

PA-08 Affordability and Access

UCC has many notable policies and programs to make the institution accessible and affordable to low-income students in addition to support offered to non-traditional students. These are listed below.

1. DARE SCHEME

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/uccplus/hear/>



The Higher Education Access Route to Education (HEAR) is a third level alternative admissions scheme which offers places on reduced points and extra college supports to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are resident in the Republic of Ireland.

HEAR Applicants must meet a range of financial, social and cultural indicators to be considered for a reduced points place and extra college support.

The ACCESS UCC, PLUS Programme office look after HEAR-eligible students who get offered a place at UCC. Once admitted to a degree programme in UCC, HEAR/UCC PLUS Programme students are eligible to receive many supports throughout their time in University.

2. Student Assistance Fund



The Student Assistance Fund provides financial assistance for full-time higher education students who are experiencing financial difficulties while attending college.

The Student Assistance Fund is partly supported by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

The Student Assistance Fund provides a further source of funding for higher education students in addition to the [Student Grant](#).

The Student Assistance fund is a means tested fund. Funds are limited and not all applicants may be eligible and/or may not be awarded funding

The Student Assistance Fund is available to help with costs such as:

- books and class materials
- rent and other utility bills
- food
- essential travel
- childcare costs
- medical costs

3. 1916 Bursary Fund



The 1916 Bursary Fund was established by the Department of Education and Skills. The purpose of the Fund is to encourage participation and success by students who are most economically disadvantaged and who are from communities significantly underrepresented in higher education. All of the higher education institutions are awarding the Bursaries through regional clusters.

1916 Bursary Fund: South Cluster SOAR Project

The South Cluster is comprised of the following higher education institutions: Institute of Technology Carlow, Munster Technological University CorK and MTU Kerry, University College Cork and Waterford Institute of Technology. The bursary fund is administered through the South Cluster SOAR Project. The SOAR Project is an inter-institutional Access initiative funded under the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund. The South Cluster have a total of 35 bursaries available to award to students applying to these higher education institutions.

What is the value of a 1916 Bursary?

Each student who is awarded the 1916 Bursary Fund will receive a bursary to the amount of €5,000 per annum for the normal duration of a full-time undergraduate programme. A bursary will be awarded for the normal duration of a part-time undergraduate course up to a maximum period of six years.

UCC PLUS+ Students (HEAR Entry students) who receive the full SUSI award are eligible to apply for the 1916 Bursary fund.

4. UCC PLUS+ Outreach programme



<https://www.ucc.ie/en/uccplus/schools/>

The ACCESS UCC PLUS Schools Outreach Programme has been designed and developed in partnership with our [DEIS](#) schools and continuously evolves in response to the needs of students. UCC PLUS currently works with 31 linked secondary schools in Cork, Kerry and Waterford ([List of Linked Schools](#)). The programme consists of a variety of activities and initiatives both school and campus-based from 1st year through to Leaving Cert. The Aim of the Schools Outreach Programme is to:

- Raise the aspirations of students and parents.
- Establish connections between students, parents, school and UCC.
- Introduce students to UCC and the UCC student experience.
- Enhance students' academic performance and their ability to compete for university places.
- Promote the [HEAR Scheme](#) as a college entry mechanism.
- Support students and parents in completing a HEAR application.

What is a DEIS School?

The DEIS programme is the Department's main policy initiative to respond to educational disadvantage. The DEIS programme focuses on targeting additional resources to those schools included in the programme to ensure every child has an equal opportunity to achieve their potential.

Schools coming into DEIS will be provided with access to supports which are the same as those provided to schools currently in the programme. At primary level this is based on what 'DEIS band' the school is in.

Schools are assigned to DEIS Urban Band 1, DEIS Urban Band 2 or DEIS Rural on the basis of the location of the schools and its level of disadvantage.

Resources available under the DEIS programme are used by schools to provide their students with the support and opportunities that they may not otherwise be available to them.

Some of the supports that schools in DEIS get are home-school community liaison support to build a positive relationships between the student's home and school lives and an enhanced school book grant rate to ease the financial burden on families and schools.

5. Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI)



Student Universal Support Ireland (**SUSI**) is Ireland's national awarding authority for all further and higher education grants. **SUSI** offers funding to eligible students, from school leavers to mature students returning to education, in approved full time third level courses.

SUSI administers funding in line with the legislation as set out in the [Student Support Act 2011](#), the [Student Support Scheme](#) and [Student Support Regulations](#)

6. UCCSU Student Emergency Fund

<https://www.uccsu.ie/uccsu-emergency-fund/>



HOME

UCCSU Student Emergency Fund

The Student Emergency Fund is a fund available through UCC Students' Union to assist students who are experiencing financial hardship due to a change of circumstances and/or an emergency.

