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Financial Supports for University in Ireland:

A Guide for International Protection Applicants, Refugees and other Migrants

PATH
Programme for Access to Higher Education

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

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Online Version

An online copy of this guide is available for download at:

Financial-Supports-for-University-in-Ireland

Published by TU Dublin in May 2025 Updated to October 2026

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Acknowledgements

The team would like to acknowledge and extend our sincere thanks to all those who contributed:

» The international protection applicants, refugees, migrants and the professionals and organisations who work with them who attended various events in TU Dublin over the last 4 years; their insightful questions on rights and entitlements in this area have informed this publication.

» TU Dublin colleagues, staff in other higher education institutions, grant awarding bodies and organisations working with migrants who provided information.

» Gráinne Ward, TU Dublin lecturer who researched and wrote this guide.

» Beti Marinescu, Adult Guidance Counsellor in Blanchardstown Adult Education Service and Siphiwe Mono, Community Development Worker IPAS/Refugee Support in Empower for their help in reviewing the booklet and for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

This guide was created by TU Dublin's Access & Outreach team as part of its Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH 3). PATH 3 is a partnership between TU Dublin and community organisations to support access to higher education for underrepresented groups. The project is funded by the Higher Education Authority under the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education.

Background

Financial Supports for University in Ireland: A Guide for International Protection Applicants, Refugees and Other Migrants provides information about the financial supports available for adult international protection applicants, recipients of international protection and other migrants considering going to university in Ireland.

TU Dublin Access and Outreach work with community organisations and statutory education providers encouraging people from underrepresented groups to consider university as an option for them. In this work, it can be difficult to locate comprehensive, clear and easy to access information on the financial supports available to migrants if they want to undertake further or higher education courses.

This guide aims to fill this gap and provides information about financial supports for higher education to members of the migrant community themselves, to staff in community organisations working with migrants and to staff in schools, adult education services (AES), further education and training (FET) colleges and universities seeking to support migrant students.

This guide focuses on progressing to higher education and for this reason, it concentrates on outlining financial supports for higher education courses. However, some readers may need to gain qualifications at QQI levels 5 and/or 6 from AESs or FET colleges to be able to meet the minimum entry requirements for their chosen higher education course. Therefore, we also include information on costs and financial supports for AES and FET courses where applicable.

This is a constantly changing area and the information in any printed publication can only be accurate and current at the time it's sent to the printers. For this reason, the guide will also be available in electronic form on the TU Dublin website, to ensure it remains up to date and incorporates relevant changes.

An online copy of this guide is available for download at:

https://www.tudublin.ie/media/documents/Financial-Supports-for-University-in-Ireland.pdf

Glossary of Immigration Terms

Asylum Seeker A person who is seeking to be recognised as a Convention refugee under the Geneva Convention 1951.

Daily Expenses Allowance A weekly allowance paid to international protection applicants who are living in accommodation provided by the International Protection Accommodation Service.

Department of Justice Letter A letter sent to an international protection applicant advising them of the outcome of their international protection application.

Family Reunification Under the International Protection Act 2015 certain family members can be given an immigration permission allowing them to live in Ireland with the holder of an international protection declaration.

Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) The immigration service of the Department of Justice.

International Protection There are currently 2 forms of international protection in Ireland. These are refugee status and subsidiary protection.

International Protection Applicant A person who is seeking to be recognised as a Convention refugee under the Geneva Convention 1951.

International Protection Applicant Certificate (IPA Cert) This is a digital PDF document issued by the International Protection Office (IPO) in Ireland that replaces physical Temporary Residence Cards (TRCs) upon renewal. It serves as official proof that you are currently in the international protection process and complying with its requirements.

International Protection Office This office is responsible for processing applications for international protection under the International Protection Act 2015 and the International Protection Act 2026. It also considers, as part of a single procedure process, whether applicants should be given permission to remain.

Irish Born Child A child who was born in Ireland (after 31 December 2004) but who is not entitled to Irish citizenship at birth.

Irish Citizen Child A child who is an Irish citizen.

Irish Residence Permit (IRP) Certificate of registration that is issued to all legally resident non-EEA nationals who stay in Ireland for more than three months.

Labour Market Permission A permission granted to international protection applicants that will allow them to access employment and self-employment. Also sometimes referred to as a 'work permit' or 'employment permit'.

Leave to Remain People who do not meet the requirements of refugee status or subsidiary protection may be granted permission to remain in Ireland under Section 49 of the International Protection Act 2015. The correct term is permission to remain.

Permission to remain People who do not meet the requirements of refugee status or subsidiary protection may be granted permission to remain in Ireland under Section 49 of the International Protection Act 2015 (sometimes referred to as Leave to Remain from earlier legislation).

Programme Refugee A person who has been invited to Ireland by the Government, usually in response to a humanitarian crisis and at the request of the UNHCR.

Refugee A person who is recognised as being a refugee under the criteria set down in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

Stamp Each residence permission type is illustrated by a stamp that has a number. The type of stamp received informs a person what they can do and how long they can stay in Ireland.

Subsidiary Protection A status granted under the International Protection Act 2015 and the International Protection Act 2026 to a person who does not qualify to be a refugee under the Geneva Convention 1951 but who is at risk of serious harm if sent home.

Temporary Protection Directive Special form of protection activated by the EU in March 2022 in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Temporary Residence Permit A document issued by the International Protection Office to asylum seekers. The IPO no longer issues physical Temporary Residence Cards (TRCs). Instead, you will receive a digital certificate in PDF form, known as an International Protection Applicant Certificate (IPA Cert).

(Source: www.irishimmigration.ie/registering-your-immigration-permission/information-on-registering/glossary-of-immigration-terms/)

Glossary of Irish Education Terminology

Term	Acroynm	Explanation
Access	N/A	Various ways Ireland's universities facilitate and support social mobility and entry to higher education for underrepresented groups
Adult Education Service	AES	Full & part-time education courses for adults in key skills areas
Alternative Entry Routes/Pathways	N/A	Ways to qualify to enter university that are different from the traditional Leaving Certificate points entry route
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna	SOLAS	State agency responsible for funding, planning and coordinating training and further education programmes
Central Applications Office	CAO	The Central Applications Office processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish higher education institutions
Child and Family Agency	TUSLA	The state agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children
Education and Training Board	ETB	There are sixteen Educational and Training Boards responsible for delivering primary, post-primary and further education in their regions, and developing appropriate further education and training programmes in conjunction with SOLAS
Further Education	FE	Additional education to that received at secondary school that is distinct from the higher education offered in universities
Further Education & Training	FET	FET covers any education and training after second-level education and up to third-level education (higher level education). FET is for adults and young people aged over 16

Further Education and Training Awards Council	FETAC	A statutory qualification-awarding body for further education in Ireland. It was established on 11 June 2001 and was dissolved, and its functions were passed to Quality and Qualifications Ireland on 6 November 2012
Higher Education	HE	Refers to the level of education that occurs after completing secondary school, typically at universities. It includes undergraduate and postgraduate studies, leading to degrees, diplomas, or certificates in various fields
Higher Education and Training Awards Council	HETAC	HETAC was the qualifications awarding body for 3rd level educational and training institutions outside the university sector up to PhD level between 2001 and 2012
Higher Education Authority	HEA	The statutory body providing policy advice for higher education in Ireland
Higher Education Institution	HEI	Is a type of organisation that provides education and training to students after secondary school level, usually at a university or institute of technology, with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and research opportunities
International Student	N/A	A student who has come from abroad especially to study in Ireland and who is paying the non-EU (international) rate of fees
Mature Student	N/A	Student starting university for the first time who is at least 23 years old
Minimum Entry Requirements	N/A	The lowest level of academic and other qualifications required to gain entry to a particular course or university
National Academic Recognition Information Centre	NARIC	Provides advice on the academic recognition of a foreign qualification by comparing it, where possible, to a major award type and level on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
National Framework of Qualifications	NFQ	A system used to describe the 10 levels of educational qualifications in Ireland
Programme for Access to Higher Education	PATH	A dedicated fund, broken into five strands, committed to increasing participation by underrepresented groups in higher education

Post Leaving Certificate Courses	PLC	Are full-time courses for people who have finished second-level education and for adults returning to education. PLC courses usually last one to 2 years
Quality and Qualifications Ireland	QQI	The state agency responsible for promoting the quality, integrity and reputation of Ireland's further and higher education system
Recognition of Prior Learning	RPL	Is a means by which formal, non-formal and informal learning can be assessed and recognised by a higher education institution. RPL may be used when applying to programmes and courses, for example, micro-credentials, or for exemptions at all levels of the NFQ
Student Universal Support Ireland	SUSI	Ireland's national awarding authority for further and higher education grants. SUSI offers funding to eligible students on approved courses at PLC, undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Ireland
Technological University	TU	A Technological University is a designation of a type of higher education institution in Ireland. The potential for such universities was established through legislation in 2018. Since then, various groups of institutes of technology began a merger process to create five technological universities
Third Level Education	3rd Level	Third-level education in Ireland includes all education after second level, encompassing higher education in universities and colleges and further education on Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) and other courses
University Access/ Foundation Courses	N/A	Access courses are full or part-time courses designed to prepare adults, who may not have formal qualifications, for successful study at university. They equip students with the skills and confidence required to take the next step to selected degree programmes

