

Studying in Ireland

A guide for international students & families — how Irish higher education works, the student visa and IRP registration, applying, costs, and the Third Level Graduate Scheme for post-study work.

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ENGLISH-SPEAKING, IN THE EU

Ireland offers a rare combination: an **English-speaking, EU education** with globally ranked universities, Europe's biggest tech hub (Google, Apple, Meta, Microsoft), and one of the most generous **post-study work schemes** around. The path runs through a **student visa (if required)** and **IRP registration**. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. Irish immigration rules, the funds requirement, and tuition change. The figures here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with Immigration Service Delivery (ISD), Education in Ireland, and your institution.**

Understand Why Students Choose Ireland

WHAT TO KNOW

Ireland offers an **English-speaking, EU degree; globally ranked universities; Europe's biggest tech hub; and a standout post-study work scheme** (up to two years). Tuition is often **lower than the UK**, and the culture is famously welcoming.

BY THE NUMBERS

English + EU

a rare combination

Tech hub

Google, Apple, Meta, Microsoft

Graduate scheme

up to 2 years

HOW TO HELP

Weigh Ireland's **English-language EU education and generous graduate scheme** against tuition and the housing market — for many, it's a compelling UK alternative.

GOOD TO KNOW

Ireland kept its generous **graduate work scheme** even as the UK tightened its own — a real post-study advantage.

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

Irish higher education includes **universities, technological universities/institutes of technology, and private colleges**, all quality-assured under **QQI**. Degrees are in the National Framework of Qualifications (e.g., Level 8 honours bachelor's, Level 9 master's).

BY THE NUMBERS

Universities

+ technological universities

QQI

quality assurance

NFQ levels

8 bachelor, 9 master

HOW TO HELP

Choose among **universities, technological universities, and colleges** — all QQI-accredited — and note the NFQ level of your program (it affects the graduate scheme).

GOOD TO KNOW

Your program's **NFQ level** matters — it determines how long you can stay under the graduate scheme (below).

Understand the Student Visa

WHAT TO KNOW

Non-EEA students from **visa-required countries** need a **long-stay “D” study visa** for programs over 3 months, applied for online before travel. Students from visa-exempt countries (US, Canada, and others) don’t need the visa but **still must register on arrival**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Long-stay “D”

if visa-required

Apply online

before travel

Visa-exempt

still register

HOW TO HELP

Check whether **your nationality needs the “D” visa**; if so, apply online with your acceptance, funds proof, and insurance — and either way, plan to register on arrival.

WATCH OUT

Even visa-exempt students **must register** for an IRP after arriving — it’s not optional.

Register for Your IRP

WHAT TO KNOW

All non-EEA students studying more than 3 months must **register with Immigration Service Delivery (ISD)** within about 90 days of arrival to get an **Irish Residence Permit (IRP)** card, endorsed with **Stamp 2** (which permits part-time work).

BY THE NUMBERS

Register with ISD

within ~90 days

IRP card

posted to you

Stamp 2

permits work

HOW TO HELP

Book your **ISD registration** promptly after arrival, bring your documents, and pay the registration fee — your IRP (Stamp 2) is your legal permission to study and work.

WATCH OUT

The IRP registration has a fee (recently ~€300) and must be done on time — keep the card with you.

Apply to Institutions

WHAT TO KNOW

Undergraduate applications typically go through the **CAO** (Central Applications Office); postgraduate applications are usually **direct to each institution**. Credential recognition runs through **NARIC Ireland**. Main intakes are September and January.

BY THE NUMBERS

CAO

undergraduate applications

Direct

for postgraduate

NARIC Ireland

credential recognition

HOW TO HELP

Apply via the **CAO** (undergrad) or directly (postgrad), check credential recognition with **NARIC Ireland**, and note the September and January intakes.

GOOD TO KNOW

Undergrad international applicants often apply via the **CAO** — confirm the route for your specific program.

Meet English & Admissions Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

Programs are **taught in English**, so you'll prove English (e.g., **IELTS**) unless exempt, plus meet each institution's academic requirements. Entry requirements are set individually by each institution.

