

GRANTS - Frequently Asked Questions
2009/10 Academic Year
(based on figures for the 2008/09 Academic Year)

Q: What courses are approved for the purposes of applying for a grant?

A: The Higher Education Authority (HEA) lists the following kinds of courses in DIT as **approved** for grant purposes: a **full-time** undergraduate course of not less than **two year's duration** or a **full-time** postgraduate course of not less than **one year duration** AND

- a **full-time** undergraduate course of a **minimum duration of one year** which represents progression from a **FETAC Level 5** qualification and which leads to the award of a qualification of third level standard (**Level 6+**) following a terminal examination AND
- a **full-time** undergraduate course of a **minimum duration of one year** which represents progression from a **Level 7** (Ordinary Bachelor Degree or National Diploma) course to an "add-on" **Level 8** (Honours Bachelor Degree) course.

Q: Can I apply for a grant for a part-time course?

A: No. You can apply for **full-time** courses only.

Q: Am I eligible to apply for a grant?

A: You are eligible to apply for a grant if:

- You are entering an **approved course** for the first time in the 2008/09 academic year OR
- You are **re-entering** college, after a break of **at least one year**, in order to **complete** an approved course at **undergrad** level for the **first time** OR
- You are **re-entering** college, after a break of **at least one year**, in order to **pursue or complete** an approved course at **postgrad** level for the **first time** OR
- You already hold a **postgrad** qualification and wish to pursue a postgrad course which represents **progression** (e.g. you hold a Masters and wish to pursue a PhD) OR
- You started, but **did not finish** an approved course and are **re-entering** after a break of **at least 5 years** in order to pursue a different approved course at the same level

In short, if for example you already hold a **Level 6** (certificate) qualification, you are not eligible to apply for a grant to study another Level 6, but are eligible to apply for a grant to "add-on" to this qualification to gain a **Level 7** or **Level 8** qualification.

If you already have a **Level 7** qualification, you may be eligible to apply for a grant to "add-on" to this in order to gain a **Level 8** in the same field of study.

If you have a **Level 7** qualification and wish to start a **Level 8** course in a different field of study, you should contact your VEC/Council to determine whether you are eligible or not.

If you already hold a **Level 8** qualification, you are **not eligible** to apply for a grant to study a second **Level 8** course.

Important: You must **also** fulfil the following **residency & nationality** criteria:

Residency:

- You must have been resident within the jurisdiction of the VEC/Council to which you are applying since at least October 1st, 2008.

Nationality:

- You must hold **EU Nationality** OR
- You must have **Official Refugee Status** OR
- You must have been granted leave to **remain in Ireland on Humanitarian Grounds** (prior to the Immigration Act 1999) OR
- You must have been granted permission to remain in Ireland following a determination by the Minister for Justice **not to make a deportation order** (under section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999) OR
- You must have permission to remain in Ireland due to **marriage to an Irish National**, or **be the child of an Irish National** (if you do not have EU Nationality) OR
- You must have permission to remain in Ireland due to **marriage to a National of another EU State, who is resident in Ireland and has been employed or self-employed in Ireland**, or **be the child of such a person** (if you do not have EU Nationality) OR

- You must be a **national of a member country of the EEA or Switzerland**. (EEA = EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein & Norway).

Q: Should I apply to the County/City Vocational Education Committee (VEC) or the County Council/City Corporation?

A: You should apply to the VEC if:

- you are intending to pursue a **PLC course (Level 5 or 6)** OR
- your first choice of course is a **Level 6 (Certificate)** or a **Level 7 (Ordinary Level Degree)** OR
- you are **progressing** from a Level 6 or 7 course to a **Level 8 (Honours Degree)** course

You should apply to the County Council/City Corporation if:

- your first choice of course is a **Level 8 (Higher Diploma)** course OR
- your first choice of course is a **Level 8 (Honours Degree)** course OR
- you are intending to pursue a **Level 9 (Masters Degree)** course OR
- you are intending to pursue a **Level 9 (Postgraduate Diploma)** course OR
- you are intending to pursue a **Level 10 (Doctoral Degree)** course

Q: I have applied to study a range of courses, including **Level 7** and **Level 8** courses. Do I have to send a grant application to both the VEC and the Council?

