

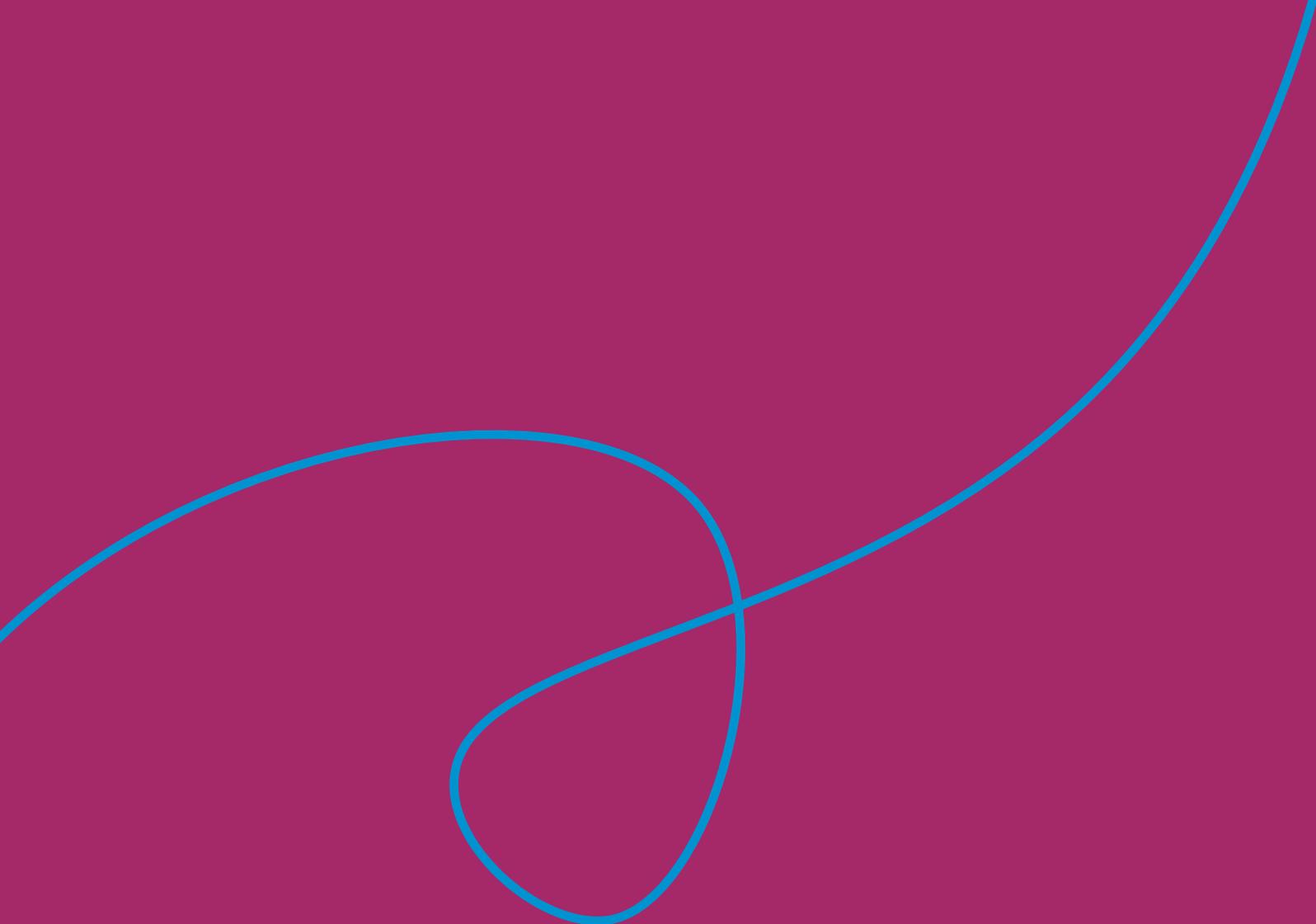


Citizens **Information** Board
information · advice · advocacy



Leaving School

Everything you need to know about life after school



This booklet is published by the Citizens Information Board. The information in this booklet is for general guidance only and is not a legal interpretation.

Call us on **0818 07 4000** or visit [citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie).

March 2026.

Contents

- 4** School's over – what now?
- 6** Career paths – what are my options?
- 9** Apprenticeships and training
- 10** PLCs and other routes to college
- 13** Applying for college and the CAO
- 19** College fees and student grants
- 21** Other financial supports in college
- 24** Disability supports in college
- 26** Finding a place to live
- 30** Studying abroad
- 34** Taking a year out
- 36** Getting a job
- 42** Looking after your mental health
- 46** Health and sexual health
- 48** What else do I need to know about Adulting?
- 50** Getting more information



School's over – what now?

So, pretty soon, school will be out forever. Or, maybe you're already finished school and are wondering, "What now?" That's where the Citizens Information Leaving School guide comes in.

This guide covers things like:

- College and further education options
- How to apply for college
- Getting a student grant and other financial supports
- Where to find apprenticeships
- Finding somewhere to live
- Starting a job for the first time
- Taking a year out

You can also get more information from:

- [citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie)
- Your local [Citizens Information Centre](#)
- The Citizens Information Phone Service on **0818 07 4000**

Citizens Information on social media

Follow us on social media for updates from citizensinformation.ie!



[@citizensinformation](#)



[@citizensinformation](#)



[@citizensinformationboard](#)



QR for more

This guide uses black and white QR codes to provide more information. Point the camera on your smartphone at the QR code to learn more about a topic.

The online version of this guide includes links to all topics. Scan this QR code to visit the online version of the Leaving School guide.



Career paths – what are my options?

Whether you're going into your final year of school, or you've just finished your Leaving Cert, you may be wondering what your employment options are.

There are many career paths you can take and, when it comes to picking a college, apprenticeship, training, or work option, it can feel daunting to take that first step.

Remember, the choice you make now doesn't have to be forever. It's okay to start along one career path and then decide it's not for you.

How do I decide what to do after school?

When deciding what you want to do after school, think about things that interest you. These can be school subjects, hobbies or activities, or anything at all.

There are many **career sectors**, and with so much choice, you may feel overwhelmed. It can help to look at the sectors broadly to see if anything grabs your interest. Career sectors can be grouped under seven main categories.

1. Agriculture, Animals & Food.
2. STEM, Environment & Construction.
3. Healthcare, Wellbeing & Sport.
4. Creative Arts, Fashion & Media.
5. Government, Law & Education.
6. Accountancy, Finance & Insurance.
7. Business, Sales & Tourism.



What is Qualifax.ie?

Use [Qualifax.ie](https://www.qualifax.ie) to browse a database of up to 15,000 courses at varying levels to find one that suits you.

Find information on the career paths you can take in each of these categories on CareersPortal.ie.

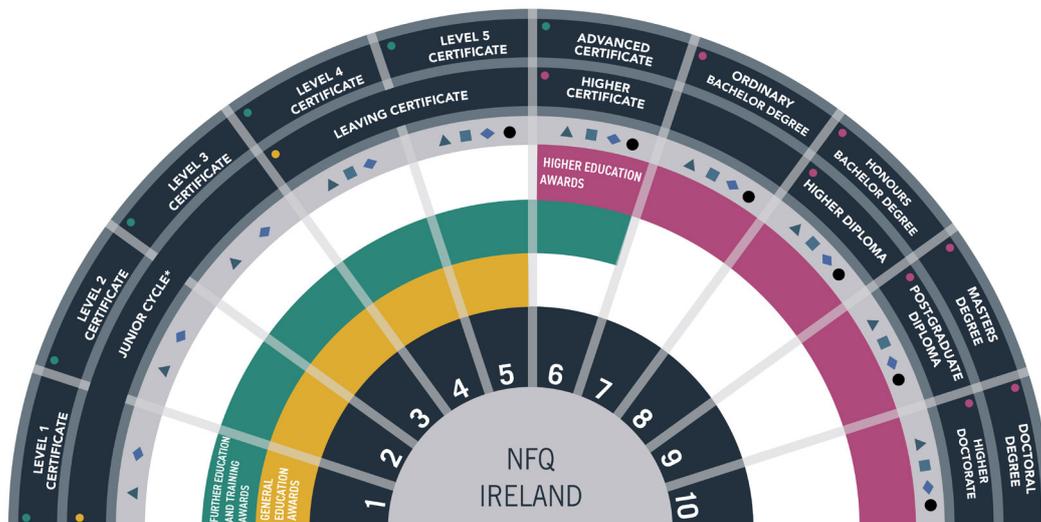


Careers Portal

CareersPortal.ie is the national career guidance service in Ireland. It has information about different occupations and apprenticeships, and about different career sectors.