Understanding Immigration/ Residency Permissions

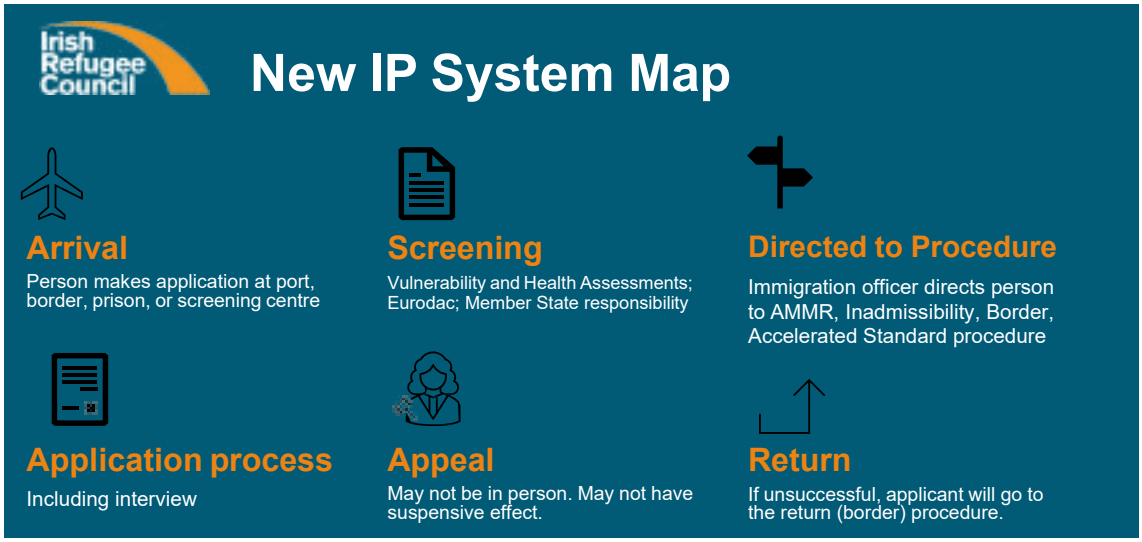
People migrate to Ireland for many different reasons. Migrants come to work, to study, to join family members already living here, as programme refugees or to seek international protection. Regardless of the reason for coming to Ireland, if you are from a country outside the European Union (EU)[1], the United Kingdom (UK) or Switzerland and you want to stay in Ireland for more than 90 days you must have a valid permission to reside in Ireland and you must register this permission.

International Protection Applicants

The procedure for obtaining and registering a residency permission is different for international protection applicants than for other migrants. International protection applicants do not usually apply for permission to enter Ireland in advance. Instead, you must tell the Irish authorities that you are seeking international protection ('claiming asylum') as soon as possible after you arrive in Ireland. Your application for international protection will be assessed by the International Protection Office (IPO). While you are waiting for the decision on your application you are given a digital certificate in PDF form, known as an International Protection Applicant Certificate (IPA Cert). This is proof that you have permission to be in Ireland pending the decision on your international protection application. See diagram below for a summary of the international protection application process.

1 Usually, the same rules that apply to the EU also apply to the European Economic Area (EEA) The EEA is made up of all the EU countries plus Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway.

Figure 1: International Protection Process[2]



AMMR = Asylum and Migration Management Regulation

At the end of the application process, you may be declared to be a refugee, awarded subsidiary protection or be granted permission to remain in Ireland. You must then register this permission with the relevant authority, Immigration Service Delivery (ISD), and receive your Immigration Residence Permit (IRP) card. A sample IRP card is shown in Appendix 1.

If you receive none of these decisions you do not have permission to remain in Ireland and, if any appeal you make is unsuccessful, you may be told to leave Ireland.

For more information on the international protection application process go to the IPO website at ***ipo.gov.ie/***

2 Irish Refugee Council Full overview of the International Protection Process in Ireland Available at ***https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/get-help/information-hub/the-international-protection-process/***

Ukraine and the Temporary Protection Directive

The Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55 EC) was activated by EU Council Decision EU 2022/382 of 4 March 2022, to provide immediate protection in EU countries for people displaced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Irish legislation can be found in section 60 of the Immigration Act 2015, as amended. It applies to Ukrainian citizens, non-Ukrainian family members of Ukrainian citizens, stateless persons, refugees and other recipients of international protection, and their family members, who were living in Ukraine before 24 February 2022 and who were displaced due to the invasion. These displaced people may choose to reside in Ireland under the terms of the Temporary Protection Directive, **or** they may apply for international protection. They cannot do both at the same time.

If you come to Ireland from Ukraine, you must tell the immigration officer at your point of entry that you wish to apply for protection under the Temporary Protection Directive. You will receive a permission letter stating you have been granted this protection. You must also register with Immigration Service Delivery. You will receive an Irish Residence Permit (IRP) card with a Stamp 4 immigration permission.

For more information on the Temporary Protection Directive go to ***gov.ie/en/publication/0f773-temporary-protection/***

Other Migrants

If you are coming to Ireland to work, to study, to join family or as programme refugees you usually need to obtain permission to enter Ireland **before** leaving your country of origin or the country where you are currently living. For example, you may need to apply for a visa, pre-clearance or an employment permit. Once you have arrived in Ireland you then need to register with the relevant authority, Immigration Service Delivery and receive your Irish Residence Permit card.

EU, UK and Swiss citizens do not need to obtain permission before travelling to Ireland and do not need to register with ISD.

For more information on visa requirements for entering Ireland go to ***https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/visas-for-ireland/visa-requirements-for-entering-ireland/***

People migrating to Ireland for different reasons are given different immigration permissions, also known as 'stamps'. The stamp for your immigration permission is shown on your IRP card.

Table 1: Summary of immigration permissions/stamps

Stamp	Who receives it	Permissions
1	Mainly employment permit holders	To work or operate a business.
2 & 2A	International students	To come to Ireland to attend approved courses. Stamp 2 holders may work up to 20 hours per week. Stamp 2A holders may not work at all
3	Family members of work permit holders, volunteers, ministers of religion	To reside in Ireland but cannot work or operate business or trade
4	Refugees, people with subsidiary protection, permission/leave to remain, family member of Irish citizen, refugee or person with subsidiary protection, parent of Irish citizen child, certain employment permit holders after 2 or 5 years	To work or operate business or trade without need for employment permit. May access some State funded courses in AESs, FET colleges and HE institutions
4 EU Fam	Non-EEA Family member of EU citizen	To work or operate business or trade without need for employment permit. May access some State funds
4D	Non-EEA family member of UK citizen	To work or operate business or trade without need for employment permit. May access some State funded courses in AESs, FET colleges and HE institutions

For more information on immigration stamps go to ***https://irishimmigration.ie/registering-your-immigration-permission/information-on-registering/immigration-permission-stamps/***

Immigration Status of Children

A child under 16's immigration status is considered to be the same as that of their parent(s) and the child will have the same rights and entitlements that their parent(s) have based on their residency permission. When you turn 16 you are required to register with Immigration Service Delivery and receive your own IRP card with your immigration permission stamp on it.

Sometimes, you will not be given the same immigration permission as your parent and there are reports of inconsistencies in what stamp a young person might receive.[3] Sometimes, you might be given a stamp 2 (which is for international students) or sometimes a stamp 3. Neither of these stamps provide access to funding for HE courses. If you feel you, or your child, have been given the incorrect residency permission you should raise this as soon as possible with the Department of Justice. It might be helpful to seek advice from one of the organisations in Appendix 6 prior to contacting the Department of Justice.

3 Immigrant Council of Ireland *Child Migration Matters: Children and Young Peoples' Experiences of Migration 2016* Available at ***CMM 2016 Child Migration Matters.pdf***

The Irish Education System

The Irish Education System

The Irish education system is divided into education for children (under 18s) and education for adults (age 16+). You can start a course in a further education & training (FET) college once you are over 16. You can start a higher education course at university from age 17.

Education for Children

Most children living in Ireland, regardless of their immigration status, are entitled to access free education at pre-school, primary school and post-primary schools in Ireland. An exception to this is if you are living in Ireland on a student visa[4].

Figure 2: Education for children in Ireland



Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16. Many children attend free pre-school education before the age of 6[5]. A child cannot leave school until they are 16 and have completed at least 3 years at post-primary level. There are 2 State examinations at post-primary level. The *Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement* examination is taken at the end of third year (usually age 15-16) and the *Leaving Certificate/Leaving Certificate Applied/Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme* examination which is taken at the end of sixth year (usually age 17-18).

