



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills**

HEA

**HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS**

***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
2019/20**

(updated March 2019)

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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 2015¹. 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. In December 2018 a Progress Review of the National Access Plan² was published which among its recommendations include an extension of the National Access Plan to 2021.

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 and has been allocated on a competitive basis to higher education institutions (HEIs) to support particular priority measures as determined by the Department of Education and Skills.

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.

The other PATH Strands (Strands 1 and 3) relate respectively to access initiatives to initial teacher education and the development of regional and community partnership strategies for increasing access to higher education by specified target groups.

1.2 Objective of Fund

Consistent with the vision, goals and target groups in the National Access Plan (NAP), the objective of the proposed new Bursary Fund is to encourage participation and success in higher education by students who are the most economically disadvantaged and who are from communities 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

¹ A copy of the National Access Plan is available at: <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Plan-for-Equity-of-Access-to-Higher-Education-2015-2019.pdf>

² A copy of the Progress Review is available at: <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/12/HEA-Progress-Review-NAP-2021.pdf>

model. The Fund will complement existing student supports and access initiatives available for students who are most economically disadvantaged.

1.3 Scope of Fund

The 1916 Bursary Fund will provide financial support through bursaries to new entrants to higher education who are socio-economically disadvantaged and have been identified by a regional cluster of HEIs as meeting the eligibility criteria for the Fund. Specific eligibility criteria are set out in Section 2.4 below.

All students must be economically disadvantaged **AND** 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
- Those entering on the basis of a further education award
- Lone parents who have been confirmed by the Department of Social Affairs and Employment Protection (DEASP) as holding a means-tested social welfare payment (at least 20% of the bursaries must be targeted at lone parents)
- Ethnic minorities

Funding is being provided for the award of 200 bursaries in each of the three academic years starting 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 approved a defined number of bursaries to successful clusters of HEIs for each academic year.

Each regional cluster is required to identify a lead institution for the purposes of the bursary scheme. Funding for the cluster is allocated through the lead institution and the lead institution is 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 overall evaluation of the Bursary Fund in Year 3 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 revised proposals reflecting the feedback of the PATH 2 assessment panel and approved by the HEA. 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 2.4 of these guidelines. Selection processes should be fully documented.

HEIs should work closely with community groups and organisations to determine eligibility and ensure that potential applicants from the target groups referred to above are aware of the 1916 Bursary.

It is intended that HEIs will form effective partnerships within their clusters, and also show evidence of how they will engage with local DEIS schools, Further Education providers, community and voluntary groups, existing local initiatives to tackle educational disadvantage, Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), and other relevant stakeholders.

2.4 Eligibility criteria

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

- ALL students must be **socio-economically disadvantaged** regardless of the target group. Students must be able to demonstrate that they would qualify for the highest level (the special rate) of SUSI grant and/or are in receipt of a DEASP means-tested social welfare payment. For example, a mature student is eligible for the Fund on the basis that they are a first-time entrant **and** are socio-economically disadvantaged.

- 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 (in the year of entry for the first time to a higher education course is at least 23 years old)
 - 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
 - Those entering on the basis of a further education award
 - Lone parents who have been confirmed by DEASP as holding a means-tested social welfare payment (at least 20% of the bursaries must be targeted at lone parents)
 - Persons from ethnic minorities who are lawfully present in the State and are:
 - a national of a Member State, a state which is a contracting state to the EEA agreement or the Swiss Confederation,
 - or person whose current immigration status or leave to remain under the Department of Justice and Equality, is one of the following:
 - Refugee (including programme refugees);
 - Subsidiary Protection;
 - Permission to remain as the family member of an EU/EEA/Swiss citizen under the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2006 and 2008 and EU Directive 2004/38/EC (EU Treaty Rights provisions);

- Permission to remain because of marriage/civil partnership with an Irish national or as dependent child of such person;
- Humanitarian leave to remain granted before the Immigration Act 1999 came into effect;
- Permission to remain following a decision not to deport under Sections 3 of the Immigration Act 1999; or
- Permission to remain as a dependent child of a person who has acquired Irish Citizenship by naturalisation, residing in the State.

For further clarification, please see Section 14 of the [Student Support Act 2011](#) and regulation 5 of the Student Support Regulations 2018, SI 101 of 2018.

