



Higher Education Information Guide: UK-Ireland





Foreword

This guide was prepared by British Council Ireland and has been developed in order to provide information to students from Ireland wishing to study in the UK and students from the UK wishing to study in Ireland.

It provides information on applying to higher education institutions in Ireland and the UK. It also explains the process for transferring points from an Irish to a UK system and vice versa. It also offers guidance on possible visa requirements for students that are not citizens of the UK, EU, EEA or Switzerland.

We are especially delighted to highlight new webpages and links from UCAS on the Common Travel Area for students from Ireland. Please note that all links and advice are current at time of publication.

The British Council Ireland would like to thank all those who contributed to, and gave feedback on, this guide and other associated materials.

We hope you find the guide useful.

Dr Kerry McCall Magan

Director, British Council Ireland



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STUDY UK

Studying in the UK is about more than lectures and libraries — it's a truly life-changing experience.

From the moment you arrive, you'll become part of a diverse, vibrant student community where friendships, creativity, and discovery come naturally.

The UK is bursting with culture, energy, and opportunity. Whether you're exploring historic cities, hiking through stunning landscapes, or diving into world-class music, food, and festivals — you'll find experiences that inspire and excite you. You'll also have the chance to join student clubs, societies, and sports teams that bring people together from all over the world.

UK cities are some of the best in the world for students. With excellent transport, student discounts, and a buzzing social scene, life outside the classroom is just as enriching as your studies. And if you ever need support, universities offer dedicated services to make sure you feel safe, settled, and confident every step of the way.

The UK gives you the freedom to be yourself, explore your interests, and discover new passions. So, you won't just find a world-class education. You'll find memories, friendships, and perspectives that could stay with you for life.





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, which 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 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 UK 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 country. To be eligible, prospective students must be resident in Ireland, the UK or the Crown Dependencies for 3 years before the start of their course.

¹ The CTA covers England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Further information can be found at: [Common Travel Area: rights of UK and Irish citizens - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).



Find more information on studying in the UK, including Northern Ireland, [here](#).

If students from Ireland 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 under the [Student Grant Scheme](#) to study in the UK.





Information for students from Ireland applying to UK universities

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is the centralised admissions service for accessing undergraduate Higher Education in the United Kingdom. UCAS does not work for any specific university or college, and are also not a branch of the government. This means that the advice they provide is impartial and factual, and they don't make recommendations about which institutions best suit students, but they do provide resources to support students on their journey.

UCAS operates as an independent, non-profit charity, where all profits go into improving the quality of resources and tools available to students, higher education institutions and advisers who support applications.



Application Process

Resources UCAS offers for students and their parents, carers and guardians:

Discover everything you need to know as an international student planning to come to the UK. Whether you're coming for the first time or are still waiting to make a decision, the guidance below can help you prepare as best you can for life in the UK.

- Why study in the UK? - [Why study in the UK?](#)
- Guidance for students from Ireland - [Students from Ireland | UCAS](#)
- The UCAS international podcast, which brings together some of the brightest minds – both experts and current students – to help you answer some of your biggest questions. Things like “how do I apply?”, “what support is available”, and “what’s it really like in the UK”? - [The UCAS International Podcast | UCAS](#)
- UCAS international student guidance pages - [International students | UCAS](#)
- Guidance for parents of international students - [Parents of international students | UCAS](#)
- Resources for advisers: Helpful [guides](#) and downloadable resources, such as the [Adviser Toolkit and Guide](#), and all UCAS adviser pages can be found here: [International advisers | UCAS](#)





Transferring Irish Qualifications to UK Points System

The [UCAS Tariff calculator](#) is a points system used for entry to higher education providers in the UK. It allows students from Ireland to compare their Leaving Certificate qualifications with the UK's 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 18yrs. Students can enter their most relevant academic achievements – for example, 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.



Application Process

The UCAS 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.

On the UCAS website, students can apply through their school or as an individual. Students from Ireland who wish to apply to UK institutions through UCAS can find out more about application deadlines for various institutions [here](#)².

Some universities allow students to apply directly, and it is necessary to check this with each university.

2 [Students from Ireland | UCAS](#)



Financial Support

Undergraduate students from Ireland who meet the [residency criteria](#), can study in the UK for the same rate of fees as students from the UK 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 the UK for further and higher education providers are available [here](#).

England and Wales: UK universities and colleges charge new students up to £9,535³. Students from Ireland can apply for a [tuition fee loan](#), which has to be repaid after students have graduated. If the student leaves their programme early, the loan still has to be repaid⁴. Students from Ireland are not entitled to maintenance support in the same way as UK home students. Students from Ireland may be eligible for a maintenance grant if they meet the criteria for the [Irish Student Grant Scheme](#). Students from Ireland will only be entitled to UK home student financial maintenance if they have been settled in the UK or the 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.

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- 3 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.
 - 4 Loan repayment conditions vary depending on the type of loan taken out. For more details on loan repayment terms see [here](#).



Scotland: The tuition fee for students from Ireland wishing to study in Scotland is up to £9,535. 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 £9,535 from [SAAS](#).

For more information on the funding available and how this impacts students from Ireland wishing to study in Scotland, visit the [Student Finance Scotland](#) page of the UCAS website or the [SAAS Brexit Q&A](#).