4 It is not Government policy to allow family reunification for people in the State on student visas, except for PhD students. PhD students must show that they can financially support their family including having private health insurance and sending their children to fee paying schools

5 The Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE) is a free, universal two-year pre-school programme available to all children within the eligible age range. For more information go to ***https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/publications/early-childhood-care-and-education-programme-ecce/***

Education for Adults

Education for adults is provided at adult education services (AESs), further education and training (FET) colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs), which are institutes of technology and universities. AESs and FET colleges are managed and operated by local Education & Training Boards (ETBs). Some higher education institutions are publicly funded (they receive money from the Government), but others are private. The funding supports discussed in this guide are only available for courses at publicly funded colleges and higher education institutions. See Appendix 4 for a list of publicly funded HEIs.

Access to funded education places for adults may depend on your nationality or immigration status and how long you have lived in Ireland or the EU.

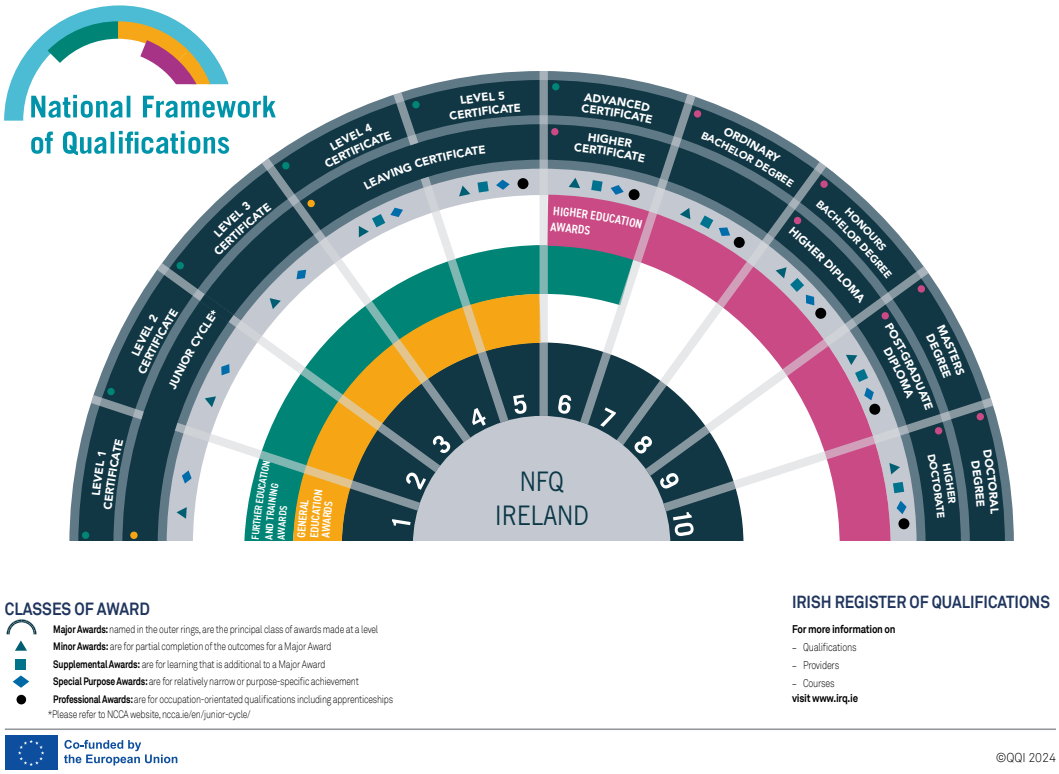
The Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) has 10 levels of education and covers a full range of courses from general literacy and numeracy classes (Levels 1 and 2) to doctoral degrees (Level 10). The NFQ lists the main qualifications awarded at each level and pathways from one NFQ level to the next. The NFQ allows you to compare qualifications to help with your choice of course and the best route to progress.

When people are talking about courses for adults, they usually refer to the NFQ level[6] the course is at. From the NFQ fan below you can see that the *Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement* examination (usually called the Junior Cert) is at Level 3 and the *Leaving Certificate* examination is at Level 5.

For an overview of the Irish education system go to ***citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/overview-of-the-irish-education-system/***

6 NFQ levels may also be referred to as QQI levels. This is because Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the organisation responsible for the promotion, maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

Figure 3: NFQ Levels Represented as a Fan[7]



While the NFQ levels are often represented as a fan, another way to think about these levels is as a ladder. Once you have completed a level, you are considered ready to step-up to the next NFQ level. It is usually only possible to do one State funded course at each NFQ level.

Figure 4: NFQ Levels Represented as a Ladder[8]



7 Available at *qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-01/nfq-fan-poster.pdf*
8 *https://bccns.ie/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/NFQ_Explained.pdf*

Minimum Entry Requirements

After completing their post-primary education many learners continue their studies at either a FET college, an institute of technology or a university. Courses at FET colleges are at Levels 6 and below on the NFQ. Courses at institutes of technology and universities are at Levels 6-10.

When applying to FET colleges a student's educational achievements, work/voluntary experience, hobbies and interests can all be taken into consideration to see if a specific FET course is suitable for a particular student. You may be asked to attend an interview or to submit a portfolio. When applying for higher education courses most students are assessed based on their Leaving Certificate results. Some students may also be asked to attend for interview or to submit a portfolio.

Alternative Entry Routes to Higher Education

If you did not take the Irish Leaving Certificate examination or you did not get the grades you needed for the course you want to do at a higher education institution, there are other ways that you can still meet the minimum entry requirements to do the course you want. You could do a QQI Level 5 or Level 6 course in a FET college, you could do a university access/foundation course or, if you are aged over 23, you can apply to university as a mature student, using a combination of work/voluntary experience, life skills, education/training courses completed and your hobbies and interests.

For more information on these alternative entry routes see **Appendix 2**.

English Language Requirements

If your first language is not English, you will be required to provide evidence of your proficiency in the English language. Each HE institution provides information on their website of accepted qualifications and minimum grade requirements. The certificate you provide must usually be dated no later than 2 years previously.

If your first language is not English but you have previously studied at a certain level through English, some HE institutions may accept this as evidence of your proficiency in the English language. For example, if you have completed the Irish Leaving Certificate or a QQI level 5 or 6 full award.

You should check on the HE institution's website for more information.

How to Get International Educational Qualifications Recognised in Ireland

It may be possible to use educational qualifications you have from another country to gain entry to HE courses in Ireland. Some HE institutions include information on their websites explaining which qualifications from other countries they can accept for entry to their courses.

You can also check the NARIC Ireland website to see if your qualification is listed on their database. If it is, the database will tell you what level on the Irish NFQ your existing qualification is equivalent to. You can download a comparability statement from the NARIC website.

If your qualification is not listed on their database, you can apply online to ask NARIC to do a comparability check for you. There is no charge for this service.

NARIC gives you an indication of the equivalent Irish NFQ level for any qualifications you already have. NARIC does not recognise professional qualifications, such as nursing, teaching etc. To have your international professional qualifications recognised in Ireland you must contact the relevant, Irish professional body.

For more information go to the NARIC website at ***qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=recognitions***

Higher Education Fees Explained

Undergraduate Fees and Charges

HE institutions charge fees for their undergraduate courses. The tuition fee rates are set by each individual higher education institution and so may vary. Information on fees should be available on the websites of each higher education institution.

Fees are made up of 2 elements (a) student contribution and (b) tuition fees. The student contribution fee is the same for all undergraduate students and the maximum rate of the student contribution is €2,500 (this will reduce to €2,350 for 2027-28 academic year).

Tuition fees are divided into EU rate fees and non-EU (international) rate fees. EU rate fees range from €250 - €10,000 per year. Non-EU (international) rate fees range from €11,650 - €46, 000 per year. The student contribution fee is incorporated into the non-EU (international) fee rate. Some higher education institutions may also charge a student levy to cover sports facilities. This levy is usually around €250 per year.

Table 2: Example of Higher Education Fees Per Year

Fee Rate	Student Contribution	Tuition Fees	Student Levy	Total Fees
EU	€2,500	€2,500	€250	€5,250
Non-EU	€0	€21,550	€250	€21,800

Who Qualifies for EU Fee Rates[9]

To qualify for EU tuition fee rate, you must

» Be an EU/EEA, UK or Swiss citizen who has

  » been ordinarily resident in EU/EEA, Switzerland or UK for at least 3 of the 5 years before the start of your course **OR**

  » spent at least 5 years in primary or post-primary school in Ireland

OR

» You previously qualified for the Free Fees Initiative (see below) but you are repeating a year of your course

OR

» You have been tax resident for several years in an EU/EEA member state or Switzerland. This is at the discretion of each higher education institution.

Alternative Entry Routes

If you are considering taking one of the alternative entry routes to higher education for example doing a university access/foundation course or a QQI level 5 or 6 Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course in a FET college, you may have to pay fees for these courses.

