



Irish Aid

Rialtas na hÉireann

Government of Ireland

Ireland–SIDS Fellows Programme 2020/21

Applicant Guidance Note

Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Table of Contents:

1	The Benefits of Studying in Ireland	3
2	The Ireland – SIDS Fellows Programme 2020/21	4
3	Eligibility	5
4	Application Process and Closing Date	5
3	Detailed guidance for the application	6
	Section A - Personal information	6
	Section B - Education	6
	Section C - Work Experience	7
	Section D - Personal Statement	8
	Section E - English Language	8
	Section F – Documentation	9
	List of documentation required	10

Ireland-SIDS Fellows Programme – Applicant Guidance Note

Please read through this document carefully in its entirety prior to completing the application form. The form requires important detail and documentation without which your application will not be valid.

1 The benefits of studying in Ireland

Ireland is an English-speaking European country which has been a member of the European Union since 1973. Situated on the Western edge of Europe, Ireland is a relatively small, though highly connected, island nation with a population of just five million people.

Ireland is an advanced knowledge economy whose focus on education has been at the core of government policy since the country gained independence from Britain in 1922. As a result, Ireland boasts one of the most highly educated populations in the world, ranking 6th globally for the percentage of our population who have completed tertiary education with 54% of 24-35 years olds having attained at least an undergraduate degree. In this regard, Ireland lies ahead of all other English speaking countries in the world with the exception of Canada and has the second most educated population in Europe.

Ireland is an open economy and our location, combined with our highly educated workforce, has served to attract significant inward investment over recent decades. Today, Ireland is a leader in the technology, bio-technology and pharmaceutical sectors, with most leading international companies choosing Ireland for the location of their European headquarters. With many of the world's biggest and best companies locating their key strategic research facilities here, Ireland offers an unparalleled ecosystem that sees academic researchers working hand-in-hand with small home-grown and start-up companies in partnership with some of the largest multinationals, through shared research projects and programmes, often supported by the Government of Ireland.

Ireland's universities lead the world in terms of their social and economic impact. The 2019 Times Higher Education university impact rankings (based on adherence to the SDGs) ranked Ireland HEI sector second in the world due to its strength in promoting good health and well-being, sustainable cities and communities, climate action and partnerships for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

All eight Irish universities are ranked in the top 5% globally. The Government of Ireland invests more than €800 million annually in research within the Higher Education sector, thus ensuring that Ireland's higher education institutions now lead the world in an increasing number of fields. Irish universities stand in the top 1% of research institutions in the world.

Studying at postgraduate level in Ireland offers a unique opportunity to join programmes that are driving innovation and changing lives worldwide.

For more information on studying in Ireland please see: www.educationinireland.com

2. Ireland - SIDS Fellows Programme 2020/2021

Ireland's Strategy for Partnership with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) makes the commitment to establish an annual number of awards to SIDS professionals for postgraduate study in Irish higher education institutions in courses relevant to addressing climate change and its associated challenges. Ireland is offering six new fellowships under its Fellowship Programme for Small Island Developing States, three each from the Pacific and Caribbean regions, for Masters level studies in Ireland in the academic year 2020/2021.

The Programme enables early to mid-career professional women and men, with leadership potential, to benefit from a prestigious, world-class, quality education contributing to capacity building. It offers selected students the opportunity to undertake a fully-funded one-year Masters level programme at a higher education institution (HEI) in Ireland. The award covers course fees, flights, accommodation and living costs. Eligible Masters level courses in Ireland commence in August or September each year and, depending on the course, will run for between 10 and 16 months. The Programme promotes equal opportunity and welcomes diversity.

The aims of the Programme are to nurture future SIDS leaders, women and men; to develop in-country capacity to address climate change and its associated challenges; and to build positive relationships between Ireland and SIDS.

On return home, graduates are expected to bring their acquired skills to contribute to capacity building in their home countries. It is also envisaged that they will contribute to building enduring positive personal and professional relationships with Ireland, promoting institutional linkages.

Applicants should be a national of one of the eligible countries and resident in one of the eligible countries (they can be a national of one country and resident in another, in the same region). Eligible countries are ODA eligible independent SIDS in each region, as follows:

Pacific: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu.

Caribbean: Antigua & Barbuda, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname.

The programme is fully funded by the Irish Government and is offered under the auspices of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Programme implementation in Ireland is supported by the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS).

3. Eligibility

To be eligible for an Ireland-SIDS Fellowship for the 2020/21 academic year, applicants must:

- Be a national of one of the following countries and resident in one of the following countries (they can be a national of one country and resident in another, in the same region):

Pacific: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu.

Caribbean: Antigua & Barbuda, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname.