Whatever you choose to do, you'll need certain skills and qualifications. In general, when you complete a further or higher education course, you get awarded a qualification from levels 1 to 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Use the NFQ to compare courses and see which ones can help you along your chosen career path. The NFQ can also help with getting your Irish qualification recognised abroad.



National Framework of Qualifications, qqi.ie

When you've decided what kind of further study or training you want to do, it's time to apply.



What is the National Framework of Qualifications?

The 'level' of a qualification refers to its level on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This tells an employer what you know, understand, and can do after achieving a qualification.



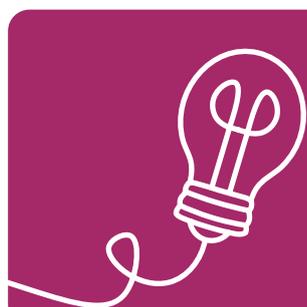
Apprenticeships and training

If you want to learn a trade or profession, you may be interested in an **apprenticeship**.

This gives you on-the-job training with an employer in a craft trade (such as plumbing or carpentry), or a profession (such as ICT, finance, hospitality, or farming). You'll also do off-the-job training in an education centre. In general, an apprenticeship lasts between two and four years.

While you're training on the job, your employer pays you a recommended apprenticeship wage. The amount you get depends on your industry. You may also be entitled to allowances, such as a tool allowance, and tax relief.

Depending on your preferred apprenticeship programme, you can start from 16 to 18 years of age (there's no upper age limit). Apprenticeships lead to nationally and internationally recognised qualifications, from levels 5 to 9 on the NFQ.



Where can I find information on apprenticeships?

Find out about apprenticeships and how to apply on [apprenticeship.ie](https://www.apprenticeship.ie). You can also go to the [apprenticeship section of careersportal.ie](https://www.careersportal.ie).

An apprenticeship is just one example of a **Further Education and Training (FET) course**. There are more **full-time and part-time FET courses listed on [fetchcourses.ie](https://www.fetchcourses.ie)**, including traineeships, community and adult education. Depending on your circumstances and the course, you may **be paid an allowance**.

If you're aged 15 to 20 and leave school without formal qualifications, you can do a **Youthreach** course. This includes basic skills training, practical work training, and general education, and you get a weekly allowance.



What is the Work Placement Experience Programme?

The **Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP)** gives people who have never had a job, or who have lost their job, a chance to get work experience. You must meet certain criteria to qualify for WPEP, including getting a qualifying social welfare payment.

PLCs and other routes to college

While the CAO is the main route to third-level education, it's not the only option. Other pathways to third-level education include:

- Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses
- Tertiary education courses

What are PLC courses?

Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses are full-time courses that offer a mix of practical work, academic learning and work experience. They are a step towards skilled employment in different areas, including:

- Accountancy and business
- Agriculture
- Art, craft and design
- Biomedical and pharmaceutical science
- Cloud computing with coding
- Computer science
- Hairdressing, barbering and beauty care
- Multi-media studies and journalism
- Personal training with sports science
- TV and film production
- Tourism

PLC courses run throughout the country and are usually at Levels 5 or 6 of the NFQ. You can go on to do a third-level degree course when you complete your PLC course.



Where can I find PLC courses?

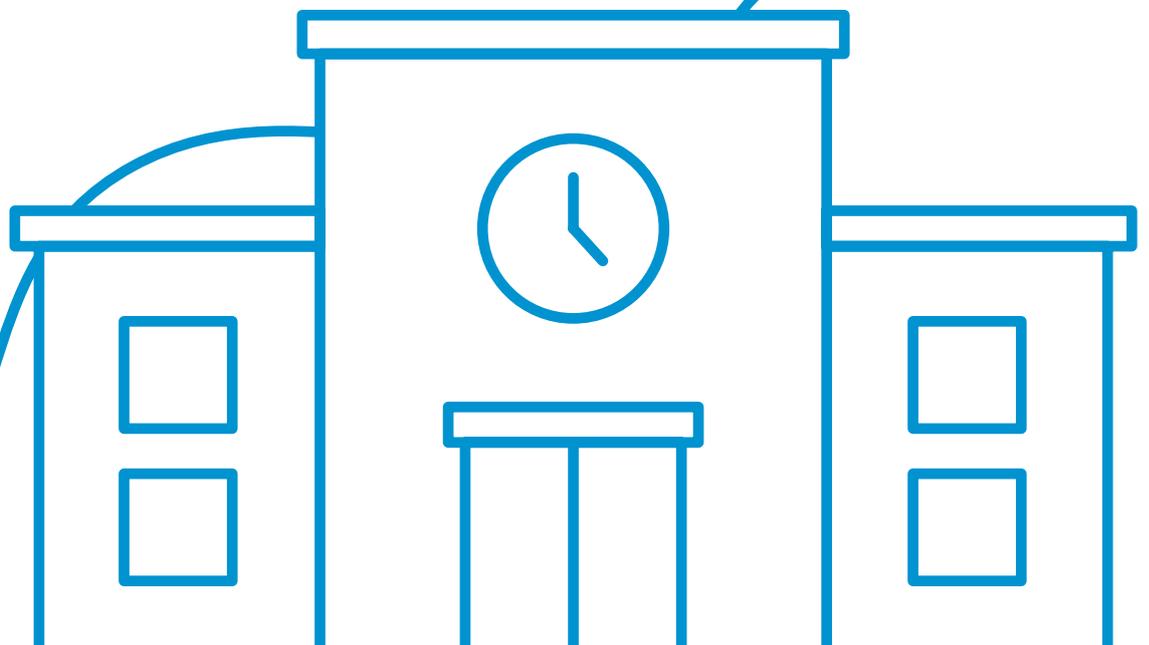
Find a list of PLC courses available throughout Ireland on careersportal.ie. You can also search by region on the Education and Training Boards Ireland website etbi.ie, or search for PLC courses on the [Qualifax website](https://qualifax.ie).

What is the tertiary education programme?

You can get a third-level degree at Level 7 or 8 of the NFQ through **the tertiary education programme**. You start your course in a further education college and finish it in a higher education college or university.

Tertiary degrees have a different entry process. You don't apply through the CAO or need the same Leaving Cert points. Instead, courses have their own entry requirements. There are more than 40 courses available, including:

- Animation
- Business
- Computing with AI
- Manufacturing
- Nursing
- Occupational therapy
- Politics
- Public health
- Software development
- Social work
- Sports science



Where can I find information on tertiary education courses?

Read **FAQs about tertiary degrees** on the National Tertiary Office (NTO) website nto.heai.ie. You can see which courses are available, as well as the entry requirements and application dates on the **NTO's courses page**.



Applying for college and the CAO

You apply for almost all full-time third-level undergraduate courses through the Central Applications Office (CAO).

