



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



PATH

Programme for Access
to Higher Education

Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)
Strand 2

1916 Bursary Fund

for students from target groups identified as currently being under-represented in higher education

Implementation Guidelines 2020/21

Table of contents

1. Overview of the 1916 Bursary Fund	3
1.1. Background	3
1.2. Objective and Scope of the 1916 Bursary Fund.....	3
1.3. Governance and Administration.....	4
2. Application and award process for the 1916 Bursary Fund	5
2.1. Eligibility criteria.....	5
2.2. Promotion	6
2.3. Application process.....	6
2.4. Selection process	7
2.5. Award process.....	7
3. General conditions of the 1916 Bursary Fund	7
3.1. Payment	7
3.2. Duration of bursaries	8
3.3. Student progression.....	8
3.4. Conditions in respect of other supports	8
3.5. Deferral or transfer bursaries	9
3.6. Termination of bursaries.....	9
4. Reporting and evaluation requirements under the 1916 Bursary Fund	9
5. Data collection under the 1916 Bursary Fund	10
6. Contact details	10
APPENDIX 1	11

1. Overview of the 1916 Bursary Fund

1.1. Background

The [National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019](#) (National Access Plan) was published in December 2015. The overall vision of this 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 Plan and Priorities to 2021](#) was published which, among its recommendations, included an extension of the National Access Plan to 2021.

The National Access Plan identified six priority groups who have traditionally been under-represented in higher education and set quantitative targets for each of these groups. These are:

- socio-economic groups that have low participation in higher education;
- first-time, mature students;
- students with disabilities;
- part-time/flexible learners;
- further education and training award holders; and
- Irish Travellers.

The National Access Plan also indicated subgroups requiring particular support, including lone parents, teen parents, and ethnic minorities.

Subsequent to the launch of the National Access Plan, the Department of Education and Skills established the [Programme for Access to Higher Education \(PATH\) Fund](#), dedicated to increasing the participation of these under-represented groups in higher education. The three strands of PATH demonstrate the government's prioritisation of, and commitment to, supporting and further developing equity of access to higher education. It is envisaged that the impact of PATH will be long-lasting and ensure better targeting of the most disadvantaged groups in Irish society.

1.2. Objective and Scope of the 1916 Bursary Fund

The objective of the 1916 Bursary Fund, provided under Strand 2 of PATH, is to encourage participation and success in higher education by students who are the most economically disadvantaged and who are from communities significantly under-represented in the student body availing of higher education (see section 2.1.1). Lone parents and ethnic minorities with a socio-economic disadvantage are also target groups. The Fund has promoted regional and community partnership strategies to develop innovative ways of targeting eligible students through the competitive call for proposals model. The Fund complements existing student supports and access initiatives available for students who are most economically disadvantaged.

Following a competitive call for proposals from regional clusters of HEIs (see figure 1), the HEA initially approved a defined number of bursaries to each cluster for the three academic years commencing 2017/18. Funding was initially provided for the award of 200 bursaries per year.

On foot of recommendations made by the HEA in their initial assessment of PATH 2 a decision has been taken to roll out the Fund for a further three years commencing in the academic year 2020/2021. These bursaries support students who are the most socio-economically disadvantaged from within groups most under-represented in higher education. Target groups

include those students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities or low levels of participation in higher education, Irish Travellers, students with a disability, first time mature students, further education award holders and lone parents.

The roll-out of the Fund for a further three years will support a total 600 new students, across the six clusters of higher education institutions, bringing the total number of individual students to be supported since its introduction as a targeted measure to 1200 students by 2022. At least 20% of the bursaries will be targeted at lone parents.

