



A N R O I N N | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | A N D S K I L L S



Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund

Strand 2

1916 Bursary Fund

**For students from target groups identified as currently
being under-represented in Higher Education**

Implementation Guidelines

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1. Background to the 1916 Bursary Fund

1.1 Context

The *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019* ('National Access Plan') was published in December 2015. The overall vision informing the goals, objectives and actions of the Plan is to ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.

The *National Access Plan* contains a number of targets to increase participation by specific categories of students. Target groups include entrants from under-represented socio-economic groups and communities; entrants with disabilities; first time mature entrants; members of the Irish Traveller community; students entering on the basis of a further education award; and part-time flexible learners.

Subsequent to the launch of the National Access Plan, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) established the *Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund*. This Fund comprises dedicated funding to support access to higher education, which is allocated on a competitive basis to higher education institutions (HEIs) to support particular priority measures as determined by the Department of Education and Skills. Under the first strand of PATH funding was made available for support equity of access to initial teacher education.

In Budget 2017 a new Bursary Fund was announced to commemorate the centenary of 1916 as part of an overall package of access measures to promote participation by under-represented groups in higher education. This funding is being provided under Strand 2 of PATH. The 1916 Bursary Fund underlines the Government's commitment to the type of equality of opportunity envisaged by the 1916 signatories.

1.2 Objective of the Fund

Consistent with the vision, goals and target groups in the the National Access Plan, the objective of the proposed new Bursary Fund is to encourage participation and success in higher education by students from sections of society significantly underrepresented in the student body availing of higher education. The Fund promotes regional and community partnership strategies to develop innovative ways of targeting eligible students through the competitive call for proposals model. The Fund will complement existing student supports and access initiatives available for students who are most economically disadvantaged.

1.3 Scope of the Fund

The 1916 Bursary Fund will provide financial support through bursaries to students who

have been identified by a regional cluster of HEIs as meeting the eligibility criteria for the Fund.

Students must be **from one of the following target groups:**

- Socio economic groups that have low participation in higher education
- First time Mature student entrants
- Students with a disability – particularly students with a physical/mobility impairment, students who are deaf/hard of hearing and students who are blind or have a visual impairment
- Irish Travellers
- Further education award holders
- Lone parents who have been confirmed by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) as holding a means tested social welfare payment as confirmed by DSP (at least 20% of the bursaries must be targeted at lone parents).
- Ethnic minorities (including programme refugees and persons from other ethnic minority groups lawfully present in the State who meet the definition of student in section 14 of the Student Support Act 2011 and regulation 5 of the Student Support Regulations 2017. S.I. No. 126 of 2017).

Funding will be initially provided for the award of 200 bursaries in each of the next 3 academic years, commencing in 2017/18. Continuation of the Fund, for new bursary awards, will be subject to a full review in Year 3. Existing bursary holders will continue to be eligible to receive their bursary for the duration of their studies, subject to their continued compliance with the bursary guidelines.

2. Administration of the Fund

2.1 Management of fund

The PATH 2 – “1916 Bursary Fund” supported under Strand 2 of the *Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund* is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

2.2 Funding allocation and governance process

Following a competitive process (PATH 2) based on a call for proposals from regional clusters of HEIs, the HEA will approve a defined number of bursaries to successful clusters of HEIs for each academic year. The specific amount of funding for each HEI within the cluster will be identified.

Each regional cluster will be required to identify a lead institution for the purposes of the bursary scheme. Funding for the cluster will be allocated through the lead institution and the lead institution will be accountable to the HEA for funding allocated.

HEIs should operate the fund in accordance with these guidelines agreed by the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA.

In the event of multi-annual allocation for bursaries under PATH 2, funding will be

released for the second and third year of the successful years provided that the HEA is satisfied with the implementation of the fund.

The lead institution will also be expected to report on progress to the Steering Group for the National Access Plan.

There will be an evaluation of the final outcome of each project and the results will be submitted to the DES.

2.3 Student Selection process

The 1916 Bursary Fund devolves the responsibility for identifying eligible students to the clusters of HEIs who are best placed to identify the target students.

Successful clusters of HEIs will be responsible for selecting the students to be awarded bursaries and will be responsible for the implementation of the Bursary fund according to the selection procedures set out in their successful (PATH 2) proposals and approved by the PATH 2 assessment panel. As part of the student selection process the HEIs will be required to ensure that successful students meet the eligibility criteria as per the call for proposals, and as set out in section 2.4 of these guidelines. Selection processes should be fully documented.