Undergraduate courses include:

- Higher Certificates (Level 6)
- Ordinary Bachelor degrees (Level 7)
- Honours Bachelor degrees (Level 8)

You can find a list of all the courses on offer and information on how to apply in the CAO Handbook.

When do I apply to the CAO?

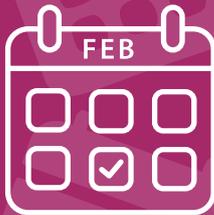
You can apply for courses online through the CAO portal from November to February each year. Depending on your circumstances, you can submit a late application until 1 May 2026. You usually apply during sixth year of school, and progress to third-level when you finish your Leaving Cert exams.





What is the CAO?

The CAO processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The HEIs decide who gets places on their courses, and they tell the CAO. If successful, you'll be offered a place through the online CAO portal.



What is a restricted-application course?

Some courses are 'restricted-application' courses. These have early assessment or interview procedures. For example, if you're applying for a course in the National College of Art & Design, you may need to submit a portfolio. If you want to apply for a restricted course, make sure to include it in your CAO application in time, so that your early assessment can be arranged. Assessments can happen as early as February.



How do I apply to the CAO?

You can apply to third-level institutions through the CAO portal. Find a step-by-step guide on how to apply for college through the CAO on citizensinformation.ie.

Before you start your CAO application, you should read the latest version of the **CAO Handbook**. This has helpful and important information about the process.



What is a personalised CAO Handbook?

You can create a **personalised CAO Handbook** on the CAO website cao.ie, which you can then view on your phone or tablet in the CAO Handbook app. First you pick your interests and where you'd like to study, and the CAO website will suggest courses for you.

Important!

When it comes to picking your courses, list your courses in your genuine order of preference. Do NOT list them based on how you think you'll perform in your exams.

You'll be offered the first course on your list that you're eligible for, so if you're offered your first choice, you won't be offered your second choice. But, if you're offered your third choice, you might still be offered your second or first choices in later rounds.



Practice makes perfect!

Before applying for real, you can practice doing your application using the **demo application form** on the CAO website cao.ie.

What are HEAR and DARE?

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) are college admissions schemes. Both schemes give third-level places to students on a 'reduced points basis'. This means you could get a place on your chosen third-level course, even if you don't have enough CAO points.

- HEAR is for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds that are under-represented in third-level education.
- DARE is for students with a specific disability or learning difficulty, who have experienced additional educational challenges.

You must confirm on your CAO application if you want to be considered for either the HEAR or DARE schemes. You also need to submit supporting documents, usually by mid-March. You can apply to both DARE and HEAR if you think you're eligible.

Find out more about HEAR and DARE on [citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie).

Can I change my mind about courses?

Yes. You can add courses or change your course choices online up to the closing date in February, free of charge. If you want to change your courses between February and early March, a fee applies (usually €10). The free change of mind facility re-opens in early May until early July.

The CAO sends you a Statement of Application Record before the end of May asking you to verify that your application information is correct.



How will I get my offer?

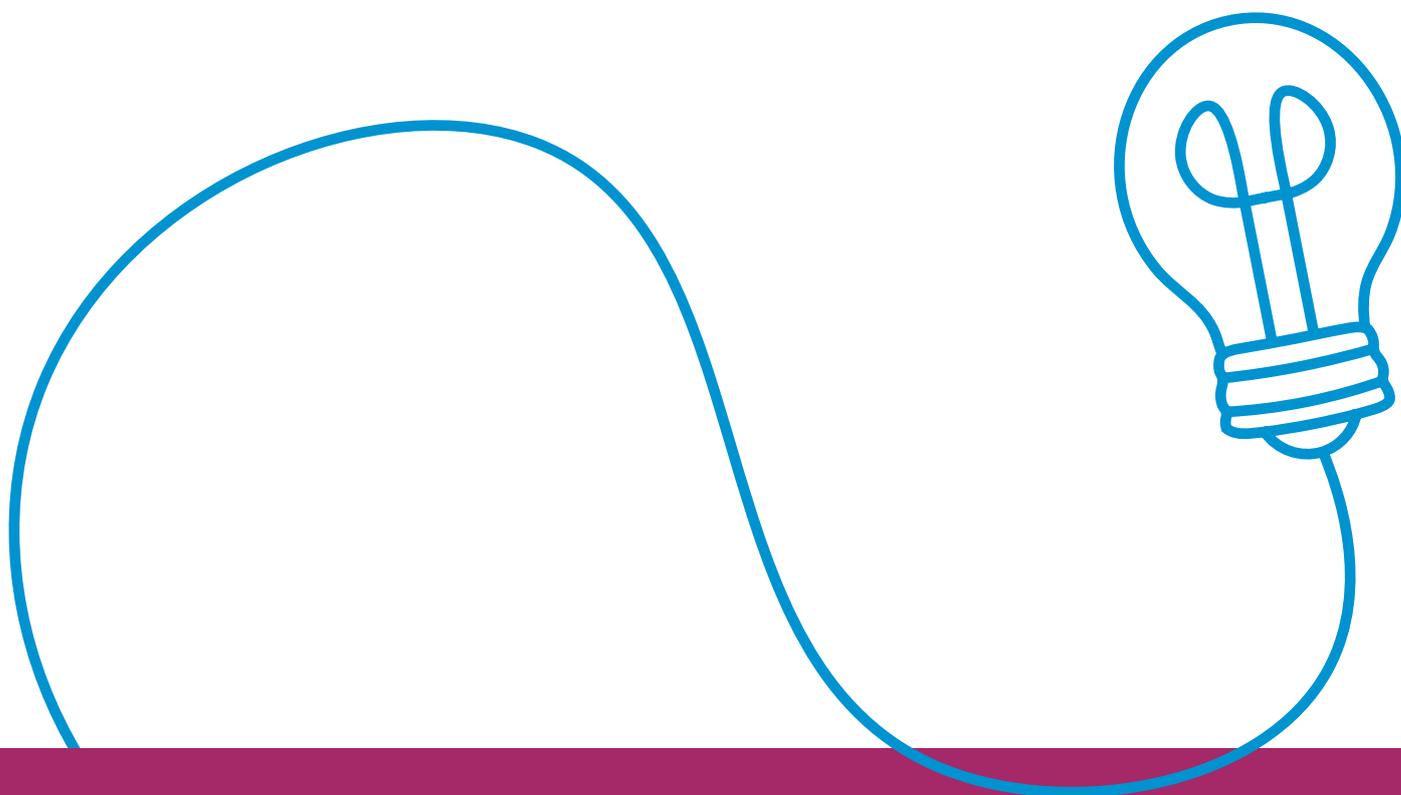
You will get an email with your offer, so make sure to check your emails regularly. You can also check the **Table of Events** page on [cao.ie](https://www.cao.ie) for offer date details.

When do I get my offer?

Round A	Who it applies to: Applicants not waiting on Leaving Cert results, such as mature students and deferred applicants	When? Usually in July
Round Zero	Who it applies to: Graduate entry medicine candidates and other categories	When? Early August
Round 1	Who it applies to: Applicants waiting for Leaving Cert results	When? Usually August (after the Leaving Cert results are released)

What do I need to know about accepting an offer?

If you apply for courses from both the Level 8 and Level 6 or 7 lists, you may get offers from both lists. You can only accept one offer, in any one round. So, if you get more than one offer, you need to choose which offer to accept.



Important!

If you accept a lower preference course in an earlier round, you can still be offered a higher preference course in a later round.
If you accept the higher preference offer in a later round, this automatically cancels your acceptance of the lower preference offer.

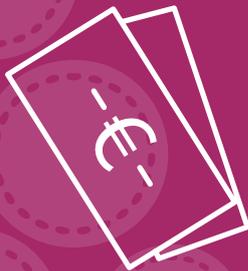


College fees and student grants

Do I have to pay tuition fees to go to college?