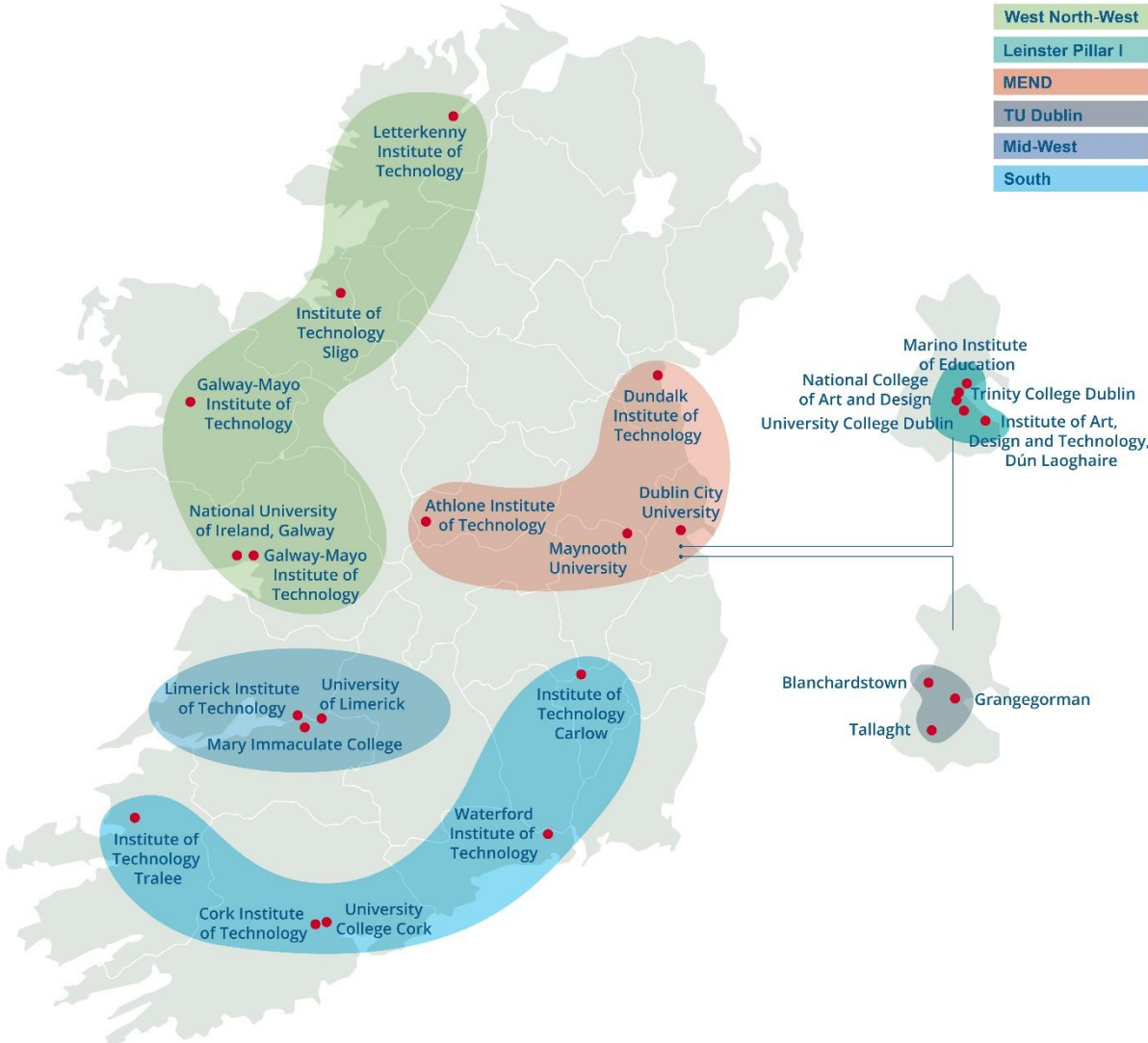


Figure 1 – Regional clusters of HEIs

1.3. Governance and Administration

The 1916 Bursary Fund is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are expected to operate the 1916 Bursary Fund in accordance with these guidelines.

The HEA devolves responsibility for the application, selection and award processes for the 1916 Bursary Fund to the regional clusters of HEIs. Funding for each regional cluster is allocated through a lead institution, accountable to the HEA for progress as outlined in section 4. Release of funding will be contingent on the receipt of satisfactory reports demonstrating progress in line with agreed project plans.