» **University Access/Foundation courses** generally these courses are free to attend. However, some may have residency, nationality or immigration status eligibility criteria (see Appendix 3)

» **PLC courses** usually have no tuition fees for Irish, UK and EU/EEA nationals and for people with refugee, subsidiary protection or leave to remain status or for other migrants who have a stamp 4. International protection applicants, who hold a Labour Market Access Permission, do not have to pay tuition fees and are treated the same as Irish, UK or EU/EEA students. All students may have to pay a registration fee. This varies from college to college and is usually between €50-100.

Postgraduate Fees

Post-graduate fees are set by each higher education institution and are also divided into EU rate fees and non-EU (international) rate fees. The criteria to qualify for EU rate postgraduate fees are the same as the criteria set out above for undergraduate fees.

9 *https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/*

Financial Supports for Higher Education in Ireland

Most of the financial supports discussed below have residency, nationality and immigration criteria which you must satisfy to receive the funding. It is important to note that you **must** satisfy **ALL** the criteria. It is not enough to live in Ireland for 3 out of the last 5 years if you do not have the necessary nationality or immigration status. Similarly, having the necessary nationality or immigration status without the required residency period will also exclude you from many funding options. This issue most often affects migrants to Ireland from non-EU/EEA countries, in particular international protection applicants.

The Irish Government provides funding to assist people with the cost of attending FET and HE courses. Some of the financial supports are to help pay your fees and others provide some weekly/monthly income while you are a student. Some of the funding options are targeted at people on low incomes or from communities who are underrepresented in higher education. To qualify for funding, you must satisfy all the eligibility criteria which are different for each funding scheme. The main financial supports are discussed below.

In addition to Government funding, financial supports for education are also available from some charities. These financial supports are for various amounts and have different eligibility criteria. You may find that you are eligible for some of these supports but not for others.

The State and charitable supports are discussed below in order of the application date for each scheme.

Uversity

Uversity is a registered charity that awards scholarships for first time entrants to higher education who are aged 23 or over. The scholarship is available to both full and part-time students, but preference is given to full-time students. The scholarship is €5,000 per year or €7,000 per year for students with dependent children. The scholarship continues for the duration of your undergraduate course.

To be eligible you must;

» be resident on the island of Ireland for 3 out of the last 5 years

» be an EU/EEA, UK or Swiss citizen

» must have a long-term permission to remain in Ireland if you are a non-EU citizen (this **excludes** international protection applicants and Ukrainians under the Temporary Protection Directive)

» have applied to or been offered a place on an undergraduate course at a participating HE institution

To apply you must make an online application via the Uversity website. **The scholarship usually opens for applications at the beginning of February and closes at the end of March. You should apply in the February before you intend to start your course.** Interviews take place between April and June. You should hear the result of your application in July or August.

For more information go to ***uversity.org/***

Student Grant Scheme (SUSI)

The **Student Grant Scheme** is the main financial support scheme for students studying full-time FET and higher education courses in Ireland. It is also known as SUSI because it is administered by Student Universal Support Ireland. It provides both fee grants and maintenance grants. All SUSI grants are income assessed.

Fee Grants may cover some or all the cost of the student contribution fee. SUSI may also pay some or all the cost of tuition fees for eligible students who don't qualify for the Free Fees Initiative.

Maintenance Grants provide a monthly award to help with your living costs. There are 10 different rates depending on your income and distance between your home and FET college or higher education institution. Grants are paid in 9 monthly instalments (during the academic year). The **maximum** grant amount in 2026-27 is €7,936 per year or €881.77 per month. From January 2027, maintenance grants will be increased by 4.5% across every band. From September 2027, families will be eligible for enhanced and new student contribution fee grant supports if they have an income below €150,000 and have more than one child in college.

Progression To qualify for a grant you must be progressing in your education; to the next year of your course or to do a course at a higher NFQ level. Grants will not be paid for students who already have an undergraduate or postgraduate degree (from any country) or for students who are repeating a year on their current undergraduate course.

Residency You must have been ordinarily resident in Ireland, EU/EEA, Switzerland or UK for at least 3 out of the 5 years before the start of your higher education course. If you have lived in Ireland, you may qualify for both a fee and a maintenance grant. If you have lived in the EU/EEA, Switzerland or UK you can only qualify for a fee grant.

Nationality/Immigration Status You must satisfy one of the following criteria:

- Be a citizen of an EU/EEA country, UK, Switzerland
- Have refugee or subsidiary protection status or be the family member of a refugee or person with subsidiary protection status (resident in Ireland under family reunification legislation)
- Be a family member of an EU/EEA or Swiss citizen with Stamp 4 EU Fam
- Have permission to remain based on marriage to, or civil partnership with, an Irish national residing in the State or as a dependent child of such a person
- Have permission to remain in the State as a dependent child of a person who is a naturalised Irish citizen
- Have permission to reside/humanitarian leave to remain
- Certain children of Turkish nationals
- Have availed of the International Protection Regularisation Scheme
- Parent of an Irish Citizen Child who had been issued with a stamp 4 on this basis
- Permission to remain in the State under Section 60 of the International Protection Act 2015 (BOTP)

SUSI grants are income assessed based on your income and the income of your parent(s) or spouse. The income assessed is your income for the previous calendar year. For example, if you are starting college in September 2027, your income for 2026 is assessed.

You must apply online using the SUSI application system which can be found on their website. The application system opens in the spring and the closing date is usually in early November, although there is also a late application option.

For more information go to ***https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/***

Aftercare Allowance

This is a payment for young people who turn 18 in the care of the State and who are continuing with their education. The allowance is €300 per week and is either paid to you directly or it is paid to the supported lodgings provider if you are in placement. It can be paid up to age 23 if you are in education. **The allowance is not paid to international protection applicants**. If you are still under 23 when you receive a positive decision on your international protection application or receive a discretionary leave to remain permission, you may apply for the allowance at that time. The Aftercare Allowance is arranged with the Tusla Aftercare Team.

For more information go to ***https://www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/after-care/tell-me-more-about-financial-support-while-attending-accredited-training-educatio/***

Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)

This is a social welfare payment for people who want to study full-time and who are already receiving a social welfare payment.

There are 2 study options:

(a) Further Education option

(b) Higher Education option

For the HE option, you must attend a full-time approved course at an approved higher education institution. To qualify for this option, you must have been receiving a qualifying social welfare payment for **at least 9 months**. Examples of qualifying payments include *Jobseekers Allowance, Jobseekers Benefit, One Parent Family Payment, Jobseekers Transitional Payment, Disability Allowance, Carer's Allowance*. It is possible to combine time spent on different qualifying payments or on certain other schemes/payments (such as the *Daily Expenses Allowance or the Temporary Protection Weekly Payment*) to make up the required 9 months. However, you must be receiving one of the qualifying payments immediately before you start your course.

You must prove that you continue to qualify for the social welfare payment at the start of each academic year. If your circumstances have changed and you no longer qualify for that payment you will not be eligible for the BTEA. For example, if your qualifying payment was *One Parent Family Payment* and you have married.

It is not possible to receive both the BTEA and a SUSI maintenance grant. However, people on BTEA should apply to SUSI as you may receive a fee grant to cover the cost of the student contribution. People receiving *Jobseekers Allowance or Jobseekeers Benefit* **must** transfer to the BTEA if you want to study full-time. People on other social welfare payments may continue to receive your social welfare payment while you are studying full-time. This means you may receive both a social welfare payment and a SUSI maintenance grant.

The weekly rate of BTEA is the same as the amount of your current social welfare payment. However, if you are aged under 25 and are getting the age reduced rate on your current social welfare payment your BTEA will be paid at the full adult rate (minus any means assessed against you). If you have a dependent child, you may also receive an annual Cost of Education Allowance, currently €500.

To apply you must complete the BTEA paper application form. **You should apply for BTEA before you start your course or within 30 days of the course commencing.**

For more information go to ***https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/***

St Vincent de Paul (SVP) Education and Training Bursary

The bursary (grant) is available to students enrolled on any higher education or training programme at a publicly funded institution. Postgraduate courses are not eligible. It is important to apply for any State funding you might be eligible for first. The amount you receive will depend on your circumstances.

To apply contact your local or regional SVP office. It's important to remember that bursary awards are dependent on the availability of funds, so applying early and submitting all necessary information correctly can increase your chances of receiving support.

For more information go to ***svp.ie/what-we-do/education-grants/***

Credit Union Education Grants

Each year many credit unions award very substantial grant funding to students who will be attending FET or HE courses. The format of these awards varies widely, as do the terms and conditions which apply. Some credit unions base the award on academic qualifications, while others run an open draw. The majority require that the applicant be either a member of the credit union or the son/daughter of a member.

You can only join a credit union (and apply for such schemes) if you live or work in the area served by the credit union. For more information, contact your local credit union.