To apply for the Student Emergency Fund, fill out the Emergency Fund Application and the budget template 'Budget Overview' section, and upload supporting documentation.

You can apply for the Emergency Fund [here](#) and access the budget template [here](#).

For more information, contact Caoimhe, the SU Welfare Officer at welfare@uccsu.ie, or our Niamh, our Welfare Administrator on welfare.admin@uccsu.ie

UCC also offers student financial assistance and advice, including the Student Assistance Fund. You can find more information here (link: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/sfsa/>).

The Student Emergency Fund is part-funded by the UCC Covid-19 Hardship Fund.

7. Financial Aid Fund for Part Time Students

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/sfsa/financialaidparttime/>

The Financial Aid Part-Time Fund provides financial assistance for part-time higher education students who are experiencing financial difficulties whilst attending college. It is a separate amount of monies allocated to part time students that comes under the auspices of the Student Assistance Fund.

The Financial Aid Part-Time Fund is part supported by the Irish government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF programme for employability, inclusion and learning 2014-2020.

The fund cannot be used for tuition fees related to the course you are undertaking and is specifically intended to help students with the living costs associated with attending college.

If you require any further assistance or information you may [make an appointment](#) online or in person.

The target access groups includes those who identify as:

Lone Parent	..	Irish Traveller	..	Teen Parent
First time entrant to college	..	Low Income Household	..	Student with disability
Socially Disadvantaged Area	..	Non-Manual/Unskilled Worker	..	

8. SANCTUARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

Adult Continuing Education Sanctuary Scholarship

UCC offers ACE Sanctuary Scholarships. Applications are welcomed from refugees and asylum seekers whose status in Ireland has not been determined and who are not eligible for typical social welfare requirements.

The University Language Centre Sanctuary Scholarship

The University Language Centre provides English language tuition, academic support and teacher training in the field of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

In support of UCC's status as a University of Sanctuary, the Language Centre is offering four free places on courses that will directly or indirectly have a positive impact on the educational or career prospects of asylum seekers and refugees living in the Cork area

9. Refugee and Asylum Seeker

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/guidance/refugeeandasylumseekerbrochure/>

University College Cork has produced a booklet to help guide prospective students through many paths in higher education in Ireland as a refugee or asylum seeker. It contains information on different education options, how to figure out fees and funding available, where to find entry requirements and how to apply for an undergraduate course.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Sometimes a full-time Bachelors or Masters degree isn't the right option for you right now. Cork is a UNESCO Learning City (<https://www.corklearningcity.ie/>) which means that there are always options to maximise your learning opportunities here, whether it's through a Level 5 or 6 QQI course, or just learning for interest and enjoyment through events, public libraries, or Ireland's many historical and cultural locations.

In UCC, Adult Continuing Education (ACE) courses are designed for lifelong learning. They have a range of levels from Certificate of Attendance to postgraduate programmes and are usually offered in the evening or on weekends to suit people working.

In some cases, ACE can also offer fully-funded Sanctuary scholarships for their courses. Further information is available at their website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ace/>



Start from the beginning

Welcome to University College Cork. Although we would love for you to make us your first choice in your college journey, this booklet will hopefully help guide you through many different paths in higher education in Ireland as a refugee or asylum seeker; it contains information on different education options, how to figure out your fees and funding, where to find entry requirements and how to apply for an undergraduate course.



ENTRY REQUIREMENT EQUIVALENCIES

If you're applying using an Irish Leaving Cert, finding out whether you're likely to be eligible for the course can be easy, if you did your school leaving exams elsewhere, you're going to need to do a little more calculation.

Step 1) Look at the course page (both points and subject requirements). These usually reflect the Irish Leaving Cert (or in some cases, mature entry requirements).

Step 2) Map your own qualification results to the Irish results to assess your own eligibility. Many institutes will have guidance on this - for UCC, you can use the Qualifications Comparison webpages (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/comparison/>)

Step 3) If your first language isn't English, you will be required to provide acceptable evidence of your English ability. This is often done through your Leaving Cert (or other EU school leaving exams), but if not, you will need a recognised English language test. Those that are recognised by UCC are outlined at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/entryreqs/euonlywith/english-language-requirements-for-non-irish-eu-applicants>, but please check directly with the different universities you are interested in attending.

Step 4) Determine whether you have any exemptions. For example, students who were born and educated outside of the Republic of Ireland will usually be automatically exempt from Irish. Students with a recognised/diagnosed learning difficulty may also be able to apply for exemptions from Irish/Third Language.