2.4 Eligibility Criteria

Clusters may only consider students for a 1916 Bursary who meet the following eligibility criteria;

- Student must be **from one of the following target groups**
 - Socio economic groups that have low participation in higher education
 - First time mature student entrants
 - Students with a disability – particularly students with a physical/mobility impairment, students who are deaf/hard of hearing and students who are blind or have a visual impairment
 - Irish Travellers
 - Further education award holders
 - Lone parents who have been confirmed by DSP as holding a means tested social welfare payment as confirmed by DSP (at least 20% of the bursaries must be targeted at lone parents).
 - Ethnic minorities (including programme refugees). Ethnic minorities for the purposes of PATH 2 include programme refugees and persons from other ethnic minority groups lawfully present in the State who meet the definition of student in section 14 of the Student Support Act 2011 and regulation 5 of the Student Support Regulations 2017. S.I. No. 126 of 2017.
- Students must be **socio-economically disadvantaged** regardless of the target group.
- Students must be pursuing an undergraduate course and be **progressing to higher**

education for the first time – (for 2017/18 academic year they can be entering in 2017/18 or existing undergraduate student who are currently in the system (first time entrants)).

- Bursaries may be provided to **full or part-time students**. It is expected that a number of the bursaries will be provided to students studying on a part-time basis.
- Students must be attending an **approved full-time or part-time undergraduate course** that meets the guidelines of the fund in one of institutions approved for funding. See Appendix 2 for definitions of approved courses.

2.5 Awards and Offers process

The regional clusters of HEIs are responsible for the award of bursaries within their own cluster, following completion of the selection process. Students selected for a Bursary should be notified by their institutions as soon as possible after selection process. An appeals procedure should be part of the process. The terms and conditions applying to Bursary holders as set out below in these guidelines should be notified to the awardees. Confirmation should be obtained in respect of compliance with the relevant terms and conditions of funding. The successful candidate must accept the bursary offer in respect of an approved course for the current academic year or the offer will lapse.

Bursary holders should also be advised of details of the institutional supports that will be provided to incoming students to support student completion, in line with their agreed funding proposal.

Any application for deferral of a bursary must be made when accepting the bursary offer. The bursary may be deferred for one academic year and for that period only with the prior written permission of their Institution. Deferrals should be notified to the lead institution who will report to HEA. Institutions may only consider awards and deferrals within their agreed funding allocation.

3. Bursary conditions

3.1 Period of eligibility and student progression

- 3.1.1** The bursary shall be awarded for the normal duration of an approved course in an approved institution. Bursaries may be approved for study across all disciplines, if the course meets the definition of an approved course.
- 3.1.2** Bursary holders will be expected to fulfill the regulations of their college/institution and to undergo any examination/assessment as determined by the authorities of their college/institution for their course.
- 3.1.3** Bursaries may be renewed where it is confirmed by the appropriate authority in the institution that the holder has progressed to the next year of their course, course following the successful completion of a part of the course as required during the previous year, subject to the normal duration of the approved course.
- 3.1.4** The Bursary may be continued after graduation from their undergraduate course where a student is in progression i.e. transferring from one course to another where the award that may be made on the successful completion of the second

course is of a higher level than the award obtained on the successful completion of their first course.

- 3.1.5** Bursaries may **not** be paid in respect of a repeat period of study on the same course or at repeat period of study on a different course at the same level of a course approved for the purposes of this Bursary fund. The institution **may waive this rule where there are exceptional circumstances** such as certified serious illness in accordance with guidelines agreed by the cluster.
- 3.1.6** A bursary holder who, during the course of his/her studies wishes to change course or faculty, must obtain the prior written approval of their institution, and must be reported accordingly to the HEA.
- 3.1.7** A bursary holder who, during the course of his/her studies wishes to defer his/her bursary for one academic year and for that period only, must obtain the prior written approval of their institution, and must be reported accordingly to the HEA, though the lead institution.
- 3.1.8** A bursary may be awarded for a maximum of four years in respect of full time undergraduate provision. Exceptions may be considered in circumstances where it can be demonstrated that normal course duration exceeds this. It may be held for six years in respect of part-time undergraduate provision. Bursaries will only be awarded for the normal duration of a course and where students are in progression and not in respect of repeat years.
- 3.1.9** The bursary may be deferred following graduation for up to one academic year and for that period only with the prior written approval of the HEI and subject to available funds and the fund continuing.
- 3.1.10** The lead institution may terminate a bursary at any time, where the bursary holder no longer meets the terms and conditions of the bursary fund.