A: No. Fill out the grant application form for the grant scheme you think you are most likely to be applying to (e.g. if think you have the best chance to get accepted onto a Level 7 course, fill out the form and send it to your VEC). When you have made your final acceptance of a place at college, fill in the **Final Acceptance Form FA-1** (which you would have received with your grant application pack) and send it back to the same VEC.

If you are accepting a Level 7 course, the VEC will process your application. If you accept a Level 8 course, the VEC will forward your application to the relevant Council for processing. It is **vital** that you send back the FA-1 form as soon as possible, in order to have your application forwarded to the correct authority.

Q: Where should I apply to?

A: You should apply to the Local Authority in whose jurisdiction you were resident at the start of October 2008 for a course commencing in 2009/10

Q: I am **commencing** a course in, and applying for a grant for, the 2008/09 academic year – am I an Independent Mature Candidate or a Dependent Mature Candidate?

A: If:

- You were resident **in your parents' home** at the start of October 2008 (i.e. 1 year prior to the commencement of your course) then **you are a Dependent Mature Candidate** and you will be means-tested on your parental income.
- You were resident **outside of your parents' home** at the start of October 2008 (i.e. 1 year prior to the commencement of your course) then **you are an Independent Mature Candidate** and you will be means-tested based on your own income. You will be required to provide **proof of residence** – e.g. a utility bill from that period.

Q: Can I send in a photocopy of the grant application form?

A: No. Only original forms will be accepted. You should contact your local VEC/Council to have an application pack sent out to you. It's a good idea to practice filling out the form on a photocopy before completing the original form.

Q: Which year's financial details should I provide in support of my grant application for the 2009/10 academic year?

A: You should provide financial details for the tax year ended 31st December 2008.

Q: What is the difference between an **adjacent maintenance grant** and a **non-adjacent maintenance grant** and what are the rates?

A The maintenance grant is a payment made three times per academic year to students in depending on the VEC/Council from whom it is issued. The **adjacent rate** applies to students whose home is **less than 24km** from the college where they are studying. The **non-adjacent rate** applies to students whose home is **more than 24km** from the college.

However, all mature students are entitled to the **non-adjacent rate**, regardless of whether they are classified as **dependent mature candidates** or as **independent mature candidates**.

The rates for the 2008/09 academic year were as follows:

	Non-Adjacent Rate	Adjacent Rate
Full Maintenance	€3,420	€1,370
Part Maintenance (75%)	€2,565	€1,030
Part Maintenance (50%)	€1,710	€685
Part Maintenance (25%)	€855	€345

Q: I am in a year other than 1st year of my course (e.g. 2nd) but applying for the grant for the first time in 2009/10.
OR

I am attending a postgraduate course in 2009/10, having completed my degree in 2008/09.

Q: Can I apply as a Mature Applicant as I would be over the age of 23 on 1st January 2009?

A: **Unless you have taken a break from study of at least 1 years duration before commencing your studies in the 2009/10 academic year, you must apply as the category of applicant which would have applied to you had you made an application for funding at the commencement of your course.**

Q: When applying as the category of candidate which would have applied had I made an application at the commencement of my course, which year's details should I provide?

A: **If applying as an undergrad *Independent Mature Candidate* using the example above, you must provide *proof of residence* that you were living outside your parents' home as of the start of October 2008 (one year before you commenced the course).**

However, you must supply financial details for the tax year ended 31st December 2008.

Q: I am awaiting a piece of documentation (e.g. Birth Certificate) or I have received a notice from the Tax Office (that, e.g. a P21 Balancing Statement has been requested by me and will be sent out in the next few days). Should I forward my form anyway and send in the document when I receive it?