Most undergraduate students doing publicly funded third-level courses don't pay **tuition fees**. The **Free Fees Initiative** means the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science covers the cost of the fees instead. But you still have to pay the **student contribution**.

You must meet **certain criteria to qualify** for free fees, but you don't need to apply – you'll be assessed for free fees based on your college application. If you don't qualify for free fees, then you may be able to get **tax relief for the student contribution and tuition fees**.



What is the student contribution?

Most colleges charge an annual **student contribution**, also known as a registration fee, which covers student services and examinations. The maximum rate of the student contribution is now €2,500. This is separate to tuition fees, which are generally covered by the **Free Fees Initiative**.

Getting a student grant

If you are a full-time PLC student or third-level undergraduate, you may qualify for a **student grant**. Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) administers the grant.

The student grant has 2 parts:

1. A maintenance grant, which is a contribution towards your living costs.
2. A fee grant, which can cover all or part of your fees, the student contribution, and the cost of essential field trips.

To qualify for a student grant, you must meet all the **conditions of the scheme**, including passing a means test.

There is a **special rate of maintenance grant** for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, which tops up the ordinary student grant. You may qualify for this if you or your parents are getting certain social welfare payments or taking part in specific programmes.

How do I apply for a student grant?

Student grant applications usually open in April and close in early November each year. You can make a late application, but **only in certain circumstances**.

You apply for a student grant online at [susi.ie](https://www.susi.ie).

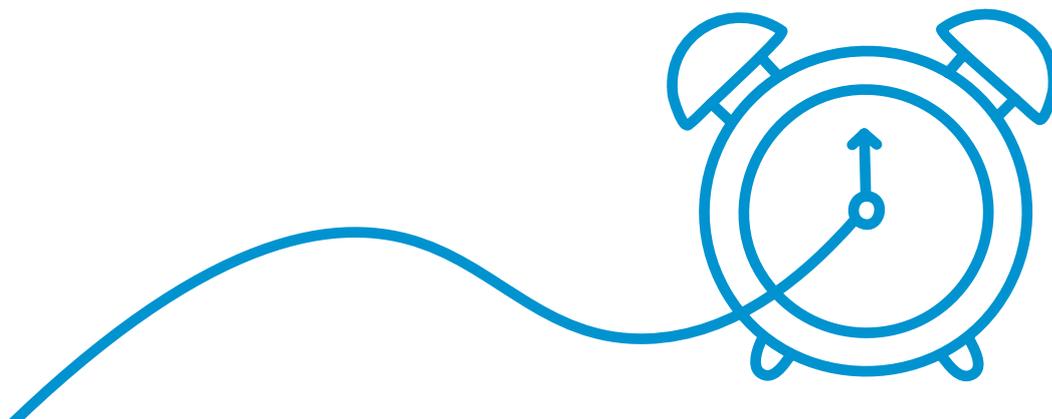
Follow these steps to apply:

1. Check if you're eligible for a grant by looking at the **eligibility criteria** on the SUSI website or by using **SUSI's Eligibility Indicator**.
2. Create an account in the SUSI Student Portal. You'll need your name, date of birth, email address, phone number and PPS number, or log in using your verified MyGovID account.
3. Complete and submit your **application form**. Make sure all details are accurate and up to date.
4. Send in any requested documents. You will get a checklist letter from **SUSI listing what documents you need**.

Then you wait for your grant decision. You'll get a letter telling you whether you've been awarded or refused a grant.

Is there a grant for part-time courses?

You can apply for the **part-time fee scheme** if you are studying certain undergraduate courses. The amount you get depends on **the number of credits you take during the academic year**. The part-time fee scheme offers support with fees only. It is not a maintenance grant.



How do I know if I qualify for a student grant?

Use **SUSI's Eligibility Indicator** on [susi.ie](https://www.susi.ie) to see if you may qualify. The indicator only applies to full-time courses.

Other financial supports in college

What is the Student Assistance Fund?

The **Student Assistance Fund (SAF)** provides financial support to full-time or part-time students in higher education with financial difficulties. It can help with the cost of books, rent, food and essential travel. It does not cover tuition fees, registration fees or student loan repayments.

What colleges participate in the SAF?

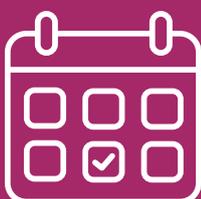
You can find a list of **participating colleges** on the Higher Education Authority website: hea.ie. To apply for the SAF, you contact the student services section of your college.

Experience of care

If you've had care experience for at least six months before turning 18, you may qualify for the **Bursary for Care Experienced Young People**. It gives financial support towards tuition fees up to a maximum of €5,000.

Returning to education

If you've been out of school for some time and you're getting a qualifying social welfare payment, you may qualify for the **Back to Education Allowance** to take part in full-time education.



When can I apply for the Bursary?

You can usually apply between September and October of the year you're attending college. Application details are published on the Tusla website: tusla.ie.

Further Education and Training (FET) allowances

You may **get a training allowance** if you take part in certain Further Education and Training (FET) programmes. These include apprenticeships, Youthreach and Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). Training allowances vary depending on your existing social welfare payment. Find more information about FET allowances on [fetchcourses.ie](https://www.fetchcourses.ie).

What if I want to study farming?

You can get different **financial supports to help with the cost of studying farming**, such as the [Teagasc Student Maintenance Grant Scheme](#).

Managing your money

One of the biggest challenges you'll face as an adult, whether you're going to college or not, is learning how to manage your money. Food, travel and household costs are just some of the things you need to manage day-to-day.



Can I get help with managing my money?

The [Money Advice and Budgeting Service \(MABS\)](#) has **money tools on mabs.ie**, including a budget tool to help you create a budget plan. You can also call MABS on **0818 07 2000** to speak with an adviser.

It is never too early to think about **pensions, savings and investments**. The idea of grappling with pensions or starting a savings account can seem daunting when just out of school but getting into the habit of saving early can have huge benefits later in life.



Top tips to control your spending

Spunout.ie has some tips on **how you can manage your spending**, such as making a weekly meal plan (to avoid convenient but costly takeaways)!



Disability supports in college

What supports can I get in college if I have a disability?

If you have a disability, specific learning difficulty or mental health difficulty, tell your college's disability or access service. They can work with you to make sure you have the supports you need for the course you're doing. These supports can range from extra time in exams to assistive technology.

What is the Fund for Students with Disabilities?

The **Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)** is one of the main funding sources for students with certain disabilities. You can apply if you do a course from PLC-level to doctoral level and **meet some other conditions**.

It covers things like:

- Assistive technology
- Academic and learning support
- Help with transport
- Non-medical helpers, such as personal assistants or notetakers
- Sign language interpreters



Where do I find my college's disability or access service?

AHEAD works with and for people with disabilities to help shape inclusive environments in education and employment. Find information about dealing with a college's disability or access service on ahead.ie. You can also visit your college's website to find information on their service.



Finding a place to live

While a big part of the college experience is gaining independence, finding student accommodation isn't easy. Before you decide to move out of home, you should consider certain factors.

1. Find out about your lectures

Blended learning has become more popular in recent years, so check how much blended learning is included in your course, and how often you need to be on campus. Some courses have mandatory in-person attendance (for example, science-related courses often have regular labs on campus).

2. Can you commute?

Figure out if you can commute to college from home instead of moving out. Consider things like cost and travel time. While commuting can be a hassle, it's cheaper than moving out if you're within a reasonable distance of college.

How do I find student accommodation?

Some colleges offer on-campus accommodation called student halls or halls of residence. Contact the college you're going to for information on their accommodation and how it's allocated. You can also check your college's prospectus or website for information on accommodation options for students.