BY THE NUMBERS

English

IELTS etc. (English-taught)

Academic

set per institution

Documents

transcripts + more

HOW TO HELP

Prepare your **English scores and academic documents**, and check each institution's specific entry requirements — they vary.

GOOD TO KNOW

Ireland is English-speaking, so degrees are in English — you'll typically need an accepted English test unless exempt.

Plan for Costs & Funding

WHAT TO KNOW

Non-EU tuition is significant: roughly **€10,000–25,000/year (undergraduate)** and **€12,000–35,000 (postgraduate)**, varying by course — often **lower than the UK**. Scholarships come from the Government of Ireland and institutions.

BY THE NUMBERS

Undergrad

~€10k–25k/year

Postgrad

~€12k–35k/year

Scholarships

Govt of Ireland & unis

HOW TO HELP

Budget the **non-EU tuition plus living costs**, and pursue scholarships (Government of Ireland, university awards) — tuition is often lower than comparable UK study.

GOOD TO KNOW

Non-EU tuition varies by course and institution — compare when shortlisting, and apply for scholarships early.

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

You must prove **access to funds** — recently about **€10,000 for the first year's living costs** (courses over a year), plus tuition. Shorter courses use a monthly figure. You also need **private medical insurance**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds

~€10,000/year

+ tuition

paid/proven

Insurance

private medical

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of funds** at the current threshold plus tuition, and arrange **private medical insurance** — both are required for registration and the visa.

WATCH OUT

The funds figure (recently ~€10,000/year) is **set by immigration and can change** — confirm the current amount.

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

Arrange **accommodation (competitive)**, **private medical insurance**, and a **bank account**, and get a **Student Leap Card** for discounted transport. Housing in Dublin especially is tight and costly — start early.

BY THE NUMBERS

Accommodation

competitive — start early

Medical insurance

required

Leap Card

discounted transport

HOW TO HELP

Sort **accommodation early** (especially in Dublin), arrange required medical insurance, and pick up a Student Leap Card — then complete your ISD registration.

WATCH OUT

Dublin housing is **tight and expensive** — secure accommodation before you arrive if you can.

Thrive & Work

WHAT TO KNOW

On Stamp 2 you can work **up to 20 hours/week during term (40 in holidays)**. After graduating, the **Third Level Graduate Scheme (Stamp 1G)** lets you stay to work — **12 months (Level 8)** or **up to 24 months (Level 9/10)**, with no employer sponsorship needed.

BY THE NUMBERS

Work

20 hrs/week in term

Graduate Scheme

12–24 months

No sponsor

needed initially

HOW TO HELP

Use your **work rights** during study, and plan for the **Third Level Graduate Scheme** after graduating — it's a generous path to Irish work experience and, potentially, a Critical Skills permit.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **Third Level Graduate Scheme** (1–2 years, no employer sponsor needed) is one of the best post-study offers anywhere — plan to use it.

Studying in Ireland: The Essentials

A snapshot — figures change, so confirm everything with Immigration Service Delivery (ISD), Education in Ireland, and your institution.

The system

Universities, technological universities/institutes, and colleges, all QQI-accredited; English-taught; NQF levels (8 honours bachelor, 9 master); Sept & Jan intakes.

Visa & registration

Visa-required non-EEA students need a long-stay “D” study visa before travel; all non-EEA students register with ISD within ~90 days for an IRP (Stamp 2).

Applying & English

Undergrad via the CAO, postgrad directly; credential recognition via NARIC Ireland; prove English (IELTS etc.) as it's an English-taught, English-speaking country.

Money

Non-EU tuition ~€10k–25k (undergrad) / €12k–35k (postgrad), often below the UK; prove funds (~€10,000/year) plus tuition; private medical insurance required; scholarships available.

Work & after

Stamp 2 allows 20 hrs/week in term (40 in holidays); the Third Level Graduate Scheme (Stamp 1G) allows 12–24 months of post-study work with no employer sponsorship needed.

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