HEIs must satisfy themselves that students come from one of the relevant target groups and that they meet any relevant criteria.

- ALL students must be new entrants pursuing an undergraduate course and **progressing to higher education for the first time**. For 2019/20, the planning work and application processes for bursaries should be done prior to the annual offer of places in HEIs. The actual awarding of the bursary may be done once the student has accepted a place in the relevant HEI and has registered in the HEI. Closing dates for applications should be set no later than the summer period preceding autumn registration.
- 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 pursuing an **approved full-time or part-time undergraduate course** that meets the guidelines of the Fund in one of the institutions approved for funding. This includes online provision if the course meets the definition of an approved course. See appendix 2 for definitions of approved courses.
- Students must have been resident in the Irish State for three of the past five years on the date on which a year of study commences.

2.5 Pre-Entry Awarding of Bursaries

In order to support the selection of students prior to entry to higher education, application processes (including shortlisting of awardees) should be carried out before the offer of courses and the start of the 2019/20 academic year. The application process should be accompanied by close collaboration between clusters and community groups and organisations.

While clusters are expected to carry out pre-entry application processes, it is recognised that clusters may not be in a position to offer bursaries to students until they have been offered a place on a course in a HEI within the cluster and can confirm that they will receive the special rate of SUSI grant and/or are in receipt of a DEASP means-tested social welfare payment. Therefore, clusters are recommended to develop and manage

their processes in order to reflect this. Should a student receive and accept a place in a HEI outside of the cluster to which they made their application, the cluster may decide to transfer the bursary to another cluster in order to enable the student to avail of the bursary. The HEA must be notified of such transfers so that the necessary adjustments can be made in financial allocations to clusters and in reporting. It is assumed that HEIs within clusters will transfer bursaries between them in order to enable students who have been shortlisted for bursaries to avail of them. This means that the overall number of bursaries allocated among HEIs within a cluster and among the clusters may ultimately increase or decrease depending on the HEI that the student has received an offer of a place from.

At all times during the application process, students must be made aware that the final offer of a bursary cannot be made until the student is offered a place on a course in the cluster in question and confirmation is in place that they will receive the special rate of SUSI grant and/or are in receipt of a DEASP means-tested social welfare payment.

2.6 Awards and offers process

The regional clusters of HEIs are responsible for the awarding of bursaries within their own cluster, following completion of the selection process. The outcomes of the selection procedures should be notified to students including those selected for a bursary as soon as possible after the selection process and after confirmation has been provided that they have been offered a place on a course in the HEI in question and can confirm that they will receive the special rate of SUSI grant and/or are in receipt of a DEASP means-tested social welfare payment. An appeals procedure should be part of the process. The appeals procedure will be in respect of process only, and appeals must be received and completed within 21 days of the announcement of awards. The terms and conditions applying to bursary holders are set out below in these guidelines and 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 is expected to accept the bursary offer in respect of an approved course for the current academic year or the offer will lapse. An application for deferral of a bursary may 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 the HEA. Institutions may only consider awards and deferrals within their agreed funding allocation (Appendix 3).

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.

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, 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 (e.g. from Level 7 to Level 8). A bursary may be renewed immediately following graduation to enable the holder to pursue an approved undergraduate course which offers progression. In relation to postgraduate courses (Level 9 or 10), a 1916 Bursary recipient wishing to study at postgraduate level may be in receipt of a bursary but will be required to make a new application for the bursary following completion of their undergraduate studies - bursaries for postgraduate courses may not be automatically awarded to a bursary recipient following completion of their undergraduate course. Bursaries for postgraduate courses are considered to be new bursaries and must be offered from within a cluster's overall existing allocation.
- 3.1.5** Bursaries may **not** be paid in respect of a repeat period of study on the same course or a repeat period of study on a different course at the same level as a course approved for the purposes of this Bursary Fund. A bursary is therefore paused until the student completes the repeat year and progresses. The institution **may waive this rule** in relation to not funding a repeat year of study **where there are exceptional circumstances** such as certified serious illness in accordance with guidelines agreed by the cluster. Notification should be provided to the HEA in respect of the funding arrangements for bursary recipients that are repeating. As per 3.1.8, bursary recipients funded for a repeat year of study will qualify as an exception and continue to receive the bursary for the duration of their course.
- 3.1.6** A bursary holder who, during 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 through the cluster lead.
- 3.1.7** A bursary holder who, during 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, through 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. Where a bursary is awarded in respect of postgraduate studies, it can only be awarded for a maximum of four years (full-time or part-time).