You could also consider renting an apartment or house by yourself or with others. If you're nervous about leaving home for the first time, you could rent a room in a family home. This is often called 'digs'. You can search online for student accommodation or consider renting from a private landlord. Where to search for accommodation online.

You can check these popular websites to help you find accommodation:

- [Collegecribs.ie](https://www.collegecribs.ie)
- [Daft.ie](https://www.daft.ie)
- [Myhome.ie](https://www.myhome.ie)



How do I know if my tenancy is registered?

Check the register on the **website of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) - RTB.ie**. Your landlord must register your tenancy with the RTB every year. The RTB also helps resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. If you rent a room in your landlord's home, this does not come under the RTB's remit.

Beware rental scams!

Wherever you decide to rent, always view the property in-person before you sign a tenancy agreement or pay a deposit. Check the landlord is registered with the RTB, and ask for a written lease or rent book.

With so many students seeking accommodation at similar times every year, rental scams are common. Don't be rushed into decisions when deciding where to rent and beware of offers that seem too good to be true. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission has good advice on how to identify rental accommodation scams. You can find more [tips on renting in college on the RTB website](#).

What do I need to know about living away from home?

If you plan to live away from home, work out how much you can afford for rent. Don't forget to allow for bills like electricity and heating, and to budget for food and other expenses.

Figure out [if you're a 'tenant' or a 'licensee'](#), because your rights will vary.

You're usually a tenant if you:	You're usually a licensee if you:
Rent a property, or room in a property, from a landlord whom you don't live with	Rent a room in your landlord's home
Rent a self-contained flat or apartment in your landlord's home	Rent a room from another tenant

I'm a tenant

You have certain rights as a tenant. For example, you're entitled to [minimum standards of accommodation](#) and a certain amount of notice [if your landlord wants you to leave](#).

You also have responsibilities as a tenant, such as paying your rent on time and keeping the property in good order.

If you have a [dispute with your landlord](#), you should try to resolve it between yourselves. If you can't resolve it, contact [Threshold](#) for advice and consider taking the issue to the [RTB's dispute resolution service](#). The service covers disputes about deposits, lease terms, termination of tenancies, rent arrears, market rents, and more.

I'm a licensee

As a licensee, you're in the rented property with your landlord's consent. This means you have fewer legal protections than a tenant. Your tenancy is not covered by residential tenancies legislation, and the protections tenants get don't apply to you.

This means your landlord doesn't have to follow the usual rules for landlords, such as:

- Registering with the RTB
- Making sure your room meets minimum standards
- Giving you a set amount of notice if they want you to leave

You should draw up a licence agreement with your landlord that covers the key issues of your arrangement.

If you're a licensee, renting a room from another tenant, you can ask your landlord to recognise you as a tenant when you've been there for 6 months.



Important!

If you are renting student-specific accommodation, you have most of the same rights as other private tenants – but there are some differences which are important to know.



What is Threshold?

Threshold has information about what you should know before signing a lease. They can give you advice about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. Threshold also has an FAQ page for licensees.



Can I get Student Accommodation Assistance?

If you are part of the Traveller or Roma communities, or have had experience of the care system between the ages of 16 and 18 and don't qualify for an aftercare allowance, you can apply for Student Accommodation Assistance.





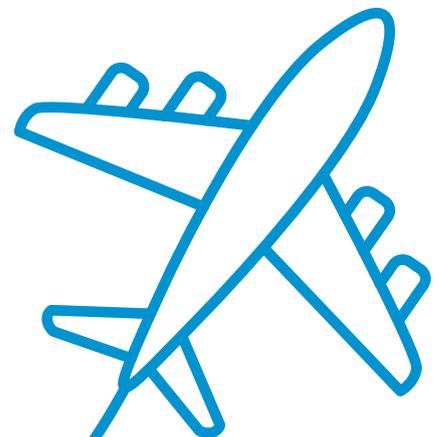
Studying abroad

More Irish students are choosing to **study abroad** each year. Many programmes in other countries are taught through English. They have realistic entry requirements, available places, and free or low fees for a good standard of education. Sometimes, the course you want to do is only available, or more easily accessed, by going abroad.

What do I need to think about when considering studying abroad?

- How to apply for courses in different countries.
- College fees and grants to help with costs.
- Practical matters, like finding somewhere to live and living expenses.

Some countries have a central body that processes college applications, like the CAO in Ireland. In other countries, you just apply directly to the college. So, check how to apply once you've found a course you're interested in.



Help with applying to colleges abroad?

EUNiCAS is an independent application support service that helps Irish students access college programmes abroad. EUNiCAS does not charge universities for listing courses in its database. You can visit their website eunicas.ie for more information.

Can I study in Northern Ireland or the UK?

You can study in Northern Ireland or the UK if you're an Irish citizen and you've been resident in Ireland for three years before the start of your course. You pay college fees in the same way as UK students, but you may be eligible for an Irish student grant.

UCAS is the equivalent to the CAO system in the Republic of Ireland. It manages all the applications for full-time undergraduate courses for universities and colleges across the UK. **UCAS has earlier application deadlines** than the CAO, and the dates can vary depending on which course you want to study.

Can I get financial support if I study outside of Ireland and the UK?

You can get a maintenance grant under the Student Grant Scheme if you're studying in another EU country and meet certain criteria. You can also apply for the part-time fee scheme if you're studying certain undergraduate courses, to help with the cost of fees.

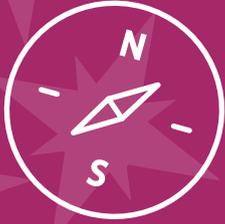
You can claim tax relief if you have paid the fees, either on your own behalf or on behalf of another person. You cannot claim tax relief on any part of the tuition fees that are paid directly or indirectly by a grant, a scholarship, or otherwise.

Studying abroad while already in college

You may want to study abroad for part of your course, but not for the whole time you're in college. Check if your college has a student exchange programme, which lets you swap places with a student from another country.

You can also study abroad through the Erasmus+ programme, if you're in at least your second year of college and are studying a recognised degree. Erasmus+ provides funding to help cover your travel costs and living expenses, but you cover other costs yourself. You cannot apply directly to Erasmus+. You must apply through a participating organisation, such as your school or college or place of work.





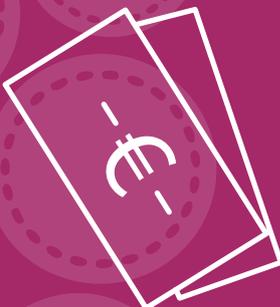
How do I find courses in Northern Ireland and the UK?

You can search for undergraduate and postgraduate courses on the Study UK website: study-uk.britishcouncil.org. You can also find courses on the UCAS website: ucas.com.



How do I find courses abroad?

The **International Association of Universities** and **UNESCO** have a **searchable online database** of higher education institutions from around the world at whed.net. The database has information on admission requirements, how to apply and fees.



How can I find out about other financial supports for studying abroad?

The International Education Financial Aid (IEFA) website iefa.org provides a database of grants, scholarships, loan programmes and other information for students who want to study abroad.



Taking a year out

You don't have to start college or a training course straight away. You might want a break after the Leaving Cert, or you may need time to figure out what you want to do.

Taking a year out from education could be the right option while you decide what's next. When considering taking a year out, you should have a plan for how you're going to spend the year.

What do I need to know before deciding to take a year out?

You can read about things to consider and how to prepare for a gap year on [Spunout.ie](https://www.spunout.ie).

Can I defer my college place?

If you've been offered your preferred college course on the CAO, but decide you want to take a year out, you can 'defer' your offer. Deferring means you put off accepting your offer, usually for one year, and your college holds the place for you. Some colleges will only let you defer in certain circumstances.



