while the Nintendo Wii let us burn off Christmas dinner calories by pretending to be pro bowlers. Nostalgia, meet cardio.



#### Wrap It Up Like a Present!

Whether it's a vintage yo-yo or the latest gaming console, the joy of gifting remains

evergreen. As we wave goodbye to 2024, here's wishing you a Christmas full of laughter, love, and maybe even a little Monopoly-induced chaos.





Stay merry, stay jolly, and may your New Year be as bright as Barbie's career prospects. Cheers to 2025!

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- · Exercise regularly.
- Maintain a good sleep routine.





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