The number of bursaries allocated to each cluster for 2020/21 is in line with the outcomes of the call for proposals and is as follows:

Leinster Pillar I (UCD, TCD, NCAD, IADT, Marino Institute)	40
MEND (DCU, MU, DKIT, IADT)	40
Mid-West (UL, MIC, LIT)	35
South (UCC, CIT, IT Tralee, WIT, IT Carlow)	35
West/North-West (LyIT, NUIG, GMIT, IT Sligo)	25
TU Dublin	25

2. Application and award process for the 1916 Bursary Fund

2.1. Eligibility criteria

2.1.1. All applicants must be **socio-economically disadvantaged** (see section 2.1.2) **AND** from one or more of the following target groups:

- Students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities or low levels of participation in higher education;
- first-time, mature students (23 or older on 1 January of their year of entry to higher education);
- students with a disability (particularly those with a physical or mobility impairment, those who are deaf or hard of hearing and those who are blind or have a visual impairment);
- Irish Travellers;
- further education and training award holders progressing to higher education;
- lone parents (confirmed by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection as holding a means-tested social welfare payment). At least 20% of the bursaries will be targeted at lone parents.; and
- students 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;

- a person in respect of whom the Minister for Justice and Equality has granted humanitarian leave to remain in the State under any enactment for the time being in force;
- permission to remain following a decision not to deport under Sections 3 of the Immigration Act 1999;
- permission to remain as a dependent child of a person who has acquired Irish Citizenship by naturalisation, residing in the State.; or
- a person granted permission to reside in the State under Section 49 of the International Protection Act 2015 (No.66 of 2015)

For further clarification, see [section 14 of the Student Support Act 2011](#) and regulation 5 the Student Support Regulations 2020 (Statutory Instrument No. 77 of 2020).

- 2.1.2. All applicants, regardless of which target group(s) they are from, must demonstrate that they would qualify for the special rate of maintenance grant under [Student Universal Support Ireland \(SUSI\)](#) and/or are in receipt of a Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection means-tested social welfare payment.
- 2.1.3. All applicants must be first-time new entrants to higher education.
- 2.1.4. All applicants must be pursuing an approved full- or part-time undergraduate course, of not less than two years in duration, leading to a major higher education and training award of level 6 or above on the [National Framework of Qualifications](#), or equivalent.
- 2.1.5. All applicants must be pursuing their studies at an approved HEI (see figure 1).
- 2.1.6. All applicants must have been resident in the State (Republic of Ireland) for three of the past five years on the date on which their first year of study commences.

2.2. Promotion

- 2.2.1. It is required that HEIs work closely with community groups and organisations, e.g. DEIS schools, further education providers, to ensure that eligible applicants are aware of the 1916 Bursary Fund and to promote awareness of the Fund. HEIs will be expected to show evidence of this engagement as part of the progress reporting process.
- 2.2.2. The 1916 Bursary Fund must be advertised on the websites of participating HEIs. The material provided should be clear, consistent with these guidelines and include the relevant contact details should a potential applicant require further information about the application and award process.
- 2.2.3. From time to time, bursary holders may be invited to participate in events to promote the 1916 Bursary Fund. This participation should be voluntary, and no obligations should be placed on a bursary holder in this regard.

2.3. Application process

- 2.3.1. While clusters are expected to carry out pre-entry application processes including close collaboration with community partners and organisations, 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.

- 2.3.2. Prior to making an application, students must be made aware that a bursary will not be awarded to successful applicants until they have been formally offered a place at the HEI to which they are applying and confirmation has been received that they satisfy the requirements set out under section 2.1.2.