How do I defer my college place?

You can read about [deferring your college place](https://www.citizensinformation.ie) on [citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie).



Getting a job

Whether you're planning to work part-time during college, or you're ready to jump-start your career, you'll need to know your **rights and responsibilities**.

Working while in college

Going to college can be an expensive time, and you may decide to work part-time to help fund your education. It can be difficult to balance work and college life, so consider the pros and cons of getting a part-time job.

Pros	Cons
More financial security.	Less time for extra-curricular activities, like joining college societies.
Real-world work experience.	Increased stress from juggling your time.
Develop key skills in a work environment (such as team building, communication and time management).	Impact on college work (risk of shiftwork overlapping with your college schedule and study time).

When you're looking for work, tell your potential employer that you are a student. They may be able to work around your college schedule.



Getting a job

Whether you're looking for your first job after school or looking for part-time work in college, you can find information about **applying for jobs, preparing your CV and doing a job interview** on citizensinformation.ie.

Finding a job

You may prefer to go directly into the working world instead of continuing in education. You can visit or call your **local Intreo Centre** where you can get information and advice for jobseekers, including a list of job vacancies.

Your rights at work

Your employer must tell you the terms and conditions of the job in writing. When you start the job, your employer has a certain amount of time to give you this information. If you don't get this information, you should ask your employer for it.

If you are **working and aged under 18**, your employer must also give you a copy of the official summary of the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996.

You have other specific **rights under employment law**. These cover things like:

- The number of hours you can work
- Minimum wage
- Breaks at work
- Annual leave

Your **contract** can give you more than your statutory minimum entitlements, but not less. If you are not getting your rights or entitlements, or if you lose your job and think your dismissal was unfair, you can complain to the Workplace Relations Commission.

Paying tax and PRSI

If you are earning enough, your employer deducts **income tax**, the **Universal Social Charge (USC)** and **Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI)** from your wages. These deductions should be shown on **your payslip**. The amount deducted depends on how much you earn and your personal circumstances.

Your PRSI contributions help you to qualify for social welfare payments if you're ill or become unemployed. And, if you have enough PRSI contributions, you can get **one free dental exam per year, and a free eyesight test every two years**.



How do I get a job in the Civil or Public Service?

Find information about Civil Service and Public Service opportunities for school leavers and college graduates on [PublicJobs.ie](https://www.publicjobs.ie).

Starting your first job

When you start your first job, you should tell Revenue as soon as possible, or you may have to pay **Emergency Tax**.

Register for **myAccount** if you have not already done so. When you've logged into myAccount, go to 'PAYE Services' and select 'Add Job or Pension Details', then follow the instructions onscreen. You need to give:

1. Your new employer's Tax Registration Number (TRN)
2. Your start date
3. How often you'll be paid, for example, weekly or monthly

When you register with Revenue, your employer gets a Revenue Payroll Notification (RPN), which lets them know how much to deduct from your wages. You only have to register your first job. If you start any new jobs, just give your PPS number to your new employer and they'll register the job with Revenue.

You can also check your **Tax Credit Certificate (TCC)** on Revenue's myAccount service. Your TCC shows what tax credits, reliefs and USC rates are being applied to your wages.

Depending on your situation, you may be able to **claim tax relief** for:

- **Medical expenses**
- **Rent**
- **Third-level fees**

You can claim tax relief on things you paid for. So, for example, if your parents paid your third level fees, then they can claim tax relief instead. Or, if you both paid part of your fees, each person can claim their own portion of the relief.



What is the Workplace Relations Commission?

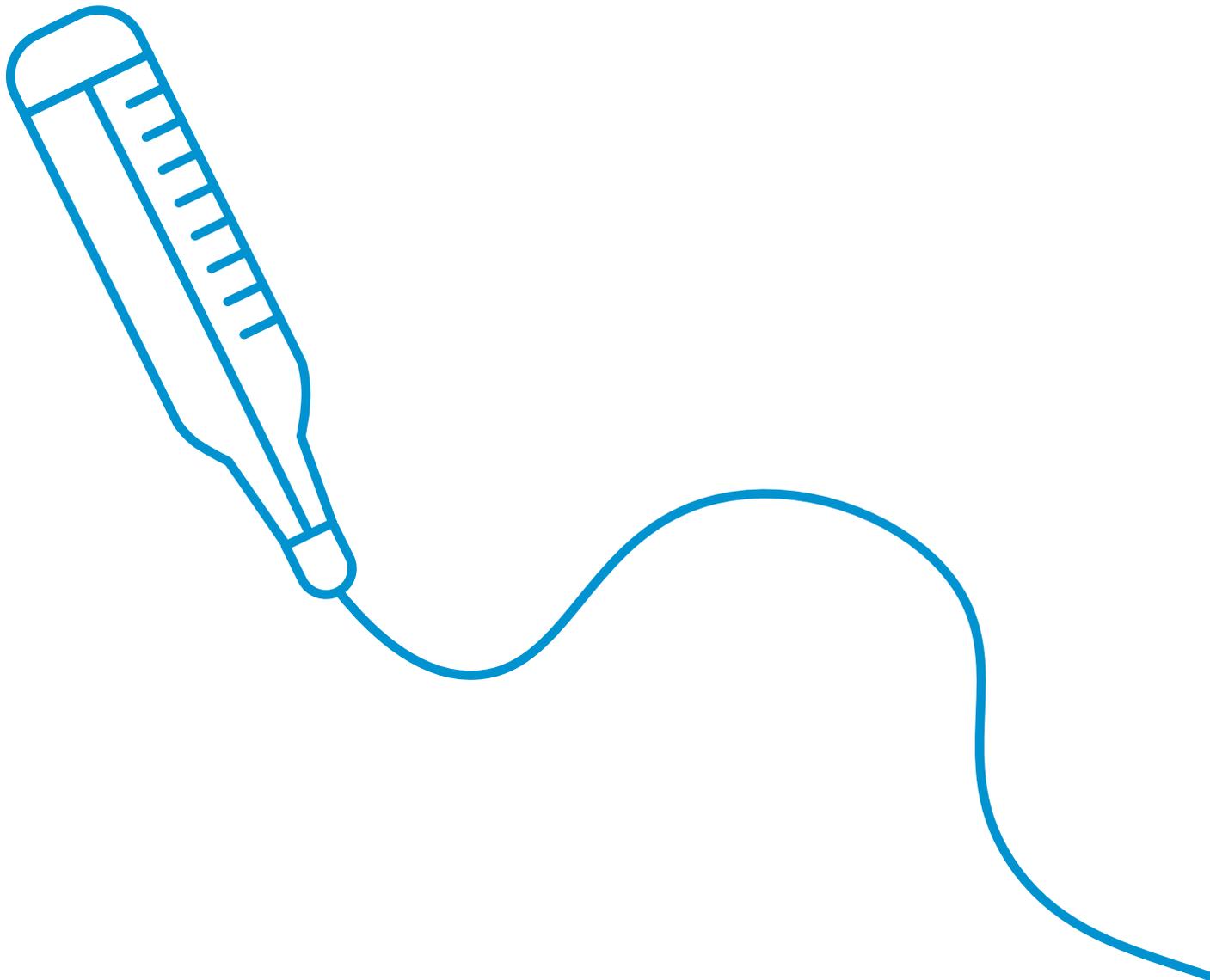
The **Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)** deals with industrial relations disputes and employment law disputes.

If you are sick

You must tell your employer if you get sick and cannot go to work. If you have worked for the same employer for at least 13 weeks, you have a right to five days' **Statutory Sick Pay** a year. This is paid by your employer at 70% of your normal pay, up to a maximum of €110 a day.