For more information go to ***https://www.creditunion.ie/blog/credit-union-scholarships-bursaries/***

Open Doors State Street Scholarship Fund

Aimed at enabling students from marginalised communities to reach their education goals. Scholarships of up to €1000 each are awarded to full or part-time students to be used towards the payment of tuition or registration fees ONLY. International protection applicants, refugees and other migrants are eligible to apply.

Applicants must complete an application form, which includes a personal statement (max 500 words) and a video submission (max 2 minutes) explaining why you would benefit from this scholarship.

For more information go to ***https://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie/2026-State-Street-Educational-Scholarship-Fund***

Free Fees Initiative

The tuition fees (not the student contribution) for some **full-time** undergraduate students attending approved courses at eligible institutions may be paid by the State. This means that even if you qualify for free tuition fees you may still have to pay the student contribution fee.

There is no income assessment for this scheme. However, to be eligible you must satisfy certain course progression, residency, nationality and immigration status criteria.

- **Progression** To qualify for this scheme you must be progressing in your education; to the next year of your course or to do a course at a higher NFQ level. Fees will not be paid for students who already have an undergraduate or postgraduate degree (from any country) or for students who are repeating a year on their current undergraduate course.
- **Residency** You must have been ordinarily resident in the EU/EEA, Switzerland or UK for at least 3 of the 5 years before the start of your higher education course
- **Nationality** Students must:
    - be citizens of an EU/EEA country, UK, Switzerland
    - have refugee or subsidiary protection status or be the family member of a refugee or person with subsidiary protection status (resident in Ireland under family reunification legislation)
    - be the family member of an EU citizen with Stamp 4 EU Fam
    - have leave to remain or permission to remain status
    - be a beneficiary of temporary protection (BOTP)

There is no need to make a special application for the Free Fees Initiative. Your higher education institution will assess you and decide if you are eligible based on the criteria set out above.

For more information go to ***hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/course-fees/***

Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)

The FSD provides funding to higher education institutions to ensure students with disabilities have the necessary assistance and equipment to enable them access, fully participate in and successfully complete their chosen course of study. **Funding is given to the HE institution not to the individual student.**

To qualify you must

- have a disability that falls within certain listed categories
- require supports to enable you to fully participate in your course
- be attending a full or part-time HE course of a minimum 1 year's duration
- be legally resident in Ireland for at least 3 of the 5 years up to the start of your course
- be a citizen of an EU/EEA country, UK, Switzerland
- be a non-EU national who is eligible for free or reduced fees in line with the criteria for the Free Fees Initiative (see above)

If you have a disability and require supports to fully participate on your course, you should contact the disability or access office in your HE institution as soon as possible. They will carry out a needs assessment to identify what supports are needed.

For more information go to ***hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/***

TUSLA Education Champions: Bursary scheme for young people with care experience

The scheme provides financial support towards the cost of tuition fees only to a maximum of €2,000 per applicant. You must be at least 18 years of age and have been in the care of the State for a minimum of 6 months. You must not qualify for a SUSI fee grant. There are no nationality/immigration status criteria for this bursary.

Applicants can get an information pack and an application form from the Tusla website and completed applications should be submitted by email. Applications open in early September and close in mid-October.

For more information go to ***tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/after-care/bursary-scheme/***

1916 Bursary

This funding is for first time entrants to a full or part-time undergraduate course whose reckonable household income is below a certain amount. The amount is linked to the income limit for the SUSI Special Rate grant and so may change year to year. The bursary focuses on certain priority groups and only people from these groups can receive the award. Examples of the priority groups include people with disabilities, lone/teen parents, members of the Traveller and Roma communities, QQI award holders, socio-economically disadvantaged communities, members of ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees.

To apply you must have been legally resident in Ireland for 3 out of the previous 5 years. International protection applicants are **not eligible** to apply for this bursary. You must satisfy one of the following criteria.

» Be a citizen of an EU/EEA country, UK, or Switzerland

» Have refugee or subsidiary protection status or be the family member of a refugee or person with subsidiary protection status (resident in Ireland under family reunification legislation)

» Be a family member of an EU/EEA/Swiss citizen with Stamp 4 EU Fam

» Have permission to remain based on marriage to, or civil partnership with, an Irish national residing in the State or as a dependent child of such a person

» Have permission to remain in the State as a dependent child of a person who is a naturalised Irish citizen

» Have permission to reside/humanitarian leave to remain

» Certain children of Turkish nationals

If you are successful, you will receive a bursary (grant) of either €2,000 (Tier 2) or €5,000 (Tier 1), depending on how many of the priority group categories you fall into. These bursaries last for the duration of your undergraduate studies and will continue if you decide to go on to postgraduate studies.

You apply when you are in your first year only and after you have registered as an undergraduate student. Applicants must apply online via the 1916 Bursary Application Portal. Applications usually open in September and the closing date is in mid-October. For more information go to ***1916bursary.ie/***

Student Assistance Fund (SAF)

This fund is for full and part-time students who experience financial difficulties during your studies. It is designed to assist students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds with ongoing financial costs and for all students in emergency situations. It cannot be used to pay course fees. It can be used to pay for other costs such as rent, childcare, books, medical expenses, travel, utility bills and food.

Non-EU (international) rate fee paying students are not eligible for the SAF. Students who are non-EU, including UK nationals, who are eligible for free or reduced fees in line with the criteria for the Free Fees Initiative, may be considered for the SAF. Ukrainian students availing of the Temporary Protection Directive may also apply.

Applications are made to your higher education institution. **Different institutions**

have different application procedures so you should check on your HE institution's website at the start of the academic year for details.

For more information go to ***https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/student-assistance-fund/***

Laptop Loan Schemes

Many higher education institutions have schemes where they loan a laptop to students for the duration of your course. These schemes operate differently in different institutions, but most include an income assessment.

For more information you should look on your institution's website for application details.

National Childcare Scheme (NCS)

This scheme provides financial assistance to parents of children from 6 months up to 15 years of age. There are 2 options (a) a universal subsidy and (b) an income assessed subsidy. The universal subsidy is €2.14 per hour (this rate will increase to €2.50 from September 2027). The income assessed subsidy depends on your individual circumstances such as income, age and number of children. The reckonable income must be less than €68,000 per year to qualify for an income assessed subsidy. You are entitled to the maximum subsidy rates if your reckonable income is €34,000 or less (from September 2027 this amount will increase to €38,500).

To qualify you must;

» Have a legal right to live in Ireland

» Have lived in Ireland for 1 year or intend to live in Ireland for at least 1 year

» Be an EU/EEA, UK or Swiss citizen

» Have immigration status (including international protection applicant and beneficiary of temporary protection)

If you are a student (or working) you qualify for up to 45 hours of subsidised childcare per week. The childcare provider must be registered with Tusla. Subsidies are awarded on a yearly basis and must be renewed annually.

You can apply online on the NCS website. You can also apply by post. Postal applications can take longer to process.

For more information ***citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/***

Immigration Status and Funding Options

As an international protection applicant, you do not satisfy the nationality and immigration criteria for most of the State financial supports (FFI, SUSI, BTEA, 1916 Bursary and FSD – see previous section) and there are restrictions on access to the SAF. You also do not satisfy the nationality and immigration criteria for some charitable funding such as the Uversity Scholarships. In this section we will discuss the funding options available to international protection applicants and to those recipients of international protection who may not meet the residency criteria.

Access to Funded Education for Adult International Protection Applicants

For adult international protection applicants your eligibility for funded education depends on the length of time you have been legally resident in Ireland. Access to funded education can be divided into 3 main time periods.

Table 3: Access to funded education for adult international protection applicants

Time Living in Ireland	Funded Education Options
0-6 months	• English language classes (ESOL) • Literacy & numeracy courses (Levels 1-3) • SAORED & similar short online courses not on NFQ • Community education courses (not on NFQ)
6 months–3 years	You can continue to do the courses in the previous time period as well as some university access/ foundation courses, IF you have a Labour Market Access Permission, you can also do • Post-Leaving Cert (PLC) courses in FET colleges (Levels 5 & 6) • Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) courses (Levels 3-6) • Apprenticeships
3 years and over	You can continue to do the courses in the previous time periods, and you may also qualify for • State funding to attend higher education courses (Levels 6-10) under the International Protection Student Scheme

International Protection Student Scheme (IPSS)

This scheme provides funding for both PLC courses in FET colleges and courses in higher education institutions. Students must have been resident in the State for a continuous period of **3 years or more** (up to the date your course starts) and must be an international protection applicant or a person at the leave to remain stage if you have not had a deportation order issued to you.

The scheme is very similar to the Student Grant Scheme (SUSI) discussed above and it is administered by SUSI. It provides both fee grants and maintenance grants. All grants are income assessed.

