

1 MARCH 2006

STUDENT VISA REQUIREMENTS

NOTE: These requirements are intended to act as a guideline only and do not limit the discretion of the visa officer in determining individual applications.

They are subject to change as we continue in our efforts to provide a more efficient service to our customers. You should therefore regularly check for the most recent version which will have the date of implementation in the top right-hand corner.

The following information outlines the minimum documentation you must submit with your application. Please read carefully and if you believe you meet all the requirements you should complete the Questionnaire at the end of this document.

This questionnaire should be submitted along with your Visa Application Form, and ALL supporting documentation.

Original documents are required and must be in **ENGLISH or accompanied by a notarised translation of same.**

All documents must be clearly legible. The Visa Officer will need to easily identify what they are and to whom they refer.

The Questionnaire must be fully completed and the Declaration signed by you.

Any unsigned declarations, false information, forged or fraudulent documentation will result in the refusal of your application and no appeal will be permitted.

The onus is on you, the applicant, to satisfy the Visa Officer that a visa should be granted.

The granting of a Student Visa does not entitle you to have any family members join you in Ireland

In applying for a Student Visa you must be able to show that:

- You are enrolled on a privately funded course involving at least 15 hours of organised daytime tuition each week
- You have paid the requisite fees to the college
- You have the academic ability to follow your chosen course
- You have a level of English language sufficient to do so (except in the case of an application which is solely for an English language course)
- You have immediate access to at least €7,000. This is the estimated cost of living in Ireland for a student for one academic year.
- You must also demonstrate that you or your sponsor has ready access to an amount of at least €7,000 for each subsequent year of your studies, in addition to the course fees for each of those years
- You have private medical insurance
- You can account for any gaps in your educational history
- Your intention is to return to your country of permanent residence following completion of your studies in Ireland

There now follows an explanation of what will be accepted as evidence for the above requirements. Please ensure you read this carefully and submit ALL documents with your application. Again, it is important that these are original, clearly legible documents, in English, or accompanied by a notarised translation. They should clearly indicate what they are and to whom they refer.

Evidence of Course

- A Letter of Acceptance from the college, confirming you have been accepted and enrolled on a course of full-time education, involving a minimum of 15 hours organised daytime tuition each week
- This letter should specify the course you will be studying
- It should also confirm the amount of fees payable for your course, and that this amount has been paid
- If the college has taken out medical insurance on your behalf, details of this must be contained in this letter of acceptance

NOTE: The educational and other credentials of a college will be taken into consideration by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in reaching a decision on a visa application. Recognition by the Department of Education and Science through ACELS meets these criteria in the case of English language schools. Please refer to the list of courses recognised by the Department of Education and Science on its website: www.education.ie

Fees

- Where the course fees are less than €6,000, fees must be paid in full to the college, prior to applying for your visa. Evidence of the amount paid should be included in your Letter of Acceptance from the college
- Where the course fees are in excess of €6,000, you must pay at least this amount prior to applying for your visa, and evidence of this should be shown in your Letter of Acceptance

Ability to Follow Your Chosen Course

- You must provide evidence that you have attained the necessary level of academic achievement required to follow your chosen course
- Such evidence will include – exam results, qualifications obtained and certificates proving this

Level of English

- You must show that you have the capacity to fully partake in your chosen course through the medium of English and satisfy the Visa Officer in this regard

- It is recommended that all applicants, regardless of nationality or educational background, undertake the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) English language test, and provide original certificate with your visa with application
- Other acceptable certificates will be those from an internationally recognised test such as TOEFL or Cambridge
- Failure to provide such a certificate may result in delays in processing your application, and possible refusal of same
- Submission of false or fraudulent certificates with your application will result in it being refused, and no appeal will be permitted
- Any certificate must have been issued within 2 years of the expected commencement date of your course
- The recommended band scores are –

IELTS – minimum score of 5

TOEFL – minimum score of 173

Cambridge – First Certificate in English (FCE) or higher

- These recommendations are subject to review pending advice from the Department of Education and Science

(Students applying solely for an English Language course are currently exempt from this requirement)

NOTE: THIS IS FOR IMMIGRATION PURPOSES ONLY

IF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT OF THE COLLEGE IS HIGHER THAN THE SCORES ABOVE, YOU MUST MEET THE COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS

Short-term Preparatory English Language Courses

If you have been accepted on a specific course of studies, but you need, or are required, to complete a preparatory course of English prior to commencing your main course, the following requirements apply:

- English language course must be short term, and not exceed a maximum duration of 6 months

- This course must be administered by the same educational institution which is offering the main course of studies
- Clear evidence of this must accompany your application
- You must submit a detailed study plan, including the duration and dates of your preliminary English course, and details and dates of your main course of study
- Fees for both the English preparatory course **AND** the first year of your main course must be paid in full to the college
- Evidence of this must accompany your application
- **English Language Requirements for Such Courses:**

IELTS – minimum overall band score of 4

TOEFL – minimum score of 137

Cambridge – PET (Preliminary English Test)

Applicants who have not completed formal 2nd Level Education

- If you are applying for a course of 2nd level educational studies, the requirements outlined above for the preparatory English also apply

NOTE: 2nd level courses can only be undertaken in a private, fee-paying school or college

Evidence of Finances

You must show you have sufficient funds to support your stay in Ireland without recourse to public funds, or the reliance on casual employment

- Fully complete the Financial Details section of the Questionnaire
- If you are being sponsored by another person or persons, you must list each person and give clear details of their relationship to you
- Give clear details of the financial support they will be giving you for the duration of your stay in Ireland
- Their bank account must show a good credit record for a minimum of six months immediately prior to making your application
- As you will be required to have a minimum of €7,000 available to you during the first year of your studies, your sponsor will need to show that this amount is available to support you AND that they have enough funds to maintain themselves and other family members
- Any lump sum lodgements made during the immediate three months prior to your application must be fully explained, with supporting evidence provided
- For example - if such a lump sum lodgement has come from the proceeds of a sale of property or encashment of Savings Certificates, Fixed Rate Deposit accounts, or any similar type sources, then clear evidence of this must be provided
- Where no evidence is provided your application will be refused
- You must also demonstrate that you or your sponsor has ready access to an amount of at least €7,000 for each subsequent year of your studies, in addition to the course fees for each of those years
- Evidence accepted will include a letter from your sponsor's employer confirming employment details, plus 4 recent payslips. This letter should include contact details for the employer, including name, address, and phone number (landline, not mobile)
- If your sponsor is involved in business, evidence of this must be provided, such as a Certificate of Registration from the authorities in your country
- All financial documentation should clearly indicate what it is and to whom it relates

- All bank statements should include the name and address of the account holder and the account number
- They should also include full contact details of the bank – name, full address of branch where account is held, telephone number (landline, not mobile), e-mail and website addresses (where available)
- Where this information is not normally available on a bank statement, it should be accompanied by a letter from the bank, on official bank stationery, giving these details. Where a bank statement or a letter from the bank is submitted giving only a mobile phone number, post box number as address, or an email address of Yahoo, Hotmail etc, this will not be considered as evidence of finances, and may in fact raise an issue of credibility over the whole application.
- The statement should cover a six-month period immediately prior to your application, and show all transactions that have taken place during this time
- Handwritten entries or details on bank statements will not be accepted

Medical Insurance

- Private medical insurance cover is required
- Your college may arrange this on your behalf. If so, details of this must be included in your Letter of Acceptance from the college
- If it is not arranged by the college, you must organise this yourself and provide evidence with your application

Educational and Employment History

- You must provide full details of your previous education on the questionnaire
- You must submit all exam results obtained, along with your qualification certificates
- You must provide information to account for any gaps between your last period of full time education and your application to study in Ireland
- If any such gap in education has been filled by periods of employment, you must give full details of your employment history

- If your employment history or educational background have no obvious connection to the course you now wish to pursue, you must give a full explanation of why you are now embarking on a change of career

Further Information You Must Consider

Passport

- Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after the expected completion of your studies in Ireland
- If you hold any previous passport, you should also submit this with your application

Decisions

- The processing times for Student Visa Applications vary depending on the volume of applications lodged, and the time it takes for an application to reach the Visa section in Dublin from the Embassy in which it was lodged
- You should allow as much time as possible when applying for a visa but a minimum time of 8 weeks is recommended
- The Visa Section will endeavour to have your application assessed as soon as possible
- Visa decisions are published weekly on our website – www.justice.ie. You can check a decision by entering the Visa Reference Number that issues to you