If you have worked for your employer for less than 13 weeks, your employer may or may not pay you when you are out sick. If you are on unpaid sick leave, and have enough PRSI contributions, you should apply for **Illness Benefit**. You need a medical cert from your GP (doctor) to get Statutory Sick Pay and Illness Benefit.

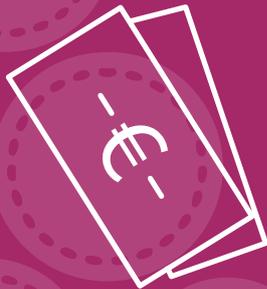
If you are not entitled to Illness Benefit, you should still send your medical certs (sometimes called a 'doctor's note') to the Department of Social Protection, because you may be entitled to **PRSI credits**. Credits are PRSI contributions you don't have to pay for. This keeps your social insurance record up to date.





What else do I need to know about working for the first time?

Find more information about starting your first job on [revenue.ie](https://www.revenue.ie).



What are tax credits and reliefs?

All workers have tax credits that reduce the amount of tax they must pay.

Tax reliefs can reduce your taxable income, for example, if you pay college fees or medical expenses.



Are there other disability and illness payments?

Find out about disability and illness payments on [citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie).



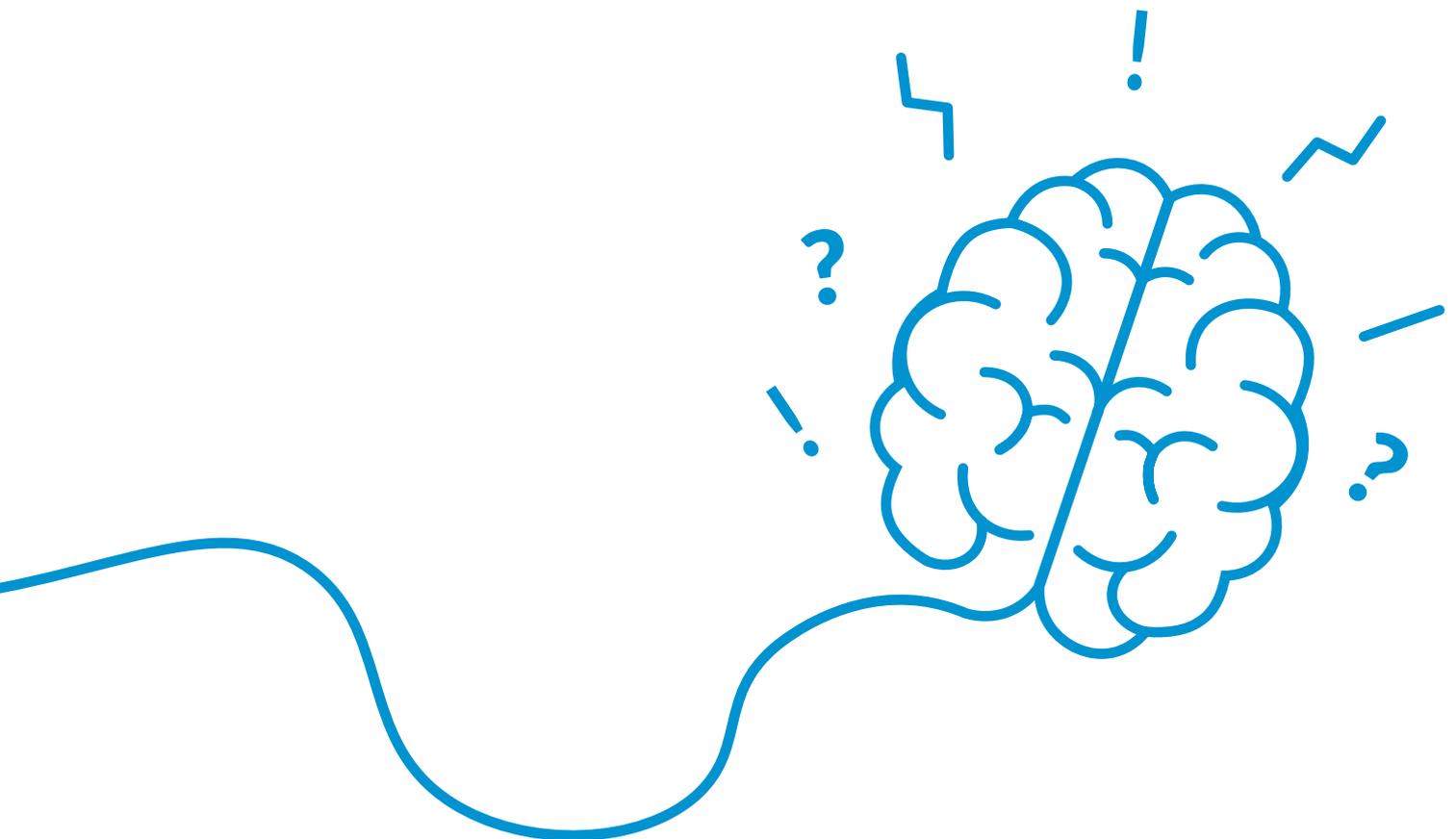
Looking after your mental health

I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed...

Leaving school is an anxious time. Between exams, results and deciding what your next move is, you have a lot going on.

It's okay not to be okay. If you're struggling, don't be afraid to ask for help. Talk to family, friends, or your GP.

You can also reach out to [mental health services and supports for young people in Ireland](#) including helplines and advocacy services.





Spunout.ie

Spunout.ie has a section dedicated to information and supports for mental health.



HSE

The HSE website hse.ie has a mental health section with information on supports and services, and getting urgent help. Or you can call the Your Mental Health information line on **1800 111 888**.



Childline

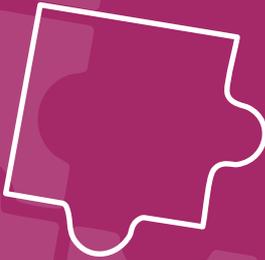
Childline is a free and confidential service from the ISPCC where you can talk to someone about anything worrying you. You can use the online Childline Chat service on childline.ie or call: **1800 66 66 66**.



Text About It

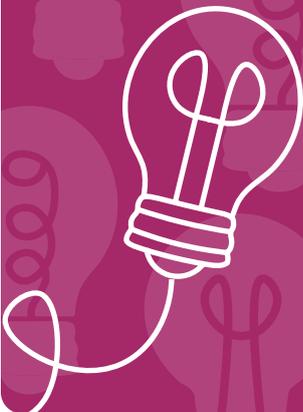
Spunout.ie runs the Text About It service where you can anonymously message a trained volunteer.

You can text **086 1800 280** or message via WhatsApp. The service is free, but SMS rates may apply if you're texting.



Jigsaw

Jigsaw offers mental health support and advice for young people, parents and those working with young people, either online or in person. For more information visit their website jigsaw.ie.



Samaritans

Samaritans offers free 24/7 support by phone on **116 123**, or you can email jo@samaritans.ie.



Health and sexual health

You may get a medical card or a GP visit card if your income is below a certain amount. A medical card entitles you to a range of free health services. A GP visit card lets you visit your doctor for free.

If you're aged 16-25 and dependent on your parents, you can get your own medical card or GP visit card if your parents have a means-tested medical card or GP visit card.

Under the common conditions service, you can get a prescription directly from a pharmacist. This is only available in certain pharmacies for specific conditions, including cystitis in women and vaginal thrush.

If you register for the Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS), you won't pay more than €80 in the same month for approved prescribed medicines for you and your family. The DPS is not based on your income.

There are no public in-patient fees in hospital, so public patients don't have to pay a daily charge to stay in hospital. You do have to pay a fee of €100 for visits to hospital emergency departments. But, there's no charge if you're referred to hospital by a GP (make sure to bring your referral letter with you).



How do I get a medical card, GP visit card or the Drugs Payment Scheme?

