



Higher Education Undergraduate Information Guide: UK-Ireland

Prepared by British Council Ireland
with the support of the British Embassy in Ireland

Foreword

This guide was prepared by British Council Ireland, with the support of the British Embassy in Ireland. It has been developed to help support available information on pathways to accessing higher education as an Irish student studying in the UK, or indeed as a student from the UK studying in Ireland.

When putting together this piece of work it was first important to identify areas where there was a lack of understanding in relation to student mobility between Ireland and the UK. The areas identified, and researched for the purpose of this guide, were around the Common Travel Area and how it relates to student mobility, and student financing. It was found that there was a knowledge gap as to what the Common Travel Area meant for students and this, in turn, led to some confusion around the correct application and financing processes, both when it came to Irish students who wished to study in the UK and students from the UK who wished to study in Ireland.

Therefore, this guide was researched and designed with these queries in mind. It explains the Common Travel Area, the procedures and processes in place and breaks down the Common Travel Area and what that means when it comes to applying to higher education institutions in Ireland and the UK. It also explains the process for transferring of points from an Irish to a UK system and vice versa and offers guidance on possible visa requirements for students that are not citizens of the UK, EU, EEA or Switzerland.

We hope you find the guide useful and please note that all links and advice are current at time of publication. The British Council in Ireland would like to thank all those who contributed to, and gave feedback on, this guide and other associated materials.

Dr Kerry McCall Magan,

British Council Ireland

COMMON TRAVEL AREA

What it means for higher education students in Ireland and the UK

The **Common Travel Area (CTA)** is an arrangement between the UK¹ and Ireland that gives a variety of rights to citizens of those countries. It includes the right to travel freely between both countries and the right to equal higher education access between both countries. The CTA is an arrangement between the UK and Ireland and is not based on legislation or membership of the European Union. In 2019, the Irish and UK governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding reaffirming the Common Travel Area and identifying the rights and privileges of Irish and British citizens within the CTA.

The CTA gives Irish and UK citizens the right to access all levels of education and training, and associated student support, such as student loans, in each other's country, on terms no less favourable than those for the citizens of that country². To be eligible, prospective students must be resident in Ireland, the UK or Crown Dependencies for 3 years before the start of their course. Find more information in **Studying in the UK including Northern Ireland**.

If Irish citizen students meet the **residency criteria**, they can study in the UK for the same rate of fees as home students. They can also apply for a tuition loan in the UK, but not a maintenance grant. In some cases, students are eligible for the **Irish government maintenance grant** to study in the UK.

¹ The CTA covers England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-travel-area-guidance>.

² For UK students studying in Ireland this would mean a fee of €3,000 per college year. For Irish students studying in the UK this fee would vary. Find out more about UK fees [here](#). To note that Irish undergraduate students studying in Scotland pay the same fees as UK students from outside of Scotland.



APPLICATION PROCESS

Irish students to UK universities

UCAS (University and Colleges Admissions Service) is the central applications body for full-time undergraduate courses at UK universities and colleges. Its website contains all the information students need to apply to a UK higher education provider including how to apply, fees and information about the universities/colleges. UCAS is the most common way students apply for courses in the UK. On the UCAS website, students can apply through their school or as an individual. Irish students who wish to apply to UK institutions through UCAS can find out more about application deadlines for various institutions [here](#).³ Some universities allow students to apply directly and it is necessary to check this with each university.

³ Specific dates vary year to year, but general deadlines are October for any course at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or for most courses in medicine, veterinary medicine/science, and dentistry, and January for the majority of other courses.



UCAS TARIFF CALCULATOR

Transferring Irish Qualifications to UK Points System

The **UCAS Tariff calculator** is a points system used for entry to higher education provider in the UK. It allows students from Ireland to compare their Leaving Certificate qualifications with UK General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A Level) grades. A Leaving Certificate subject at honours level is approximately equivalent to two-thirds of an A level.

UCAS Tariff points are allocated to qualifications generally studied between the ages of 16 to 18. Students can enter their most relevant academic achievements – i.e. their highest qualifications, be it Leaving Certificate scores or other diplomas – to the Tariff calculator to find their Tariff points. They can then **search by course/region/study level** to find relevant courses that match their Tariff point score. It is worth noting that not all institutions will use the Tariff to express entry requirements, and that they will instead list specific grades. Some qualifications will not be listed on the Tariff calculator, although higher education providers may still accept them. If this is the case, simply **check the entry requirements** for the specific courses of interest.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Irish students applying to UK universities

Irish citizen undergraduate students, who meet the **residency criteria**, can study in the UK for the same rate of fees as UK students and may be eligible for a maintenance grant under the **Irish Student Grant Scheme**. Fees and available funding across the UK do vary, however, depending on whether they choose to study in England, Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland. More detailed information on the range of Irish government grants and funds for Irish citizen students who want to apply to UK for further and higher education providers is available [here](#).