2.4. Selection process

- 2.4.1. It is a requirement of funding that at least 20% of bursaries in a given year will be awarded to lone parents.
- 2.4.2. It is expected that a number of bursaries in a given year will be provided to students studying on a part-time basis.
- 2.4.3. The HEA expects that all selection processes are fully documented in line with general data protection regulation requirements.
- 2.4.4. The outcome of the selection process should be notified to applicants as soon as possible after it has concluded.
- 2.4.5. Applicants should be permitted to appeal the outcome of their application in respect of process only. Any such appeal must be complete within 21 days of the applicant being made aware of the outcome of their application.

2.5. Award process

- 2.5.1. It is the HEI's responsibility to confirm that successful applicants satisfy the eligibility requirements set out in section 2.1 prior to formally offering them a bursary.
- 2.5.2. HEIs should work towards the early notification of outcomes of the selection process including where possible a notification of a conditional offer of a bursary. The formal awarding of a bursary, however, may only occur once the student has accepted their place at the relevant HEI.
- 2.5.3. All bursary holders should be advised of the institutional supports available to them to enhance their student experience in higher education.
- 2.5.4. Should a student accept a place at a HEI outside of the cluster to which they applied, that cluster may decide to transfer a bursary so that the student can avail of it. Where this happens within a cluster, it is assumed that HEIs will transfer bursaries between themselves resulting in the number of allocated bursaries varying accordingly. The HEA should be notified in either instance.

3. General conditions of the 1916 Bursary Fund

3.1. Payment

- 3.1.1. Bursaries are in the amount of €5,000 per annum for both full- and part-time students and no variations should be applied to this amount.
- 3.1.2. Bursaries should be paid in instalments, directly to the bursary holder's Irish bank account, over the course of an academic year.
- 3.1.3. It is the HEI's responsibility to coordinate payment of the bursary in a timely manner.

3.2. Duration of bursaries

- 3.2.1. A bursary will be awarded for the normal duration of a full-time undergraduate course as defined in Appendix 1. The bursary may also be held for progression at undergraduate level, i.e. from Level 6 to Level 7 and from Level 7 to Level 8. Where the normal duration of a Level 8 course exceeds four years, the bursary will be awarded for the full course duration.
- 3.2.2. A bursary will be awarded for the normal duration of a part-time undergraduate course (i.e. Level 6, 7 or 8), up to a maximum period of six years.

3.3. Student progression

- 3.3.1. Bursary holders are expected to abide by the regulations of their HEI and undergo any examinations or assessments as required of their course. The HEI is required to verify, at regular intervals, that the bursary holder is continuing to satisfy their course requirements prior to paying further instalments. Where this is not the case, no further instalments should be paid.
- 3.3.2. Bursaries may be renewed where it has been confirmed that the holder has progressed to the next year of their course. The first instalment due in a new academic year should not be made until the bursary holder has been fully registered at their HEI.
- 3.3.3. Bursaries should not be paid in respect of a repeat period of study, therefore any student repeating a year must have their bursary paused until they progress. The HEI is permitted to waive this rule where there are exceptional circumstances, e.g. certified serious illness. Any such recipients funded for a repeat year of study should continue to receive the bursary for the duration of their course.
- 3.3.4. In relation to postgraduate courses (Level 9 or 10), a 1916 Bursary recipient who has successfully completed their undergraduate course and wishes to progress their studies to postgraduate level will be required to make a new application for the bursary immediately following completion of their undergraduate studies. Bursaries for postgraduate courses should not be automatically awarded to a bursary recipient following completion of their undergraduate course. Bursaries for a postgraduate course are considered to be new bursaries and must be offered from within a cluster's overall existing allocation. In such case a bursary will be awarded for the normal duration of a full-time or part-time postgraduate course.

3.4. Conditions in respect of other supports

- 3.4.1. Students are not permitted to hold a 1916 Bursary in conjunction with any other bursary, scholarship or award, irrespective of value.
- 3.4.2. Where relevant, a bursary holder is permitted to avail of any additional financial supports available to them where they are benefitting from the opportunity to study abroad as part of their course e.g. Erasmus+.
- 3.4.3. Where relevant, students are permitted to hold a 1916 Bursary in combination with a [SUSI](#) grant.
- 3.4.4. Students on Back to Education allowance or other Department of Employment and Social Protection social welfare payments can hold a 1916 Bursary without it having any impact on their Back to Education allowance entitlement or other social welfare payment.

- 3.4.5. A 1916 Bursary will be considered as income disregard for the purposes of reckonable income in relation to SUSI grants or means-tested social welfare payments.
- 3.4.6. Bursary holders are permitted to apply for the [Student Assistance Fund](#) and/or be covered for supports under the [Fund for Students with Disabilities](#).

3.5. Deferral or transfer bursaries

- 3.5.1. Bursary holders are permitted to defer their bursaries for a maximum of one academic year with the prior written approval of their HEI. The HEA must be kept apprised of any such deferrals as part of the progress reporting process.
- 3.5.2. A bursary holder who wishes to change course must obtain the prior written approval of their HEI. The HEA must be kept apprised of any such changes as part of the progress reporting process.
- 3.5.3. Subject to the conditions of student progression as outlined in section 3.3, a bursary may be retained by a student that is transferring to another HEI provided that the student has completed at least one full year of study. The HEA must be informed immediately so that the bursary can be transferred to the relevant cluster, where relevant, in the next funding allocation.

3.6. Termination of bursaries

- 3.6.1. A HEI may terminate a bursary at any time where the bursary holder is no longer adhering to the requirements of the 1916 Bursary Fund.
- 3.6.2. A bursary holder may terminate their bursary at any time, however this action should not be taken without prior consultation with their HEI.
- 3.6.3. In circumstances where a bursary has been terminated, it may be reallocated by the HEI subject to the following conditions:
 - every effort has been made to support the original bursary holder who has indicated they wish to withdraw from higher education;
 - the HEI is fully satisfied that the original bursary holder will not be returning to higher education;
 - where possible, an exit interview has been conducted with the original bursary holder to understand their reasons for non-progression;
 - a formal notice of termination has been issued to the original bursary holder;
 - the new bursary holder meets the eligibility criteria as outlined in section 2.1;
 - the duration of the reallocated bursary does not exceed the duration of the original bursary; and
 - the HEA is kept apprised of any reallocated bursaries as part of the progress reporting process.

4. Reporting and evaluation requirements under the 1916 Bursary Fund

- 4.1. The HEA is responsible for monitoring performance and ensuring effective progress under the 1916 Bursary Fund.

- 4.2. HEIs are required to report any issues which may impact on the timely and effective provision of bursaries to the HEA immediately.
- 4.3. The lead HEI for each regional cluster is responsible for preparing and submitting annual progress and financial reports addressing a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators.
- 4.4. The lead HEI for each regional cluster is accountable for proper use of the 1916 Bursary Fund.
- 4.5. Release of funding will be contingent on the receipt of satisfactory reports demonstrating progress in line with agreed project plans.
- 4.6. The lead HEI for each regional cluster will be required to report on progress to enable regular updates to be provided to the National Action Plan Steering Group.
- 4.7. A full impact assessment of PATH 2 – 1916 Bursary Fund will be carried out in 2022.
- 4.8. The HEA reserves the right to carry out transaction testing and to commission audits of participating HEIs for financial or other compliance matters.

5. Data collection under the 1916 Bursary Fund

- 5.1. Clusters are required to comply with data requests received from the HEA.
- 5.2. The HEA will collate aggregate and anonymised data received as part of the progress reporting process for evaluation, public interest and statistical purposes and may share it with a trusted third party in accordance with general data protection requirements. The HEA will also consult with its Data Protection Officer in relation to the possibility of introducing data sharing agreements with HEIs.
- 5.3. It is the responsibility of the HEI to inform students of the data collection arrangements outlined above and to ensure that all processes associated with data processing for applications and awards are GDPR-compliant.

6. Contact details

Any queries relating to these guidelines should be emailed to access@hea.ie.

APPENDIX 1
1916 Bursary Fund - Approved Courses

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 award 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.