Postgraduate

Have you already completed your Bachelors degree, and want to apply for a Masters or PhD? UCC has a wide range of postgraduate programmes. (<https://www.ucc.ie/ocaj/>)

There are different closing dates depending on the type of student and the programme, but we would generally advise students to apply as early as possible (applications open in November for the following year's intake).

You do need to consider funding for postgrad programmes; they don't always have the same funding opportunities for students as undergraduate programmes do.



UCC
College Road,
Cork, Ireland
[ucc.ie/en/study/
ask.ucc.ie](http://ucc.ie/en/study/ask.ucc.ie)



GLOSSARY

What we mean when we say...

- Central Applications Office (CAO)** - the applications engine for Undergraduate EU/ Irish students. <https://www.cao.ie/>. CAO will offer discounts for applications made from mid-November to mid/late January.
- Postgraduate Applications** - the applications engine for Postgraduate EU/Irish students. <http://www.ucc.ie/ocaj/>
- Part-time** - Determined at university level. This is usually available on the course page. Courses like ACE and some postgraduates can be offered part-time. Not available to international (non-EU) applicants, and funding through SUSI is not available for part-time courses.
- Full-time** - Determined at university level. This is usually available on the course page. Generally, undergraduate courses in UCC are full-time.
- PLC/ QQI/ PE** - Not offered at UCC. QQI level 5 and 6, often more vocational/job-oriented programmes. They can be used as an entry mechanism into UCC (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/relate/>)
- Undergraduate** - courses at Honours Bachelor Degree (Level 5), QQI/PE Level 5/6, Ordinary Bachelor Degree (Level 7). UCC only offer Level 5

- Postgraduate** - Higher Diploma (Level 8), Masters and PhD Dip (Level 9), and doctorate (Level 10). Usually more expensive and less funded by FFI*
- Levels - NFQ** (<https://www.nfq.ie/>)
- Points** - Leaving Certificate or equivalent, competitive entry to courses which vary each year depending on competition and the standard of applicants.
- Asylum seeker** - waiting for asylum application to be processed. Cannot avail of FFI* or EU fees, but may apply for Sanctuary scholarships (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocaj/universityofsanctuary/sanctuaryscholarships/>)
- Refugee** - application has been processed and granted refugee status. Right to stay indefinitely.
- Mature** - A person who is over 23 years of age by 1st January in the year of entry (e.g. if applying for September 2021, need to be 23 by 1st January 2020).

*FFI - Free Fees Initiative

WHAT KIND OF COURSE DO YOU WANT TO DO?

Think about the kind of subjects you're interested in, what goals you have for the course, what you've done before, and what time you can give to the course. There are a lot of options out there!

Part-time

If you're working full-time and can't take up a full-time course, investigate part-time programmes. These have less commitment but can take longer to complete. The amount of time you spend on campus can vary from course to course, so check out the timetables and make sure they fit your schedule.

Non-EU students and asylum seekers are not eligible for part-time study.

Language Courses

If you're worried about your level of English, you might want to look at doing an "English for Speakers of Other Languages" course before you start your college journey. UCC's Language Centre (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocaj/>) has a range of programmes for different levels of English, from our adult Summer School to full-time, year-long preparation courses.

All university courses require students to have acceptable proof of their level of English, you should consider taking a course which prepares you for a test like IELTS/TOEFL.



REFUGEES ASYLUM SEEKERS

GUIDE

FEES

One of the most important things you need to find out before university is whether you will be categorised as 'EU' or 'International (non-EU)'. This impacts your fees, what scholarships and grants you can apply for, and in UCC, how you apply for your course.

Asylum Seekers

In general, asylum seekers are international students, regardless of how long you've been in Ireland. This usually means the fees will be more expensive, so consider your choices carefully and check out the Sanctuary Scholarships below. You should apply for your course through the International Office at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/uo/>

Refugees

If you're a refugee, you may be classed as an EU student, depending on how long you/your family have been in Ireland. You can find full information at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ev/apply/support/finance/how/fees/criteria/for/determining/EU/Non-EU/status/for/an/applicant.pdf>

EU students apply for undergraduate courses through the CAO, whether they're coming from Leaving Cert, through a QQI course, or as a mature student. Check out the Glossary for the links.

If you start as an asylum seeker, but are granted Official Refugee Status in the middle of your studies at UCC, contact the Fees Office as soon as you receive official confirmation of your refugee status. We may be able to amend your fees status to EU from the start of the following academic year.

Please note that these are general guidelines; you should always check with the universities that you're interested in to confirm your status before applying.