England and Wales: UK universities and colleges charge new students⁴ up to £9,250⁵ a year for undergraduate courses. Irish students can apply for a **tuition fee loan** which has to be repaid after students have graduated.⁶ If the student leaves their programme early, the loan still has to be repaid. Irish students are not entitled to maintenance support in the same way as UK home students. Irish students may be eligible for a maintenance grant if they meet the criteria for the **Irish Student Grant Scheme**. Irish students will only be entitled to UK home student financial maintenance if they have been settled in the the UK or Crown Dependencies for over 3 years. The **Student Finance England** and the **Student Finance Wales** pages of the UCAS website contain more detailed information on funding available.

4 Part-time students can also avail of a loan if they are studying at a rate of at least 25% of an equivalent full-time course. Further education learners, similarly, can avail of an Advanced Learner Loan if they are aged 19 or over, and studying eligible courses from Level 3 (A level equivalent) up to Level 6 at approved course providers.

5 Find out more about UK fees here. EU variable fees do not apply to Irish students, who are entitled to pay the same as UK students under the terms of the Common Travel Area arrangement.

6 Loan repayment conditions vary depending on the type of loan taken out. For more details on load repayment terms see [here](#).



Scotland: The tuition fee for Irish students wishing to study in Scotland is £9,250. However, Irish nationals who are living in Ireland and who have been resident in the Common Travel Area (UK, Islands or Ireland) for three years prior to the relevant start date for their undergraduate course in Scotland will be eligible to apply for a tuition fee loan of up to £9,250 from [SAAS](#).⁷ For more information on the funding available and how this impacts Irish students wishing to study in Scotland, visit the [Student Finance Scotland](#) page of the UCAS website or the [SAAS Brexit Q&A](#).

Northern Ireland: Students from Ireland who meet the [residency criteria](#) are treated the same as Northern Ireland students. This means if a student chooses to study at a Northern Ireland institution, the maximum tuition fee is capped, and they can apply for a [tuition fee loan](#) to cover this cost. This is similar to elsewhere in the UK, although the fees cap is higher outside of Northern Ireland. There is more information on this available through the [Northern Ireland Department of Economy](#) website.

For all higher education students studying in the UK, financial support may be available from their chosen university in the form of scholarships and bursaries. Students should visit individual university websites.



TRANSFERRING QUALIFICATIONS TO LEAVING CERTIFICATE POINTS

UK students to Irish universities

British students who wish to apply to Irish universities are scored based on their best four A levels or three A levels and an AS level in a different subject from the same or preceding year. All grades have a points level which they can be converted to. The maximum number of points that can be achieved is 600 with the exception of those taking Mathematics, Further Mathematics or Pure Mathematics who will have 25 points added to their score for that subject (maximum possible 625).

For more information on the scoring system see [Applicant Scoring for GCE/GCSE](#). Proof of English proficiency is required in all cases.

Further information on transferring qualifications including A Levels/ GCSE, Welsh Baccaalaureate and Cambridge Pre-U is available [here](#).



APPLICATION PROCESS

UK students to Irish universities

Students who wish to begin their first year of undergraduate study in Ireland must apply through the [Central Applications Office \(CAO\)](#) – UK student wishing to enter a course at a post-initial year level may apply directly to the higher education provider at which they wish to study. All undergraduate students in Ireland, regardless of citizenship pay a contribution charge. For the academic year 2021-2022, the contribution charge was €3,000⁸. For more information on how to apply, please visit the [Education in Ireland website](#).

All students, regardless of citizenship, pay a contribution charge. For the academic year 2021-2022 this contribution charge was €3,000.



⁸ Most colleges charge an annual student contribution. It is also known as a registration fee and it covers student services and examinations. The amount of the contribution varies from one institution to another.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

UK students applying to Ireland universities

Ireland higher education operates a Free Fees Initiative for undergraduate study, whereby EU, European Economic Area (EEA), Swiss and UK students attending publicly-funded courses do not have to pay tuition fees ([further information here](#)). If students qualify for the scheme, they will only need to pay a contribution charge of around €3,000⁹ per annum. For more information on free undergraduate fees, including eligibility criteria, see [Citizens information - Third level student fees and charges](#).