Fee Grants Fees up to 100% of the EU rate of fees for approved undergraduate courses to which the Free Fees Initiative (see above) applies or €6,270 for approved undergraduate courses provided in the State to which the Free Fees Initiative does not apply.

Maintenance Grants provide a monthly award to help with your living costs. There are 10 different rates depending on your income and distance between your home and higher education institution. Grants are paid in 9 monthly instalments (during the academic year). The **maximum** grant amount in 2026-27 is €7,936 per year or €881.77 per month.

Grants are income assessed based on the applicant's income and the income of your parent(s) or spouse. The income assessed is your income for the previous year. For example, if you are starting college in September 2027, your income for 2026 is assessed.

Grants will not be paid for students who already have an undergraduate or post-graduate degree (from any country) or for students who are repeating a year on their current undergraduate course.

The deadline for applications is mid-November. Further information and application form is available from ***https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-further-and-higher-education-research-innovation-and-science/services/international-protection-student-scheme-for-fehe-students-20262027/***

Other Funding Options for International Protection Applicants and People with Refugee, Subsidiary Protection and Leave to Remain Status

Most of the State funding, including the IPSS, has a requirement that people must be resident in Ireland or an EU/EEA country, Switzerland or the UK for 3 of the past 5 years. This can mean that applicants for and recipients of international protection who have been living in Ireland for less than 3 years have no access to State funding for higher education courses. You also do not satisfy the residency criteria for some charitable funding such as the Uversity Scholarships

Irish Refugee Council (IRC) Education Fund

This is a charitable fund for international protection applicants and those with refugee, subsidiary protection and leave to remain status. It provides financial assistance to enable people to access further and higher education. The fund is usually only available if you cannot access any other funding.

It opens for applications in July with grants offered in August/September for courses running from September to the following May.

For more information go to the IRC website at ***https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/get-help/services-support/education-programme/***

University Scholarships

Several Irish higher education institutions offer scholarships, without any period of residency requirement, to international protection applicants or to people with refugee, subsidiary protection or leave to remain status. Some of these scholarships come within the University of Sanctuary Initiative and are known as Sanctuary Scholarships. What the scholarship includes varies depending on the higher education institution and there may be slightly different eligibility criteria. Most scholarships waive fees and include a bursary (grant) to help with living expenses. Some scholarships are for undergraduate courses only, some for postgraduate courses only and some include both. Most of these scholarships require that applicants do not qualify for any State funding such as FFI, SUSI or IPSS.

Application procedures and dates vary between the different higher education institutions. You should check on the higher education institutions website to see if they offer any of these scholarships and what the application procedures are.

For more information go to ***irishrefugeecouncil.ie/sanctuary-scholarships***

Access to Funded Education for Adults under the Temporary Protection Directive

From the academic year 2026-27 funding for Ukrainian students living in Ireland under the Temporary Protection Directive (BOTPs) will move away from temporary/emergency supports. From this date eligibility for these supports depends on when you were granted temporary protection, whether you are a new or continuing student and whether you are studying a PLC or a HE course.

Students who were granted temporary protection 3 or more years before the start of the academic year

If you are a **new entrant** to a PLC or HE course, supports may be provided under existing schemes such as the Free Fees Initiative or the Student Grant Scheme (SUSI) (see above). You must meet the relevant eligibility criteria of those schemes to avail of supports.

If you are an **existing student** on a **PLC** course, and you are progressing to the next year of study, the existing PLC Bursary will cease. Students can check eligibility for maintenance supports via the Student Grant Scheme administered by SUSI.

If you are an **existing student** on a **HE** course, and you are progressing to the next year of study you should apply to the Student Grant Scheme (administered by SUSI). You must meet the relevant eligibility criteria to be eligible for support.

If you are an existing student on a HE course, the Temporary Tuition Fee Support Scheme will continue to be in place for the 2026/2027 academic year for eligible BOTPs who are progressing in their undergraduate course. Similarly, The BOTP Stipend will be in place for the 2026/2027 academic year for eligible undergraduate students progressing in their course. Adjacency criteria will be applied. In the case of students in this cohort whose primary address is less than 30kms to their college, the stipend will amount to €3,230 per annum. For those living 30kms or more from their college, it will amount to €7,586 per annum.

For the 2026-7 academic year the PLC Bursary Scheme remains open for existing students going onto year 2 of a PLC course **ONLY**. To be eligible, you need to be an existing registered FET student who was awarded the bursary for year 1 of your SOLAS approved 2-year full-time PLC in the academic year 2025/26 and who is progressing into year 2 of that course in 2026/27.

If you are a new entrant to a PLC or HE course there are no state supports available for you.

For more information go to ***https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/whats-new/changes-to-student-supports-for-ukrainians-with-temporary-protection/***

Funding for Other Migrants

In the previous sections we have described the funding options for some groups of migrants to access higher education. In this section we highlight groups of migrants for whom there are few or no funding options to access higher education courses.

Some Stamp 4 Holders

Not all holders of a Stamp 4 residency permission can avail of the funding options for HE courses discussed above.[10] It is important to know the underlying reason the Stamp 4 was granted. This information will usually be contained in the letter you received from the Department of Justice confirming your permission to reside in Ireland.

In summary, people who have a Stamp 4 residency permission for the following reasons do not have access to funding for higher education courses:

» Non-EEA child(ren) of person granted residency as parent of an Irish citizen child

» De facto partner of Irish citizen or their non-EEA child(ren)

» Previous employment permit holders and their child(ren)

» Exceptional/discretionary grounds (e.g. young people in the care of the State)

Holders of Other Stamps

Holders of other residency permissions also do not have access to funding for higher education courses. These include the following stamp numbers:

Table 4: Stamps which do not allow access to financial supports for higher education

Stamp	Who receives it
1	Mainly employment permit holders
2 & 2A	International students
3	People who have permission to reside in Ireland but do not have permission to work (for example family members of work permit holders)

10 All Stamp 4 holders can do FET courses at NFQ level 6 and below.

Change of Immigration Status and Access to Financial Supports

As we have explained in previous sections most financial supports to attend a higher education institution have nationality and immigration status eligibility criteria. So, what happens if your nationality or immigration status changes after you have started your course? Do your funding options change?

Becoming an Irish Citizen

A change in your nationality status might impact on your access to financial supports if you become an Irish, EU/EEA, UK or Swiss citizen. This guide is only able to provide information on becoming an Irish citizen.

If you were born in Ireland

You can become an Irish citizen if:

» One of your parents was Irish or entitled to be an Irish or British citizen at the time of your birth

» One of your parents was entitled to live in Ireland or Northern Ireland without any restriction on their period of residency

» One of your parents was legally resident on the island of Ireland for 3 out of the 4 years immediately before your birth[11]

» You were not entitled to citizenship of any other country ('stateless')

» You are **under 18** and have legally resided in Ireland for at least 3 years and your parent/guardian makes an application for you to become an Irish citizen. Your application will also depend on your parent/guardian's residency history, so this option is not open to unaccompanied minors.

If you were not born in Ireland

» You are **under 18** and your parent is a naturalised Irish citizen. Your parent can make an application for you to become an Irish citizen if you have legally resided in Ireland for at least 3 years.

11 This does not include residence on a student visa, or residence while awaiting an international protection decision or residence under a declaration of subsidiary protection

» You are **over 18**. You can make an application to become a naturalised Irish citizen if you have been legally resident in Ireland for at least 5 years.[12]

» If you **over 18** and are married to an Irish citizen. You can make an application to become a naturalised Irish citizen if you have lived in Ireland for 3 years up to the date of your application for citizenship.

This is a complicated application process which can cost between €175 to €1,125 to complete. It is recommended that you seek advice before applying.

For more information go to ***citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/irish-citizenship/becoming-an-irish-citizen-through-naturalisation/***

Uversity

This scholarship is for students who are first time entrants to an undergraduate programme in the current academic year. You apply in the February before the first year of your course starts and you cannot apply in subsequent years. A change of nationality/immigration status later in your course will not make you eligible for this funding.

Student Grant Scheme (SUSI)

This scheme has a 'Change of Circumstances' clause. This applies, amongst other things, to a change of nationality or immigration status. SUSI normally assesses your application based on your situation in the last full, calendar year. However, if you have experienced a relevant change in circumstances in the current calendar year you may apply for your application to be assessed/reassessed under a change in circumstances using your SUSI student portal.

12 If you are aged between 18-23 and in full-time education, you can make a 'young adult application' where you can combine your immigration stamps with those of one of your parents to make up the 5 year of stamps required. This option is not open to unaccompanied minors.

Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)

If you are an international protection applicant, who is studying full-time, and you then receive either refugee, subsidiary protection or leave to remain status after the start of the academic year you are entitled to apply for BTEA. If your change of status occurs at the mid-point of an academic year, the BTEA can be awarded from the **date you have received this permission**.

To qualify you must have been receiving the Direct Provision Allowance and show that you are or would be eligible for a qualifying social welfare payment.