Free Fees Initiative

Under the Free Fees Initiative, the Irish government pays tuition fees to the university on behalf of eligible students registered for full-time undergraduate programmes in UCC. Please follow the link below for details of the eligibility criteria. <https://www.funding-governance-performance.ie/funding/student/finance/courses/fees/>

ACCOMMODATION

Whether you live at home or away is a big decision when looking at third level education. You may want to consider the price, how far away you live from the college, living with other students, and how your choice will impact your study.

On-campus accommodation is very popular in all higher education institutions. UCC holds a lottery for places each year in February/March, so keep an eye on the accommodation pages for the universities you're interested in and apply on time. Don't panic if you don't get a place; have a look at private accommodation such as house shares, digs, or apartment complexes. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ev/accommodation/>

If you live near to the university (we usually say within 45km), consider commuting from home if possible. Contribute to UCC's Green Campus thinking by walking or cycling. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ev/burial/commuting/>

Don't forget that as a student, you can get a Student Leap Card for cheaper travel and student discounts. Registered students can purchase one of these from the Students' Union office. <https://www.studentleapcard.ie/leapcard/>

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FUNDING

There are several funding options to support students in achieving their third level education both in UCC and from public organisations. You can find all our scholarships at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/scholarships/>, and we've included information on a range of common options below.

Many students work part-time during their degree. You can use online job boards like MyStudentJobs (same link) or visit shops/restaurants in the area to see if they are hiring.

Please remember to check any visa, immigration, or social welfare requirements to make sure that working is an option for you.

Sanctuary Scholarships

All 5 cities and many towns across Ireland are Places of Sanctuary, which aim to provide a positive, safe and welcoming experience for asylum seekers/refugees. Many universities now offer financial support to asylum seekers through yearly Sanctuary Scholarships. You're not guaranteed a place, so you should consider making your application early.

Back to Education Allowance

The Department of Social Protection provides funding for second and third level education through the Back To Education Allowance (BTEA) scheme. Age restrictions may apply and courses must lead to a QQI qualification (for example, a Bachelor's degree in UCC). <https://www.gov.ie/en/department/408a2f-back-to-education-allowance/>

You must secure a full-time course place before applying for BTEA, but you should check the requirements and process with your local Social Welfare Office in the first instance. To be eligible for 3rd level allowance, you need to be in receipt of qualifying social welfare payments for 9 months (234 days) before the application.

Social Welfare payments received while in Direct Provision are not considered a qualifying payment.



Irish Refugee Council Education Fund

The Irish Refugee Council provides support where possible to students taking level 5 or 6 courses, such as the Leaving Cert or a Post-Leaving Cert course. They do try to assist with two undergraduate courses (such as an Ordinary or Honours Bachelor degree) each year, so check out their website (<https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/finding/information/education/>) and contact their Education Officer for further details.

Socialising

One of the best things about university is meeting new people and getting involved in new activities. UCC has a huge range of societies - why not get in touch with one? Meet other Refugees (both refugees & non-refugees) with <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ev/societies/>



If you're coming to UCC and choose to drive, we need to let you know that there is no student parking on campus. However, we do have Park & Ride facilities in Pouladuff and Donnybrook Cross which are open first of charge to all students. Consider organising a car pool with other students to keep your carbon footprint low.



UCC's Sanctuary Scholarships are run by the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Unit. Applicants must:

- (1) Be an asylum seeker or a refugee who is not eligible for the state Free Fees scheme, SUSI grants and/or the state pilot support scheme (documentation of status will be required)
- (2) Meet the eligibility criteria for their chosen UCC degree course through the CAO application process (including the Mature Student Entry route, which closes for applications on February 1st)
- (3) Be living in the Republic of Ireland, and
- (4) Be able to live in commuting distance to Cork during their studies.

The scheme is targeted at people who have not had the opportunity to study at (or complete) undergraduate education

The scheme does not include accommodation support. For queries please contact edunit@ucc.ie

SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland)

SUSI provides tuition fee and maintenance assistance to Irish, EU and refugee students at third level with low levels of income. You will normally have to meet EU/EEA Fees status (see above) to be eligible to apply.

The course must be a full-time, approved course (all Bachelor's degrees at UCC are SUSI-approved courses), and the levels of help are different depending on the type of course and how much you/your parents earn. Visit the SUSI website for full details, and check out their eligibility reckoner (<https://susi.ie/>)

Student Support Scheme

If you're still in the asylum application process and can't apply for SUSI for this reason, you may need to look at the Student Support Scheme (<https://www.education.gov.ie/en/Services/Student-Support-Scheme/>) instead. This provides financial assistance in a similar way to SUSI.

- You must have spent at least 3 years in secondary school in Ireland
- You must be at least 3 years in the asylum process
- You cannot be on a deportation order