- Have a minimum of three years' relevant experience (this can include internships and volunteering positions).
- Hold a bachelor's level academic qualification from an accredited and government-recognised higher education institution, with a first class honour, or second class honour, Grade 1 (in some cases a second class honour Grade 2 may be accepted).
- Not already hold a qualification at Masters level or higher.
- Be applying to commence a new course at Masters level in Ireland no sooner than August/September 2020 (see eligible courses).
- Be able to demonstrate leadership abilities and aspirations, as well as commitment to addressing climate change and its associated challenges within their own country.
- Have identified and selected two relevant courses from the directory of eligible courses.
- Have a clear understanding of the academic and English language proficiencies required for the courses chosen.
- Be in a position to take up the scholarship in the academic year 2020/2021.

4. Application Process and Closing Date

Your task is to complete the Application Form and gather all the documentation required as detailed below.

The closing date for receipt of applications and all certified documents is **31 January 2020** – no applications will be accepted after this date. Applications submitted without all of the required documentation will be deemed incomplete, and will not be considered.

Applications must be typed, signed, and scanned together with all the supporting documents listed in section F below, and submitted to SIDSFellowships@dfa.ie by the closing date.

If your application is successful, you will be invited for interview. You **must** be available to participate in an interview with the Embassy of Ireland during the period **17-28 February 2020**. Interviews will take place remotely, by video or telephone conference.

If you are shortlisted for interview, you will be required to submit the **hard copy** of your application and supporting documents before the interview takes place.

5. Detailed guidance note for the application

Please read through these notes fully before you submit your application. The application form contains six sections, each of which is described in detail below.

Section A: Personal information

In this section you are asked to provide detailed personal information, including: your full name and contact details; nationality; country of residence; passport details; gender; whether you have a disability you wish to disclose; date of birth; and whether you have ever been convicted of a crime. Please note that in the event that you are successful, and a disability is disclosed, we may seek that the candidate provides certification from their doctor in order that any necessary supports can be considered.

Please note that the Government of Ireland supports equality of opportunity and welcomes diversity.

Section B: Education

Section B requests further details on your education background.

Please be reminded that your qualifications must be accredited and from a government recognised higher level institution, and have been awarded within the last 12 years (i.e. no later than 2008). Ideally your qualification should be at first class honour or higher-second class level.

- **Question B1** requires you to confirm details of your undergraduate qualification(s), including information on your undergraduate qualification, the institution attended and the dates of study.
- **Question B2** requires you to list other certified higher education qualifications and/or relevant professional or vocational training qualifications you have attained (if any). You are required to include certified copies of completion certificates for each **higher education qualification** you have attained and listed. Do not provide certificates for other types of training. Do not include 'on the job' training or workshops here.
- **Question B3** asks you to provide information on other important **relevant** training you have undertaken. Please only include training which is **specifically relevant** to this application.
- **Question B4** requires you to list the Masters level programmes you would like to pursue in Ireland, ranked in order of choice (1-2). **Please note that any changes to the course choices you list here will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.**

You are expected to show that you have researched higher education institutions in Ireland and the available Masters programmes which are relevant to your aspirations, and to briefly demonstrate (100 words or less) how these programmes will increase your capacity to work towards addressing climate change and its associated challenges in your country and enhance your leadership aspirations. You are also asked to state the IELTS scores required for your programmes of choice.

Section C: Work experience

This section is divided into two key areas: information on your current employment and information on previous employment. You can also include volunteering activities here. When completing this section, please pay particular attention to your leadership roles and activities.

- **Question C1** seeks information about your current employment* and asks you to briefly describe the activities of the organisation you work for (100 words).

You are requested to summarise your role and responsibilities within the organisation (100 words) and to list any other roles you have previously held within this organisation, including the dates you held those positions (please ensure you insert the month as well as the year here).

You are also asked whether you will be taking leave from your current employment should you be successful in attaining a Fellowship Award.

****If you are currently unemployed, please state this and indicate your last place of employment. If you have never been employed, you can refer to internships or volunteering positions you have held (if any).***

- **Question C2** seeks summary information about your previous employment, if applicable. Please ensure you provide all details requested (name of organisation; full address; dates of employment (month and year); position held and a summary of key tasks and responsibilities).

If you have worked as an intern or a volunteer, you can include this work here, if it is relevant to your application.

Please note that the Embassy of Ireland may seek a written and/or a verbal reference from your employer. If you are not agreeable to this, please indicate on the application form.

Section D: Personal Statement

The final section of the application is your personal statement. In this very important section, you have the opportunity to allow your personal qualities to shine through and a chance to share your achievements, aspirations and goals with the selection panel.

The quality and breath of your statement will be a critical factor in how your application will be scored by the selection panel, and whether you will be called for interview. Your personal statement should be approximately 1,000 words in length (to a maximum of 1,200 words).

You will be expected to refer to:

- Your key achievements (within and beyond the workplace);
- Your leadership qualities and aspirations;
- How your proposed programmes of study in Ireland could help support development and capacity building around addressing climate change and its associated challenges in your country.
- How your proposed programmes of study in Ireland could contribute to your future and towards building linkages with Ireland.