The [Irish Student Grant Scheme](#) is the main source of financial help for undergraduate students from select countries, including the UK, who want to study in Ireland. The scheme is split into two parts: maintenance and contribution charge grants. Maintenance grants go towards students' general living costs and contribution charge grants are designed to cover students' contribution charges, cost of fieldtrips, or any other fee directly relating to their course. In order to get a student grant, student must be a national of an EEA member state, Switzerland or the United Kingdom or have immigration status or leave to remain. For all higher education students studying in Ireland, financial support may be available from their chosen university in the form of scholarships and bursaries. To look for scholarships and check eligibility criteria, students should visit individual university websites.¹⁰

Financial awards are also provided by the government of Ireland and other organisations. For a list of available scholarships see [Education in Ireland - Scholarships](#). To check what assistance students are entitled to, visit [Citizens Information - Student Grant Scheme](#) or [Student Finance Ireland](#).

⁹ Northern Ireland residents choosing to study in Ireland are eligible to apply for the Student Contribution Loan, which will help cover the contribution charge. Applications are submitted to Student Finance Northern Ireland.

¹⁰ This is similarly true for students studying in the UK.



Visa requirements for students studying from the UK to Ireland or Ireland to the UK

Students that are citizens of the UK, EU, EEA or Switzerland do not need a visa to study in Ireland. A full list of countries exempt from needing a visa can be found at [Citizens Information - Visa Requirements for Entering Ireland](#). If your country of citizenship is not on this list, you will need a study visa. Similarly, if you are an Irish citizen wishing to study in the UK you will not need a visa to do so, as your freedom of travel is covered in the terms of the CTA.

If someone resident in Ireland, but who is not a citizen of Ireland, wishes to study in the UK they can find information on UK study visas [here](#). Non-EU citizens who wish to study in Ireland can find more information on Irish study visas [here](#).



Notes and References

Common Travel Area

- [Common Travel Area: rights of UK and Irish citizens](#)
- [Citizens Information Ireland webpage on Common Travel Area between Ireland and UK](#)
- [Studying in the UK including Northern Ireland](#)
- [Citizens Information webpage on the Student Grant Scheme](#)
- [UCAS webpage on undergraduate tuition fees and student loans](#)
- [Citizens Information webpage on fees and supports to third level education](#)

Application process – Irish students to UK universities

- [UCAS website](#)
- [UCAS webpage on finding undergraduate courses](#)

Transferring Ireland qualifications to UK Tariff points

- [UCAS Tariff calculator webpage](#)
- [UCAS course search webpage](#)

Application process – UK students to Irish universities

- [Central Applications Office Ireland website](#)
- [Education in Ireland webpage on what can I study](#)
- [The Complete University Guide webpage on studying in Ireland](#)
- [Citizens Information Ireland webpage on fees and supports to third level education](#)
- [Student Finance Northern Ireland website](#)
- [Education in Ireland webpage on scholarships](#)
- [HEA Ireland webpage on student finance](#)

Financial support – Irish students applying to UK universities

- [Complete University Guide webpage on studying in Ireland](#)
- [Citizens Information Ireland webpage on third-level student fees and charges](#)
- [Citizens Information Ireland webpage on the student grant scheme](#)
- [Education in Ireland webpage on scholarships](#)
- [HEA Ireland webpage on student finance](#)

Transferring Qualifications to Leaving Certificate points – UK students to Irish universities

- [CAO Ireland webpage on applicant scoring for GCE/GCSE](#)
- [CAO Ireland guide on entry requirements criteria for EU/EFTA applicants](#)

Financial support – UK students applying to Irish Universities

- [UCAS webpage on undergraduate tuition fees and student loans](#)
- [Gov.uk webpage on student finance: how to apply](#)
- [UCAS webpage on student financing England](#)
- [UCAS webpage on student financing Wales](#)
- [UCAS webpage on student financing Scotland](#)
- [Student Awards Agency Scotland webpage on Brexit guidance](#)
- [UCAS webpage on student financing Northern Ireland](#)
- [Gov.uk webpage on repaying your student loan](#)
- [Department of Economy Northern Ireland webpage on higher education](#)

Visa requirements

- [Citizens Information Ireland webpage on visa requirements for entering Ireland](#)
- [Study in the UK on a Student Visa](#)