Free Fees Initiative

This scheme includes a *'Change of Nationality'* clause. This applies to you if you did not meet the nationality/immigration status criteria at the start of your course, but you become an EU/EEA citizen, including an Irish citizen, during your HE course. To avail of this clause, you must have met all the other eligibility criteria to qualify for the scheme **at the start of your course**.

» If you acquire EU/EEA citizenship up to 31st January in an academic year you may be entitled to free tuition fees from the second half of the academic year.

» If you acquire EU/EEA citizenship from 1st February, you may be entitled to free tuition fees from the commencement of the next academic year.

Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)

HE institutions endeavour to provide supports and reasonable accommodations for students with additional needs, whether or not you meet the nationality and immigration status criteria of the FSD. A change of status might mean the HE institution receives funding from the FSD (subject to meeting other eligibility criteria), but it should not negatively impact the supports you receive.

1916 Bursary

This bursary is for students who are first time entrants to an undergraduate programme in the current academic year including students entering directly to year 2 via the advanced entry route. You apply in the first year of your course and you cannot apply in subsequent years. The application date is mid-September–mid-October every year and so a change of nationality/immigration status later in your course will not make you eligible for this funding.

Student Assistance Fund (SAF)

If you started your course paying non-EU (international) rate tuition fees you remain on this rate of fees for the duration of your course. It does not matter if you have a change of nationality/immigration status. Students paying the non-EU (international) rate tuition fees are not eligible for the SAF.

National Childcare Scheme (NCS)

The eligibility criteria for this scheme are quite broad and include having a legal right to reside in Ireland and having lived in Ireland for 1 year or intending to live in Ireland for 1 year. A change of nationality/immigration status is unlikely to impact your ability to access this funding.

International Protection Student Support Scheme

When you progress to the next year of your course you can reapply for the IPSS if you are still an international protection applicant or at the leave to remain stage. If you have received a positive decision on your international protection or leave to remain application, you cannot reapply for the IPSS. If you have the required 3 years residency you should now apply to the FFI and SUSI. If you don't, you should contact the Irish Refugee Council or apply for a university scholarship. If you have been issued with a deportation order you cannot reapply for the IPSS.

Irish Refugee Council (IRC) Education Fund

This funding is aimed at people who cannot access State supports. If your change of nationality/immigration status means that you are now eligible for State funding under another scheme you will not be prioritised for funding from the IRC

SVP Education and Training Bursary

TUSLA Education Champions: Bursary scheme for young people with care experience

Laptop Loan Schemes

Credit Union Education Grants

Open Doors State Street Scholarship Fund

These schemes have no nationality/immigration status eligibility criteria so a change of status will have no impact on your ability to access this funding.

Funding for Springboard+, Postgraduate and Part-Time Study

Springboard+

The primary objective of Springboard+ is to provide upskilling and reskilling courses to develop the talent base in Ireland in key growth sectors of the economy. Courses are at NFQ levels 6-9 and are part-time or blended learning. Courses are free if you are receiving certain social welfare payments or if you have been out of the workforce due to childcare or other caring responsibilities for a specified period of time.

Springboard+ courses have residency and nationality/immigration status criteria. You must

» Be living full-time in the Republic of Ireland and have valid PPSN.

» Have a Stamp 4, Stamp 5, or Stamp 6 on your IRP card. This includes those who are resident here on a Stamp 4 based on:

- having permission to remain in Ireland as a family member of an EU citizen **or**
- having official Refugee/Subsidiary Protection status in Ireland/being here based on refugee family reunification **or**
- having been granted Humanitarian Leave to Remain in the State (prior to the Immigration Act 1999) **or**
- having permission to remain following the Minister's decision not to make a deportation order.

» Have been ordinarily resident in the EU/EEA/UK/Switzerland for 3 full years out of previous 5 years on a qualifying visa stamp.

Ukrainian applicants who are in employment or returning to the workforce, including BOTPs must meet the residency requirement, i.e. have lived in the EU/ EEA/ UK/ Switzerland for 3 out of previous 5 years, to be eligible to enrol on a Springboard+ course.

All applicants who are in receipt of a qualifying DSP payment (see Springboard website for details) do not have to meet the nationality or residency requirements above.

Applications for Springboard+ courses usually open in June, although some courses also take applications at other times of the year. You apply online via the Springboard+ website. If you are receiving a social welfare payment you should contact your local Intreo office as well.

Springboard+ students may apply for the Student Assistance Fund (SAF), Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD), Laptop Loan Schemes (may be some restrictions), National Childcare Scheme, Aftercare Allowance and TUSLA Education Champions: Bursary scheme for young people with care experience.

All these funding supports have the same eligibility criteria, including residency and nationality/immigration status criteria, as outlined in the sections above.

For more information go to ***citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/***

Postgraduate Funding Options

State funding for postgraduate courses is available, depending on your nationality or immigration status, under either the

» Student Grant Scheme (SUSI) **or**

» International Protection Student Scheme (IPSS)

Registered postgraduate students may apply for the Student Assistance Fund (SAF), Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD), Laptop Loan Schemes, National Childcare Scheme, and Bursary for Care Experienced Young People

All these funding supports have the same eligibility criteria, including residency and nationality/immigration status criteria, as outlined in the sections above.

Note: You will not be able to receive the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) unless you are studying for one of the following:

» Level 8 Higher Diploma (H. Dip.) in any discipline

» Level 9 Professional Master in Education (PME) for post-primary teaching

» Level 9 Master's degree where you don't have a third level qualification, and the college has admitted you based on relevant life experience

For more information go to ***https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/postgraduate-student-grant***

Part-Time Funding Options

Most of the funding options discussed previously are aimed at full-time students. The FFI and the Student Grant Scheme are not available to part-time students.

However, from the academic year 2024-25 a *Student Part-Time Fee Scheme* was introduced for a list of specified part-time undergraduate courses only. This scheme is administered by SUSI and has the same residency and nationality/immigration status eligibility criteria as the Student Grant Scheme (see above). You must apply online using the SUSI application system which can be found on their website.

The BTEA is not available for part-time courses. If you are currently receiving either Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobseeker's Benefit, Jobseeker's Benefit (Self-Employed) or Jobseekers Pay Related Benefit you may be able to take up the *Part-Time Education Option* which will enable you to continue to receive a social welfare payment while studying part-time. The Department of Social Protection must be satisfied that the course is likely to improve your chance of finding employment. To apply you need to fill in a paper application form PTE01.

If you are receiving another type of social welfare payment you should be able to take up part-time studies without it affecting your social welfare payment. You should confirm this with the Department of Social Protection before you start any course.

Part-time HE students may apply for the 1916 Bursary, Student Assistance Fund (SAF), Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD), Laptop Loan Schemes, National Childcare Scheme, Uversity Scholarship, SVP Education Bursary and IRC Education Fund.

All these funding supports have the same eligibility criteria, including residency and nationality/immigration status criteria, as outlined in the sections above.

For more information go to ***https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/part-time-fee-scheme-for-undergraduate-courses/***

Tax Relief on Tuition Fees

If you are working and paying tax, you may claim tax relief on any fees you pay for full or part-time HE courses. You can claim the tax relief for fees paid for yourself or for fees you paid for another person (for example your child). Maximum amount of fees that qualify for tax relief is €7000 (from the 2027-28 academic year the threshold for tax relief on tuition fees will be reduced, so that it aligns with the current rate of the student contribution). Tax relief is given at the standard rate of 20%.

» For full-time students there is no tax relief available for the first €3000 of fees paid in each tax year

» For part-time students there is no tax relief available on the first €1,500 of fees paid in each tax year

» However, if you are paying fees for more than one student you will be able to claim tax relief on the full amount of fees for the second and subsequent students

To apply you can claim using your Revenue My Account or ROS service or by completing and submitting application form IT35

For more information go to ***https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/***

How to Apply for Your Course

Courses in FET Colleges

If you want to do a course at QQI Level 6 or below you should apply directly to the FET college. Once you have found the course you are interested in you should go to the college's website and apply directly to the college. You can apply to more than one college at a time. However, you may be asked to pay a reservation fee of €50 to keep your place on each course. You may be asked to attend an interview and/or to submit a portfolio. You should check on the college website for details of the closing date for your course.

For information on PLC courses go to ***https://www.qualifax.ie/***

University Access/Foundation Courses

Not every university offers access/foundation courses. You should check on the university website to see if the university you are interested in offers this type of course. Information on how to apply should also be available on their website. You apply directly to the university. Each university has different application procedures and closing dates. You may be asked to fill in a form, write a short essay or personal statement or attend an interview. You should check on the college website for details of the closing date for your course. See appendix 3 for a list of universities who offer access/foundation courses.

Note: You might find some international foundation programmes on offer for €15,000 for one year, and these programmes often guarantee you a place in university. If you get to university via this route, you will have to pay the non-EU (international) rate fees for the duration of your degree (even if your nationality/ immigration status changes during this time) and you will not be eligible for any State funding or for Sanctuary Scholarships.