Right of Appeal

- If you are refused a visa you may appeal this decision within 2 months
- Appeals must be submitted in writing to: The Visa Appeals Officer, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2
- Your appeal should fully address all the reasons for which your application was refused. Any additional supporting documentation should be submitted with your appeal for consideration

- You must quote your Visa Reference Number on your appeal, along with your name and nationality
- There is no fee payable for appealing a visa refusal decision
- There will be no appeal allowed if you are found to have given false or misleading information in any part of your application, or submitted false, forged or fraudulent documentation

If You Are Granted A Student Visa

Arrival in the State

- If your application for a visa has been approved, the Embassy to which you applied will affix a visa to your passport
- The dates entered on your visa indicate the dates between which you may enter the State
- It is important to note that a visa is a form of pre-entry clearance to the State only, and does not guarantee that you will be permitted to enter or remain in the State
- Immigration Officers at the point of entry are entitled to question any person on arrival. If they are not satisfied with the bona-fides of any person, or their reasons for wishing to enter the State, they have the right to deny entry to any such person, despite the fact they hold a valid visa
- It is recommended that you have supporting documentation related to your course of study with you to present to the Immigration Officer on disembarkation from your flight

Attendance at Course

- You have been granted a Study Visa on the basis that you will attend school/college to partake in a course which involves **at least 15 hours** of organised daytime tuition each week.
- It will be necessary for you to show evidence of your attendance record to the Garda National Immigration Bureau when seeking to have your permission to remain in the State extended.

- If you do not show a satisfactory attendance rate at your course you will not be entitled to remain in the State

Registration and Permission to Remain

- If you intend staying in Ireland for more than 90 days, it is a requirement that you register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) either at 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2, or the Immigration Officer in area in which you are residing
- Extensions of your permission to remain in the State to pursue your studies will only be granted if the Immigration Officer is satisfied with matters such as your level of attendance at your course, evidence of your accommodation, finances and medical insurance
- Permission to remain in the State is not usually granted for a period of more than a total of 18 months unless the student is attending a full time course of at least one year's duration leading to qualifications recognised by the Minister for Education and Science – see website www.education.ie

Re-entry Visas

- The initial visa issued to you will be valid for a single entry to the State
- If you have a valid reason for leaving the State for a short period of time you must apply, in advance of making any arrangements, for a Re-entry visa.
- You must be able to prove you will be continuing with your studies on your return to the State
- Before a re-entry visa can be issued, you must be registered with the Garda National Immigration Bureau
- For information on how and where you can apply for a Re-entry visa please see link to 'Re-entry Visas' on www.justice.ie
- It is your responsibility to ensure you have the correct visa (where relevant) for the country you intend travelling to
- **NOTE:** A visa must be obtained from the UK authorities prior to travelling to Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland consists of Counties Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone)

Entitlement to take up Casual Employment

- Only students attending a full time course of education of at least one year's duration leading to qualifications recognised by the Minister for Education and Science will be permitted to take up casual employment
- Access to employment is denied to all other students
- Casual employment is defined as up to a maximum of 20 hours part time work per week, or full time work during normal college vacation periods. Such work should not interfere with your course attendance, as failure to provide evidence of a satisfactory attendance record will result in refusal of any extension to your permission to remain
- The entitlement to casual employment will cease on completion of your college course
- The stamp placed in your passport by GNIB will indicate whether or not you are permitted to take up casual employment
- If you are in doubt about this you should check with GNIB before you accept any job offer.
- Any breach of your visa conditions will lead to a review of your case and possible removal from the State

Students Under 18 Years of Age

- Any person who wishes to pursue a course of study in Ireland must be enrolled at a private fee-paying school or college
- The requirements outlined above will apply for all students
- Parental consent from both parents(where applicable) is required
- The granting of a visa to a person under the age of 18 years for the purpose of study does not give any entitlement to any other family member to accompany or join the student in the State
- Details of the person in whose care the minor shall be must be provided with the application

- The provisions of Part IVB of the Children Act 2001 will apply when examining such applications – see website:
<http://acts.oireachtas.ie/en.act.2001.0024.4.html>