Northern Ireland: Students resident in Northern Ireland will be charged tuition fees of £4,855 per annum for full-time undergraduate programmes. Students who normally live in England, Scotland and Wales, will be charged tuition fees of £9,535 per annum for full-time undergraduate programmes. It is expected that EU students who are Irish nationals resident in Ireland will be eligible for the same tuition fees as students from Northern Ireland, in line with the Common Travel Agreement arrangements.

Students who are Irish nationals resident in Great Britain are expected to be charged the fee for Great Britain, however this is provisional and subject to the publication of the Northern Ireland Assembly Student Fees Regulations⁵.



Students who normally live in the Islands will be charged tuition fees of £9,535 per annum for full-time undergraduate programmes. EU students (excludes Ireland nationals living in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland) are charged tuition fees in line with international fees. 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 [British Council Study UK Scholarship](#) and individual university websites for further information on financial support available.

Find out more about [UK fees here](#). EU variable fees do not apply to students from Ireland, who are entitled to pay the same as students from the UK under the terms of the Common Travel Area arrangement.





Information for students from the UK applying to Irish universities

Students from the UK who wish to begin their first year of undergraduate study in Ireland must apply through the [Central Applications Office \(CAO\)](#) – students from the UK 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 student contribution charge. For the academic year 2025-2026, the contribution charge has been set at a maximum of €3,000 (subject to budgetary changes by the Irish government).

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.

For more information on studying in Ireland and how to apply, please visit the [Education in Ireland](#) website.



Transferring UK Qualifications to Leaving Certificate Points System

As a result of changes to equivalences announced by the Government of Ireland in 2023, A-Level students can use their best 3 A-Levels, along with a 4th A-Level, or an Extended Project or an AS subject for Ireland's third-level entry system.

Applicants taking GCE exams in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales can attain a score of 600 points with 3 A-Levels and 1 AS, and 625 points if one of the A-Levels is Maths.

Students with UK citizenship who meet the criteria for EU/ EEA fees should apply via the [Central Applications Office \(CAO\)](#). Students are encouraged to read the [CAO Handbook](#), which provides great detail on the application process. The CAO also provides [a suite of helpful video guides](#) explaining the application process.



Financial Support

Under the terms of the [Free Fees Initiative](#) for undergraduate study, the Department of Further and Higher Education pays the fees to the colleges instead. EU, European Economic Area (EEA), students from the UK and Switzerland 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 maximum €3,000 per annum.⁶ 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. To get a student grant, students 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.

Financial awards are also provided by the Government of Ireland and other organisations. To check what assistance students are entitled to, visit [Citizens Information - Student Grant Scheme](#) or [Student Finance Ireland](#).

⁶ 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](#).





Visa Requirements

For UK students studying in Ireland or for students from Ireland studying in 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](#).

Please review: [Requirements for Entering Ireland](#) and 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](#).



Healthcare

For students from the UK studying in Ireland or students from Ireland studying in the UK

Under the [Common Travel Area](#), students from the UK studying in Ireland or students from Ireland studying in the UK have the right to access publicly funded health services there.

Under these arrangements Irish citizens resident in the CTA have access to UK health services, which includes emergency, routine and planned access to health services.

If you are a [UK national living in Ireland](#), you are entitled to state healthcare in Ireland on the same basis as an Irish citizen. You will need to pay a fee for standard patient charges. The amount you pay for healthcare depends on your circumstances. Some people can get their healthcare in Ireland paid for by the UK. This could be because you are temporarily living in Ireland and normally live in the UK.





Notes and References

Common Travel Area, Information for Students from Ireland, Information for students from the UK, and Visa requirements

- [Common Travel Area between Ireland and the UK](#)
- [Studying in the UK including Northern Ireland](#)
- [Eligibility rules for home fee status](#)
- [Student Grant Scheme](#)
- [Common Travel Area: Rights of UK and Irish citizens](#)

Visa requirements

- [Visa Requirements for Entering Ireland](#)
- [GOV.UK - Student Visa](#)
- [Student visas to study in Ireland](#)

Healthcare

- [Healthcare for UK nationals living in Ireland - GOV.UK](#)
- [Health for Irish nationals living in the UK - GOV.IE](#)



Information for students from Ireland applying to UK universities

- [British Council Study UK](#)
- [UCAS Website](#)
- [The UCAS Tariff Calculator](#)
- [UCAS Webpages for Students from Ireland](#)
- [UCAS Find your Course](#)
- [UCAS Undergraduate Entry Requirements](#)

Information for students from the UK applying to Irish universities

- [The Central Applications Office \(CAO\)](#)
- [Education in Ireland - What can I study in Ireland?](#)
- [SAAS Website](#)
- [UCAS - Student Finance in Scotland](#)
- [SAAS Brexit Guidance](#)
- [Student Grant Scheme](#)
- [UCAS - Student Finance in Northern Ireland](#)
- [The Northern Ireland Department of Economy - Higher Education](#)



Financial support – students from Ireland applying to UK universities

- [Student Grant Scheme](#)
- [HEA - Student Finance](#)
- [GOV.UK - Student finance: how to apply](#)
- [UCAS - Student Finance in England](#)
- [UCAS - Student Finance in Wales](#)
- [UCAS - Student Finance in Scotland](#)
- [UCAS - Student Finance in Northern Ireland](#)
- [UCAS - Undergraduate Student Fees and Student loans](#)

Financial support – students from the UK applying to Irish Universities

- [Complete University Guide - Studying in Ireland](#)
- [Third-level student fees and charges](#)
- [Student Grant Scheme](#)
- [HEA - Student Finance](#)
- [Student Finance Northern Ireland](#)