3.2 Value of Bursaries

Each bursary will be in the amount of €5,000 per annum. This applies to both full and part-time students. The annual value of the bursary is in accordance with the rates specified by the Minister of Education and Skills. There are no variations to be applied to this amount.

3.3 Conditions in respect of other supports

The following conditions will also apply:

- Students are not entitled to receive the 1916 Bursary in conjunction with any other bursary, scholarship or award of similar description.
- Students can hold the 1916 Bursary and the student grant simultaneously, where they meet the eligibility conditions of the student grant scheme. The 1916 Bursary will be an income disregard for the purposes of 'reckonable income' in the student grant scheme.
- Students can apply for financial assistance through Student Assistance Fund (SAF) and/or the Fund for Students with a Disabilities (FSD).
- The 1916 Bursary will be an income disregard for the purposes of means tested social welfare payments.
- The bursary will have no impact on the individual's DSP social welfare payment. It will therefore be paid in addition to the income supports the individual is receiving from the DSP.

- Students on Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) can get bursary without it having any impact on their BTEA entitlement.
- Funding from the Bursary will be disregarded for all means tested social welfare payments.

3.4 Payment of Bursaries

- The paying authority for this bursary will be the relevant institution within the approved number of bursaries and approved funding.
- The bursary should be paid in instalments over the course of the academic year.
- Payment will be made into the student's Irish bank account.
- The first instalment in each academic year of the approved course shall not be made until the students have been registered and are attending an approved course.
- An approved institution is required to verify at regular intervals that a person awarded a bursary is continuing to engage with their course, in accordance with its rules, and is continuing to attend the course for which they have been approved in that institution. The awarding authority must not pay the second or subsequent bursary instalments, before it has received such verifications.

3.5 Other Conditions

- It will be a condition of funding that necessary data sharing arrangements which will be between the HEA and the institutions are in place, subject to data protection considerations.
- Awardees under the fund may be invited to participate/attend publicity events.

4. Financial reporting, Evaluation and control requirements

Successful clusters /HEIs will be required to meet HEA reporting requirements. Record-keeping and financial reporting for the Bursary fund serve a number of distinct requirements. They are:

- a) To establish the ongoing position of institutions regarding the allocation of the fund locally at a relevant point in time but in particular at the end of the financial period.
- b) To gather data for the purpose of research and development of the access initiative

In line with normal governance of State funding the HEA reserves the right to carry out transaction testing.

Details of outcomes of evaluations of the 1916 Bursary scheme must also be made available to the HEA. The HEA plans to undertake its own evaluations of the Fund. The HEA reserves the right to carry out an audit of the implementation of the scheme.

5. Data collection

The Higher Education Authority will collate data for the purpose of research,

development and evaluation of this access initiative and in accordance with Data Protection legislation. HEIs will be required to comply with data requests.

HEA process this in the public interest, for historical research purposes or statistical purpose.

6. Contact details for queries and assistance

Any questions regarding these guidelines should be submitted in writing via e-mail to Emer Musonda (emusonda@hea.ie).

APPENDIX 1

Regional Cluster Member Institutions

South

University College Cork,
Cork IT,
IT Tralee,
Waterford IT
IT Carlow

Mid-West

University of Limerick
Mary Immaculate College,
Limerick IT

West

Galway-Mayo IT
IT Sligo
Letterkenny IT
NUI Galway (incorporating St. Angela's College)

Dublin / Leinster *Pillar I*

University College Dublin
Trinity College Dublin
National College of Art and Design
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology

Dublin / Leinster *Pillar II* *

Dublin Institute of Technology
IT Tallaght
IT Blanchardstown
Dublin City University
Dundalk IT
Maynooth University
Athlone IT

** Institutions should note that the original establishment of the clusters, provided for DIT, ITB and IT Tallaght to operate as a sub-cluster of Dublin cluster II as they are engaged in a merger/designation as a technological university process. Accordingly, proposals for PATH 2 and 3 will be accepted from this sub-cluster and from the MEND sub-cluster of DCU, DkIT, MU and AIT.*

APPENDIX 2

Approved Courses - 2017 Bursary Scheme

Undergraduate

A **full-time** or **part-time** undergraduate course leading to a major higher education and training award at Level 6 (Higher Certificate), Level 7 (Ordinary Bachelor Degree), Level 8 (Honours Bachelor Degree) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or equivalent awards;
that:-

- (a) takes not less than **two years** to complete, and
- (b) on the successful completion of which a student is awarded a major higher education and training award, leading to an award of level 6 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, which is a recognised qualification pursuant to the national framework of qualifications, and
- (c) is provided by one of the approved institutions listed in **Appendix 1** of these guidelines.