

**Third Level Graduate Programme
Immigration Rules for Non-EEA students**

First Published 2007

This Revision: 31 May 2017*

* References, content and weblinks updated August 2023

Third Level Graduate Programme 2017 Revision

1. *This notice sets out the immigration arrangements, which apply to all non-EEA persons holding a student permission (Stamp 2), who wish to avail of the Third Level Graduate Programme. Please note that all previous arrangements and notices concerning the Third Level Graduate Programme have been superseded by this notice.*

What is the Purpose of the 2017 Revised Third Level Graduate Programme?

2. The Third Level Graduate Programme was first introduced in April 2007 and was subsequently amended in 2011 in the context of the student immigration reforms of that year. The second international education strategy, ‘*Irish Educated Globally Connected*’, published in late 2016, contained a commitment to amend the current programme to further incentivise high performing students to come to study in Ireland, to remain on after their studies and to meet identified skills and language gaps in the economy.

3. The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (now [Immigration Service Delivery](#)), in cooperation with the Department of Education and Skills (now DFHERIS) and in consultation with the Higher Education sector, developed this revised programme focused on retaining the highest achieving students and assisting them to transition into the workforce, should they so choose.

4. The intention of the programme is to allow legally resident Irish educated non-EEA graduates holding an award of a recognised Irish awarding body to remain in Ireland after their studies. This should be for the purpose of seeking graduate level employment and applying for either a [general employment permit, a critical skills employment permit](#) or a [research hosting agreement](#).

Who can apply for the Third Level Graduate Programme?

5. The Third Level Graduate Programme is open to any non-EEA national graduate who has completed studies in Ireland on a programme listed on the [Interim List of Eligible Programmes \(ILEP\)](#) and has been awarded a qualification at Level 8 or above on the [National Framework of Qualifications](#) by a recognised Irish awarding body.

6. Persons seeking to avail of the Programme:

- 1) Must have been notified in writing by the relevant awarding body or institution on or after 1 January 2017 that they have achieved the award for which they had enrolled as a student on the ILEP-listed programme.

- 2) Must hold a current Stamp 2 student immigration permission and an up-to-date immigration registration card, and must apply within six months of being notified by the relevant awarding body or institution that they have achieved the award for which they had enrolled as a student.
- 3) Must not have already exceeded the seven-year limit on their permission as a non-EEA national student in the State.
- 4) May, if having previously benefitted from the Third Level Graduate Programme at a level 8 award or above, on achievement of a higher level award, e.g. level 9 or above, re-enter the Third Level Graduate Programme, subject to the overall limit of eight years.
- 5) A graduate will not be permitted to access the Programme on more than two separate occasions, subject to 4) above.
- 6) Must, in line with the obligation on any non-EEA national seeking to renew their permission to be in the State, comply with the laws of the State. Such persons are expected to be of good character and not to have come to the adverse attention of the authorities in any way.

Persons qualifying for graduate immigration permission of up to twelve months

7. Graduates with an award at level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications will be granted a period of residence in the State, the lesser of either, twelve months or such period as would bring their overall time resident in the State (i.e. time spent on Stamp 2 as a student and on Stamp 1G under this programme) to **seven** years in total.

Persons qualifying for graduate immigration permission of up to twenty-four months

8. Graduates with an award at level 9 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications will be granted a period of residence in the State, the lesser of either, twenty-four months or such period as would bring their overall time resident in the State (i.e. time spent on Stamp 2 as a student and on Stamp 1G under this programme) to **eight** years in total.

9. It should be understood that, graduates at level 9 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications who qualify for the Programme will be granted permission for twelve months initially. This will be renewed for a further period of twelve months (subject to the overall eight year limit) where the graduate satisfies the immigration authorities that he or she has taken appropriate steps to access suitable graduate level employment (e.g. attendance at job interviews, signing up with graduate employment agencies, etc.). The immigration authorities, while not strictly applying the lists or thresholds themselves, will have regard to the [Highly Skilled Occupations List](#) and [Ineligible Occupations List](#) and [Employment Permit](#) and [Critical Skills Employment Permit](#) salary thresholds of the [Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#) in assessing the efforts of the graduate in securing appropriate graduate level employment.

What immigration permission will qualifying persons receive?

10. Persons applying under the Programme will need to apply to their local registration office to receive a Stamp 1G. Persons intending to reside in Dublin, Kildare, Meath or Wicklow are advised that Immigration Service Delivery has an on-line application system in place in respect of [renewals](#). The Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) is responsible for registering and renewals for persons living outside Dublin, Kildare, Meath or Wicklow. The [Garda website](#) provides details of the closest registration office. Email for an appointment at gnib_dv@garda.ie. Applicants for the Programme are strongly advised to apply, in sufficient time, to have their registration renewed and revised immigration permission on Stamp 1G arranged **before** their current permission expires. In this regard, persons intending to participate in the Third Level Graduate Scheme are advised to consult the website ([irishimmigration.ie](#)) of the immigration service and familiarise themselves with the arrangements and timeframes involved. Applications for inclusion in the Third Level Graduate Programme will not be accepted from persons whose permission to be in the State has lapsed.

11. The Stamp 1G permission allow employers to employ such graduates on a full-time basis as opposed to persons who have a restricted work permission under Stamp 2 student conditions. During the period of permission granted under the scheme, graduates are permitted to work full time in accordance with employment law provisions but are not permitted to operate a business or be self-employed.

12. Holders of Stamp 1G are exempt from the requirement to possess an employment permit from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. However, it is open to that Department, in the context of managing access to the labour market, to revise this policy at any time if such action is considered necessary.

Documents Required

13. Persons seeking a permission under the Programme must present evidence that they have achieved the award for which they had previously been enrolled as a student. Acceptable documentation, which may be verified by the immigration authorities, includes a letter of confirmation from the awarding body / institution of the award achieved, or the degree scroll.

14. As noted, persons eligible to re-register for a further twelve months (or part thereof), in the circumstances as set out above, will be expected to present evidence (e.g. attendance at job interviews, signing up with graduate employment agencies, etc.) that they have been actively seeking graduate level employment during the previous twelve months.

Overseas-accredited awards

15. The Third Level Graduate Programme is confined to graduates who have completed their studies in Ireland and have been awarded a qualification at Level 8 or above of the National Framework of Qualifications by a recognised Irish awarding body in respect of study of a programme listed on the ILEP.

Disclaimer

16 Please take note that the arrangements set out herein reflect current policy as regards the Third Level Graduate Programme and all previous notices and policy statements in this regard have been superseded by this notice. Immigration policies are kept under ongoing review and are therefore subject to change. Any change of policy by Immigration Service Delivery will be indicated in advance on our website (irishimmigration.ie). You are advised to consult this website from time to time for the most up-to-date notices.

Immigration and Citizenship Policy Division
31 May 2017*

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