You can apply online for a medical card, GP visit card or the Drugs Payment Scheme card on mymedicalcard.ie, or get an application form from your local health office.

Your sexual health and wellbeing

The law says a person must be 17 years of age to be able to consent to a sexual act. It's a crime to engage in a sexual act with someone who has not given, or cannot give, consent. It's also a crime to share intimate images without consent.

As a student, college might be where you begin exploring sex and your sexuality for the first time. Be aware of things that can help you take care of your sexual health and wellbeing.

For example, you can get free contraception if you're a woman or person with a uterus, aged 17 to 35. You need to visit a doctor to get your free prescription. This visit and any contraception check-ups you need are free. The scheme includes emergency contraception, such as the morning-after-pill, which you can get from your pharmacy without a prescription from a GP. You can get free condoms through sexual health clinics or from your college's student union.

If you're worried about an STI, you should visit your GP, pharmacist or an **STI clinic** for medical advice. If you are over 17, you can order a free **sexually transmitted infection (STI)** test online to take at home. Some hospitals and clinics also offer free STI tests.

What can I do to look after my sexual health?



Sexualwellbeing.ie

Find out more about sexual health and wellbeing, sexual consent in practice and free contraception and STI kits, on sexualwellbeing.ie.



Spunout.ie

Check out Spunout.ie's [10 tips on how you can look after your sexual health](#).

What about unplanned pregnancy?

If you have an **unplanned pregnancy** and need support, there are free confidential services, including counselling, to help you consider your options and get the information you need.

What is the My Options service?

The **My Options** helpline and counselling service offers information and support if you have an unplanned pregnancy.

You can call on **1800 828 010** (or **+353 59 916 5066** if you're calling from outside Ireland). You can also find information on the My Options website, including a [counselling service for men and partners](#) of somebody who is pregnant.



My Options

The **My Options** helpline and counselling service offers information and support if you have an unplanned pregnancy.

What else do I need to know about Adulting?

Know your Personal Public Service (PPS) number

Everyone needs to know about public services and how to access them.

A Personal Public Service (PPS) number is a unique number that lets you access public services in Ireland, including social welfare, tax, education and health services.



What if I don't know my PPS number?

Contact your local Intreo Centre or local Social Welfare Branch Office and the staff there can find your number for you.

Get a Public Services Card

You need a **Public Services Card (PSC)** to access social welfare and certain other services (such as applying for a driving licence).

To get your PSC, make an appointment at a PSC Registration Centre (Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office) to prove your identity. Once you have your PSC, you can also create a verified MyGovID account.



What is MyGovID?

MyGovID lets you access a range of public services online. There are two types of account: Basic and Verified. With a Verified MyGovID account, you can access all services available on MyGovID, including applying for a passport or for the Student Grant.

Claiming social welfare benefits

You can get a jobseeker's payment if you are aged 18 or over, unemployed, looking for work and meet certain qualifying conditions.

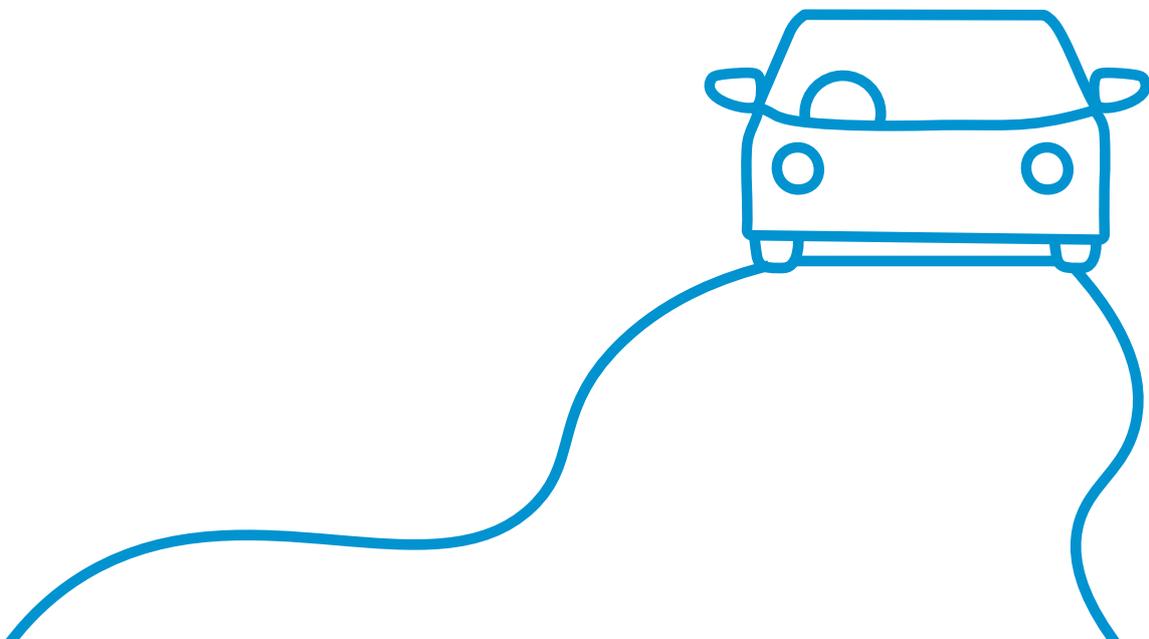
Jobseeker's Allowance is a means-tested payment and you don't need to have paid PRSI to qualify.

You cannot get Jobseeker's Allowance until three months after you've finished school and exams. If your parents are getting a social welfare payment, they can continue getting a **Child Support Payment** for you for these three months.

To qualify for **Jobseeker's Pay-Related Benefit** or **Jobseeker's Benefit**, you must have worked and have enough paid PRSI contributions.

If you are aged over 18 and in financial difficulty, you can apply for a basic weekly **Supplementary Welfare Allowance**. Find a list of **offices that provide Supplementary Welfare Allowance on gov.ie**, or contact **your local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office**.

You apply for a jobseeker's payment at your local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office. This is also known as **signing on**. You can also apply online at **MyWelfare.ie**.



Learning to drive

There are **four steps to learning to drive** and getting a driving licence: passing the driver theory test, getting a learner permit, practicing driving, and passing the driving test. Driver testing in Ireland is carried out by the **Road Safety Authority (RSA)**.

Getting more information

More from Citizens Information

Find more information about everything covered in this guide from Citizens Information.

citizensinformation.ie



[Citizens Information Centres](#)



Citizens Information Phone Service 0818 07 4000 | Monday to Friday, 9am – 8pm

A number of helpful organisations are mentioned throughout this guide under the relevant sections. Here are others that you may find useful:



Coimisiún na Meán

Media regulator for online safety,
television broadcasting and video
on-demand services.

Complaints Contact Centre

Call: 01 963 7755 Monday to Friday
8am-6pm or email usersupport@cnam.ie





Department of Social Protection

Government department that administers Ireland's social welfare system.

Call: **01 704 3000** or email info@welfare.ie



Health Service Executive

Manages all the public health services in Ireland, including personal social services.

Call: **1800 700 700**



Youth Information Centres

Free, confidential youth information services for young people about various areas, including education and employment. Find your nearest centre on youthworkireland.ie, or use the online chat service.





citizensinformation.ie



0818 07 4000 - Mon to Fri, 9am - 8pm



Local centres - [locations nationwide](#)

The Citizens Information Board provides independent information, advice and advocacy on public and social services through citizensinformation.ie, the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) and the nationwide network of Citizens Information Centres (CICs). It is responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and provides the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities.

Citizens Information Board

Head Office, George's Quay House,
43 Townsend St, Dublin 2

Telephone: 01 605 9000

Email: info@ciboard.ie

Website: citizensinformationboard.ie