3.1.9 The bursary may be deferred following graduation (e.g. from Level 6 or from Level 7) 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.

3.1.11 A bursary may be retained by a student that transfers to another higher education institution providing that the student has completed at least one year of study in the higher education institution that awarded the bursary. This is subject to progression as outlined in 3.1.5. Once the transfer of a bursary has been agreed by the relevant HEIs, or the relevant cluster leads in the case of a bursary recipient transferring outside of the initial awarding cluster, the HEA should be advised accordingly and without delay. The bursary is then transferred to the new higher education institution and will be included in the next funding allocation for the relevant cluster.

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. As per 3.1.8, the maximum value of a bursary in relation to a full-time undergraduate course is €20,000, and the maximum value in respect of a part-time undergraduate course is €30,000.

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, irrespective of value.
- 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 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 DEASP social welfare payment. It will therefore be paid in addition to the income supports the individual is receiving from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.
- Students on Back To Education Allowance (BTEA) can get a bursary without it having any impact on their BTEA entitlement.

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 Arrangements for terminated bursaries

In circumstances where a bursary recipient has not returned to higher education, clusters may reallocate the bursary subject to the following conditions:

- 3.5.1** Every effort must be made by HEIs to support recipients who indicate that they are considering withdrawing from higher education. HEIs should actively engage with such recipients and, in so far as is possible, understand the reasons for non-progression. Exit interviews should be conducted.
- 3.5.2** Clusters must be fully satisfied that a recipient is not returning to higher education. The bursary should be formally terminated. At that point the bursary can be considered for reallocation.
- 3.5.3** Students awarded a reallocated bursary must meet the eligibility criteria of the Fund in full.
- 3.5.4** The period of a reallocated bursary must not exceed the duration of the originally awarded bursary. For example, the bursary of a recipient awarded in the first year of a three-year programme who does not return to higher education for the second year may be reallocated for the remaining two years.
- 3.5.5** Clusters should ensure that the HEA is kept apprised of the reallocation of bursaries. Reallocated bursaries will also need to be recorded in the reporting process.

3.6 Other conditions

- It will be a condition of funding that necessary data sharing arrangements between the HEA and the institutions are in place, subject to data protection considerations. It is the responsibility of HEIs to inform students of the data sharing arrangements within a cluster in respect of selection processes.
- Awardees under the Fund may be invited to participate/attend publicity events. Participation by award recipients in publicity events should be voluntary, and clusters should not place obligations on award recipients in this regard.

4. Financial reporting, evaluation and control requirements

Successful clusters / HEIs are required to meet HEA reporting requirements. Clusters must keep the HEA informed of the progress on the roll-out of the Bursary Fund. This includes the requirement to immediately report any issues to the HEA which may impact on the timely and effective provision of bursaries.

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 and academic year 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 aggregate and anonymised data and may share it with a trusted third party for the purpose of research, development and evaluation of this access initiative and in accordance with Data Protection legislation, and may share it with a trusted third party. HEIs will be required to comply with data requests.

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

6. Contact details for queries and assistance

Any questions regarding these guidelines should be submitted in writing via e-mail to access@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 North-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
Marino Institute of Education

Dublin / Leinster Pillar II consisting of:

Technological University Dublin (formerly Dublin Institute of Technology, IT Tallaght and IT Blanchardstown)

MEND (Midlands, East and North Dublin)

Dublin City University
Dundalk IT
Maynooth University
Athlone IT

APPENDIX 2

Approved Courses - 2018 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 in the regional clusters of HEIs.

APPENDIX 3

1916 Bursary Fund: Cluster Allocations

Cluster	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
Dublin/Leinster Pillar I	40	40	40	120
MEND	40	40	40	120
Mid-West	35	35	35	105
South	35	35	35	105
West North-West	25	25	25	75
TU Dublin	25	25	25	75
Total	200	200	200	600