Undergraduate Degrees

In most cases, to apply for a full-time undergraduate degree course in Ireland, you do not apply directly to the higher education institution. Instead, you apply via the Central Applications Office (CAO) website. The CAO website has a comprehensive handbook (available online or, by request, on paper) which lists all the undergraduate courses on offer in every higher education institution in Ireland. You can also search HE institutions' websites for courses by either subject area or name of higher education institution. CAO also has a range of resources to help with your application. If you are applying for entry based on school leaving qualifications you obtained abroad, CAO has information on whether these qualifications meet the minimum entry requirements for the higher education institutions.

CAO has **very strict deadlines** for submitting your application, sending required documentation and for changing your application. **There is an early application deadline, with a reduced fee, in mid-January. The normal closing date is the 1 February and there is a late closing date, with a higher fee, on 1 May.**

For part-time undergraduate degree courses, you must apply directly to the higher education institution so you should check on their website for details of how and when to apply.

For more information on applying via CAO go to ***cao.ie/***

Postgraduate Degrees

For both full and part-time postgraduate degrees, you must apply directly to the higher education institution so you should check on their website for details of how and when to apply.

Checklist of Things to Consider Before Applying to University

This is a summary of what you need to investigate if you are thinking about going to university. It will help you to decide if you are ready to apply now or at some point in the future and to discover if you will be eligible for financial assistance either from the State or from some other donor.

» What course(s) are you interested in?

» What are the minimum academic entry requirements for this course(s)?

» Do your existing educational qualifications meet these entry requirements?

» If not, what additional qualifications do you need and how can you obtain these qualifications?

» What, if any, are the additional/alternative entry routes for your course(s)?

» Do you meet the minimum English language requirements?

» If not, how can you obtain the required level?

» Is the university you are considering publicly funded or is it private?

» Do you satisfy the nationality/immigration status eligibility criteria for State financial assistance?

» What other options for financial assistance do you have now?

» Is your nationality/immigration status going to change in the future? When?

» Will this change mean you will satisfy the nationality/immigration status eligibility criteria for state financial assistance?

» If you must wait a year (or more) before you will be eligible for State financial assistance, what can you do to progress your education until then?

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Irish Residence Permit (IRP) Card[13]

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13 From *New Irish Residence Permit cards introduced - Immigration Service Delivery*

Appendix 2: Alternative Entry Routes to University

PATHWAYS TO UNIVERSITY

Choose a path that describes you



I have a Qualification



Apply using your Leaving Certificate or QQI Level 5 or 6 qualification.

I have Relevant Experience



If you are 23+, apply using your current qualifications, volunteering, work and life experience.

I don't have a Qualification or Relevant Experience



Apply for a QQI Level 5 or 6 programme or a University preparation programme.

- Find out about the **financial supports and grants** available.
- Find out how to apply as a **mature student** or the entry routes available if you are **under 23**.
- **Choose** the right universities and courses for you.

Apply to University



Useful Websites:

Access Entry Routes for under 23s:	iua.ie
Adult Career Guidance Service:	etbi.ie
Information on Courses:	qualifax.ie
Financial Supports:	citizensinformation.ie
International Qualifications (NAIRC):	qqi.ie/what-we-do
Mature Student Entry:	CAO.ie
University Preparation Programme:	tudublin.ie/access-foundation-programme

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
TU DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

PATH

Appendix 3: University Access/Foundation Programmes

University	Access/Foundation Courses	Further Information
Atlantic Technological University	Certificate in Access for Higher Education	*Access for Higher Education - Atlantic Technological University*
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	Teacher Education Access Programme (TEAP)	*Teacher Education Access Programme (TEAP) | Mary Immaculate College*
	Pre-University Programme for Mature Learners	*Pre-University Programme for Mature Learners | Mary Immaculate College*
Maynooth University	Certificate in Return to Learning	*RETURN TO LEARNING CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME | Maynooth University*
Trinity College Dublin	Trinity Access Programme (TAP) Young Adults	*Foundation Course - Trinity Access Programmes, Trinity Teaching & Learning - Trinity College Dublin*
	Trinity Access Programme (TAP Mature Students	*Mature Students - Trinity Access Programmes, Trinity Teaching & Learning - Trinity College Dublin*
Technological University Dublin	Access Foundation Programme	*Access Foundation Programme (TU699) | TU Dublin*
Technological University of the Shannon	Access Programme Certificate (full-time)	*Access Programme (Certificate) - TUS*
	Transition to Higher Education (part-time)	*Transition to Higher Education (Certificate, L6, 20 ECTS) - TUS*

University	Access/Foundation Courses	Further Information
University College Dublin	UCD Access to Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Law (AHSSL)	*Access to Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Law (AHSSL) - UCD Access and Lifelong Learning*
	SEAM+ - UCD Access to Science, Engineering, Agricultural Science, Computer Science, Medicine and Veterinary Medicine	*Access to Science, Engineering, Agricultural Science and Medicine (SEAM) - UCD Access and Lifelong Learning*
University of Galway	Access and Foundation Programmes	*https://www.universityofgalway.ie/access/entryroutes/accessand-foundationprogrammes/*
University of Limerick	Access to University Course	*Access to University Course AUC | University of Limerick*

Appendix 4: List of publicly funded higher education institutions

Publicly Funded Higher Education Institutions	
Higher Education Institution	**Acronym**
Atlantic Technological University	ATU
Dublin City University	DCU
Dundalk Institute of Technology	DKIT
Institute of Art, Design and Technology	IADT
Maynooth University	MA
Munster Technological University	MTU
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland University of Medicine and Health Sciences	RCSI
South East Technological University	SETU
Technological University Dublin	TU Dublin
Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest	TUS
Trinity College Dublin (University of Dublin)	TCD
University College Dublin	UCD
University College Cork	UCC
University of Galway	UCG
University of Limerick	UL

Appendix 5: Entitlements for International Protection Applicants, Recipients of International Protection & People with Temporary Protection Directive who are interested in progressing to Higher Education

Status	Free Fees	SUSI	1916	International Protection Student Scheme	Sanctuary Scholarships	National Childcare Scheme	PLC Bursary Ukraine (Closed to new entrants)	Temporary Tuition Fee Support (Closed to new entrants)
Refugee (Stamp 4)	Yes - if resident in Ireland for 3 years since date of application for IP	Yes - if you have been legally resident in Ireland for 3 years	Yes – if you have been resident in Ireland for 3 years	Not eligible	Yes – if you are not eligible for any other State supports e.g. SUSI	Yes	Not eligible	Not eligible
Subsidiary Protection (Stamp 4)	Yes – if you have been living in Ireland for 3 years since date of decision on IP application	Yes - if you have been legally resident in Ireland for 3 years	Yes – if you have been resident in Ireland for 3 years	Not eligible	Yes – if you are not eligible for any other State supports e.g. SUSI	Yes	Not eligible	Not eligible
Leave to Remain (Stamp 4)	Yes – if you have been living in Ireland for 3 years since date of decision on IP application	Yes - if you have been legally resident in Ireland for 3 years	Yes - if you have been resident in Ireland for 3 years	Not eligible	Maybe - if you are not eligible for any other State supports e.g. SUSI. Depends on scholarship/ University	Yes	Not eligible	Not eligible
International Protection Applicant	Not eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible	Yes - if you have not received a decision on your application after 3 years	Yes – if you are not eligible for any other State supports. e.g. IPSS	Yes	Not eligible	Not eligible
Temporary Protection Directive (Ukraine)	Yes - if resident in Ireland for 3 years since date you became a BOTP	Yes - if resident in Ireland for 3 years since date you became a BOTP	Not eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible	Yes	Yes - if you became a BOTP less than 3 years ago and you are a continuing student moving to the 2nd year of a 2 year SOLAS approved FET course and you received bursary funding in the 2025-6 academic year	Yes - if you became a BOTP less than 3 years ago and you are a continuing student on a HE course and received this support in previous years.
International Protection Regularisation Scheme	Not eligible (But fees may be covered by SUSI if person qualifies for SUSI grant)	Yes - if have been legally resident in Ireland for 3 years	Yes - if have been legally resident in Ireland for 3 years	Not eligible	Not eligible	Yes	Not eligible	Not eligible

Appendix 6: Useful Organisations

Organisation	Website
Citizens Information	*citizensinformation.ie*
Crosscare Migrant Project	*migrantproject.ie*
Doras	*doras.org*
FET Guidance Service	*https://www.etbi.ie/fet-guidance/contact-a-local-fet-guidance-service/*
Immigrant Council of Ireland	*immigrantcouncil.ie*
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	*ihrec.ie*
Irish Refugee Council	*irishrefugeecouncil.ie*
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland	*mrci.ie*
Nasc	*nascireland.org*



PATH
Programme for Access
to Higher Education

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS