

Free Fees Initiative

Criteria for Determining Eligibility

Tuition fees may be paid in respect of the full-time students who have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss State/United Kingdom for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to their third-level course and who meet the criteria of the scheme. Eligibility under the scheme is determined at date of entry to the course. Details of the nationality criteria to be applied are under the 'Nationality' section on the [HEA website](#).

The scheme is subject to the following conditions:

1. Tuition fees will be paid in respect only of students attending full-time undergraduate courses.
2. The courses must, other than exceptionally, be of a minimum of two years duration.
3. Tuition fees will **not** be paid in respect of:
 - students pursuing a second undergraduate course,
 - students who already hold a postgraduate qualification.

Notwithstanding this condition and subject to compliance with the other conditions of the Free Fees initiative, students who already hold a Level 6 qualification (Higher Certificate or National Certificate) or a Level 7 qualification (Ordinary Bachelor Degree or National Diploma) and are progressing on the same programme to a Level 8 (Honours Bachelor Degree) course without necessarily having received an exemption from the normal duration of the course may be deemed eligible for free fees for their final year.

Students who hold a Level 6/7 qualification, and who were approved under the FFI for the course, and who undertake a **new** Level 8 course from year one cannot be considered as progressing for the purposes of the FFI. In this case the Level 8 course would be considered as a second undergraduate course and not eligible under the FFI. However, students may be entitled to free tuition fees for the final year of their Level 8 programme.

4. Tuition fees will also not be paid in respect of students undertaking a repeat year of study at the same year level. In this regard, this condition may be waived where evidence of exceptional circumstances, such as cases of certified serious illness, is provided.
5. Subject to compliance with the other conditions of the Free Fees Initiative, students who have previously pursued but have not completed a course of third level study and subsequently resume third level studies:
 - a) May be deemed eligible for free fees where the third level course concerned did not attract any exchequer funding (e.g. fees, maintenance, tax relief, subsidy towards course cost).

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Criteria for Determining Eligibility (Continued)

- b) are not eligible for free fees for the equivalent period of time spent on the first course of study where the third level course concerned did attract exchequer funding (as above). Part-time and evening students are included in this category.
6. Tuition fees will be paid in respect of eligible students who, having attended but not completed approved courses, are returning following a break of at least five years in order to pursue approved courses at the same level.
 7. The tuition fees payable do not include the payment to be made by students towards the cost of registration, examination and student services.