A: **No. if you form without the complete documentation attached (especially a P21), it will be returned to you unprocessed.** Wait until you receive the document and send in a complete application. Most Local Authorities will accept late applications.

Q: Can I apply as an **Independent Mature Candidate** even though I am not 23 on the 1st of January 2008, as I am living outside of my parents' home?

A: **No. You must apply as *Candidate other than a Mature Candidate* and provide details of your parents' income.**

Q: I have sent in my complete application, together with all supporting documentation. I have received my acknowledgement postcard, but was wondering when I would be contacted again?

A: *You can assume that if your form is not returned as "incomplete" that it has been forwarded to the relevant person to be assessed. You will be notified in due course of the outcome (i.e. if you are eligible/ineligible).*

Q: My income (**Independent Mature Students**) or that of my parents (**Dependent Mature Students**) for the tax year ended 31st of December 2008 was from a combination of the categories listed on the application form (i.e. employment, pensions, social welfare). What documentation should I provide?

A: **You should provide all documentation listed on page 15 of the application form that applies to your (or your parents') income for the tax year ended 31st December 2008. This list includes:**

- P21 PAYE Balancing Statement (prepared by your local Tax Office or available at www.revenue.ie)
- P60 for each employment
- P45 if employment ceased
- Accounts, Notice of Assessment, Adjusted Profit Computation (self-employed)
- Social Welfare Statement/Health Service Executive Statement
- Interest Certificates (interest on Deposit Accounts, Investments, SSIA's etc)

This is not a complete list; further documentation may be required on a case-by-case basis.

Q: What other documentation should I submit?

A: **The most common forms of documentation required are:**

- Original Long-Form Birth Certificate
- Proof of residence outside the parental home **from 1st October 2008** in the case of **Independent Mature Candidates**
- Evidence of exam results or participation on a PLC, FETAC or Third Level course
- Evidence of divorce or separation
- Evidence of Maintenance Agreement
- Proof of parents/guardians' residence
- Official Refugee Status sanction from the Dept of Justice
- Marriage Certificate

- Evidence of Nationality (certified copy of passport)
- Foster care arrangement
- Legal Guardianship
- Adoption

You should supply all documentation **that applies to your case**. Again, this is not a complete list; further documentation may be required on a case-by-case basis.

Q: I sent in my application late, and because I did so, I have not been assessed yet. Do I have to pay my registration fees to the college or can I wait until I have been assessed?

A: Contact the Admissions Office – generally, at least a percentage of the fee is required.

Q: I was approved for a grant in the 2008/09 academic year. Do I have to supply any information to the VEC/Council in order for my grant to continue for 2009/10?

A: All applicants who were awarded grants for the 2007/08 academic year are forwarded **Renewal Forms** to be completed and returned to the VEC/Council.

Undergrads should send **proof of exam results** indicating that they have passed and are eligible to advance to the next year of their course with this form.

Postgrads should send a **letter confirming entry into first/next year** of their postgraduate course from the relevant college with this form.

Q: What is the **Special Rate of Maintenance (Top-Up)** grant, how much is it and am I eligible to apply for it?

A: The **Special Rate of Maintenance Grant, or Top-Up Grant**, is an extra maintenance payment made to candidates whose **reckonable income** is below a certain level **and** who are in receipt of certain **Social Welfare Payments**.

For the 2008/09 academic year (tax year ended 31st Dec 2007), the reckonable income limit was **€20,147**, and amounts as follows :

Grant	Standard Grant	Special Rate Amount	Total Grant
Non Adjacent Rate	€3,420	€3,270	€6,690
Adjacent Rate	€1,370	€1,310	€2,680

(All information is correct according to the HEG Scheme 2008/09)

Further information on financial supports from the following websites:

www.studentfinance.ie

www.citizensinformation.ie

www.gotocollege.ie

www.ivea.ie/student_supports