Additionally, your personal statement should reflect some understanding of how building linkages with Irish institutions or business can help to further your goals and those of your country.

You are required to confirm that this is entirely your own original work and that no one has assisted you with this personal statement.

Tip: when completing this application form, ensure your responses are focused and have clarity. Keep in mind that the selection panel are seeking to understand your motivation for applying for this specific Fellowship and how being successful in this application will assist you, and potentially your country, in the future.

Section E: English language Requirement

If you have already completed an IELTS test, provide full details as requested under question E1 of the application form. Note that the test is only valid if completed within 24 months of the proposed commencement of your studies in Ireland (i.e. must be dated September 2018 or later).

If you do not already have an English language qualification, please read carefully the following section. Irish higher education institutions require a high standard of English language proficiency and this must be formally certified, normally through the International English Language Test System (IELTS - www.ielts.org).

IELTS examines competency in English language across reading, writing, speaking and listening and is necessary for admission to all Irish HEIs – there are no exceptions. Most HEIs require a score of 6.5 overall, but some require a higher overall score, or specific scores within

each band. In the Ireland-SIDS Fellows Programme Directory of Eligible Courses we have made every effort to identify those courses which have a higher IELTS requirement than an overall score of 6.5, but these requirements may have changed since the Directory was compiled. It is the applicant's responsibility to be aware of the IELTS score required for all the programmes selected.

English Language testing

All applicants who are selected to go forward for interview will be required to sit an IELTS exam. The Embassy of Ireland will inform you about the test details closer to the time. In most cases the Embassy of Ireland will assist you with funding to take an IELTS test, or in some cases another accepted English language test (on one occasion only).

Further details can be found on www.ielts.org. Early preparation for the IELTS exam is strongly advised, even for native English speakers, including practice tests, available here: <https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/prepare-test/free-practice-tests>. Candidates should familiarise themselves with the accents of native English speakers from different countries and regions including those from Ireland, America, Britain, India and Australia. Where possible, it is also recommended to attend an IELTS training session. Useful guidance can also be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCioolcx7Slmuczo6HkaE41g>

F. Documentation

You are **required** to accompany your application with a number of important documents. Failure to include all of these documents will deem your application ineligible. These should be certified as set out below and scanned together with your application form. Candidates shortlisted for interview will then be required to submit the hard copy of their certified documents before the interview takes place.

As it can take some time to gather all these documents, please start the process as early as possible to ensure that your valid application is received on or before the deadline.

All required documents must be **certified true copies of original documents**. This means that when you copy your original documents you must get them certified by a justice of the peace, notary public, an official of the Embassy of Ireland or another authorised official who can confirm that they have seen the original document and the duplications are true copies of the original document. The submitted documents must bear the official stamp and signature of the certifying authority. **Certificates must be stamped and signed on the front of the document – all documents submitted must be single-sided.**

Photocopies of certified documents are not acceptable, but a certified photocopy of a document with an original certification is acceptable.

It is recommended that you obtain a minimum of **three** certified copies of all your documents as you will need to provide additional certified copies for your programme applications, as well as retain a copy for yourself.

Where original documents are not in English, you must provide certified true copies of official English translations.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE EMBASSY OF IRELAND WILL NOT BE IN A POSITION TO RETURN ANY DOCUMENTS TO YOU.

Documents required:

- 1. Two recent passport sized photographs, attached as per instructions on the front of application form.**
- 2. A certified copy of the completion or graduation certificate for each higher education qualification you have completed (in English).** Photocopies of certified copies are not accepted. Do **not** include copies of certificates from short courses or for non-degree level programmes.
- 3. A certified copy of the academic transcripts for each higher education qualification and the grading schedule for each qualification you have completed (in English).** Photocopies of certified copies are not accepted. If multiple pages, each page must be certified with an official stamp and signature. Single sided printing only.
- 4. Letters from two academic referees on official letterhead with original signatures.** These references must be from academics who have taught you personally. These references should indicate both why you are a suitable candidate for a Fellowship Award and why the courses you have chosen are relevant to you. E-signatures are not accepted. Photocopies of signed letters are not accepted.
- 5. A certified copy of the identity page of your passport. If you do not have a passport at this time, another form of certified official identification must be provided.**
If you are shortlisted following the interview process you will be required to submit a certified copy of the identify page of your passport. Please note that if you are awarded a fellowship, your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after the expected completion of your study in Ireland.
- 6. OPTIONAL: your original IELTS score report, if available. Please note that this test must have been taken in September 2018 or later.**
If you are shortlisted following the interview process and you do not have the English language certification required for your Masters programme in Ireland, you will be required to take the examination and pass it to the standard required. Please see the following section.

Your application will not be valid unless documents 1 to 5 above are included and certified correctly