



Working for People with Sight Loss



The NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary Fund

Bursary Information and Awarding Criteria

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1. Background to the NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary

It is widely recognised that there has been a history of exclusion and missed opportunities for blind and vision impaired young people in education (McCarthy, 2016). Within Ireland's further education, blind and vision impaired people now make up just 1.8% of students with disabilities, and, represent the smallest single grouping of students with disabilities studying at third level (AHEAD, 2018). In reviewing the longer term trends, the growth rate of blind and visually impaired students in higher education has remained three times slower than that of the general disabled student population over the last five years.

NCBI, Ireland's national sight loss agency recognises that appropriate financial supports are essential for young blind and vision impaired people seeking to transition into further education, and therefore, have launched an annual Bursary which aims to support the living expenses of blind and vision impaired students attending further education.

2. About the NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary

The NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary honours the lifelong contribution of Gerard Byrne, who was a lifelong advocate for education. Gerard sadly passed away in 2017 having worked with NCBI in a management capacity since 2003. The Gerard Byrne Bursary is an annual grant for undergraduate students who are blind or vision impaired and who are studying on a full-time basis at a recognised educational institution in the Republic of Ireland.

The value of each scholarship is set at €2,000 per year (maximum €8,000 across the duration of a recognised undergraduate certificate, diploma, or degree programme) and continues for the duration of the undergraduate programme chosen by the Bursary winner, to a maximum of four years. No Bursary will be paid in the event of repeat years. The third-level courses approved for the purposes of this Bursary scheme are set out in Appendix 1.

Where appropriate and possible, NCBI may also offer a 6-month paid internship to one Bursary award winner per year, in an area relevant to their field of study. If both candidates express an interest in the internship, the successful candidate will be chosen via an interview process. The internship will be offered during or on completion of the chosen course.

3. Eligibility requirements

In order to be eligible, all applicants must be blind or vision impaired with a certified diagnosis from a registered eye health care professional.

The Bursary is open to students who are entering their first year and those who are already studying at undergraduate level.

Once eligible, the appropriate application form can be accessed, and submitted via the NCBI website at www.ncbi.ie or requested from NCBI on 1800 911 250.

4. Identification and selection process

The Bursary will be awarded to students whose access to education has been substantially impacted by sight loss. The selection process will involve a case by case review of all student applications which consists of:

- Background personal details and contact information
- Undergraduate area of study and duration of course
- Personal statement outlining their academic career goals as well as their motivation for pursuing higher education.
- Personal statement that demonstrates perseverance, resilience, and the ability to overcome educational challenges related to their vision impairment.
- Insight - applications should outline what insight they have gained from their own experiences to date, and tell us how they feel education can be made more inclusive for students with vision impairment.
- Judges' consideration of the potential impact of the NCBI Bursary on the applicants' ambitions

Applications for Bursary 2023 will close at 5pm on July 21st 2023.

Submissions should be made via the NCBI website at [Gerard Byrne Bursary - NCBI](#) or posted to NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary Application, Unit F5 Talbot House, Belgard Square West, Tallaght, Dublin 24, D24F22V. Those who are unable to access the form online can call 1800 911 250 and request to speak to a member of the Children and Young Persons team. Following the closing date, shortlisted students will be invited to interview virtually or at one of NCBI's regional offices and the successful candidates will be notified on or before September 29th 2023.

5. Bursary offer

The awarding and administration of the NCBI Bursary shall sit within the administration of NCBI's National Services. When a Bursary offer has been made and subsequently accepted, verification will be sought by the NCBI to ensure that the candidate continues to attend an approved undergraduate course as outlined in Appendix 1.

The successful candidate must comply with the terms of the offer as outlined by the NCBI and accept the Bursary in respect of an approved course for the 2023 / 2024 academic year. The Bursary can be deferred for one academic year only, and for that period, only with the prior written permission of the NCBI.

Any offer of a Bursary is dependent upon information being truthful and accurate and upon the applicant fulfilling all of the conditions of the NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary scheme. The right to withdraw an offer is maintained by NCBI in the event of any error or omission whatsoever in the information provided by or on behalf of the applicant.

6. Conditions attaching to all Bursary offers

All applicants to whom a Bursary is offered must fulfill the terms and conditions of the scheme together with the entry requirements for the third level course chosen which must be an approved course for the purposes of this scheme.

Bursary holders will be expected to comply with the regulations of their college / institution and to undergo every term examination or any other examination determined by the authorities of their college / institution for their course.

It is permissible for any NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary holder to be in receipt of an award or grant or scholarships of the state (e.g SUSI, Department of Education) or EU also.

Successful Bursary recipients will be expected to take part in NCBI communications and publicity surrounding the awarding of the Gerard Byrne Bursary. These expectations will run for the duration of the Bursary award. It is advised that all students consider this additional commitment when applying.

7. Value of the NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary

The Bursary will be paid for the prescribed duration of the undergraduate programme at an annual rate of €2,000 to the maximum value of €8,000 for a continuous four year undergraduate degree programme.

Bursary holders who are required to participate in off-campus placement during part of an academic year as an integral part of their course will have their Bursary entitlement paid in the normal manner by NCBI.

Bursary holders who take a year out to pursue activities, educational or otherwise, which do not form an integral part of their primary undergraduate programme will not have their Bursary payments made during their year of absence from college.

Bursary holders who participate in a compulsory year in full time attendance at a foreign third level education institution as an integral part of an international primary undergraduate programme chosen will have their Bursary payments made in the normal course while abroad.

A Bursary holder permitted to register for a succeeding year of his / her undergraduate study programme while carrying one or more repeat **8**

subjects will have his / her Bursary payments made while she / he remains registered. However, payments will terminate if the repeat exams are not passed within the required time frame established at the commencement of the academic year.

8. Payment of the NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary in 2023

The Bursary holder will be paid the Bursary in equal term instalments by Electronic Fund Transfer directly into the student's Irish bank account. The first instalment will be paid once the student provides evidence of acceptance and registration on their course from the relevant college / institution.

Evidence of course progression and transcripts may be requested by NCBI throughout the academic year to confirm the student is registered with the college and engaged in the approved course in order to facilitate payment of subsequent Bursary instalments.

9. Renewal of the NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary

Subject to the normal duration of the approved course chosen, the NCBI Bursary will be renewed when the student provides evidence of progression on their course for each year in order to certify that the Bursary holder is meeting the conditions required.

NCBI may terminate or lower the value of a Bursary, at any time without

notice, where an unfavourable report on the Bursary holder is received from the authorities of the relevant college / institution.

A Bursary holder who, during the course of her / his studies, wishes to change course or faculty or defer her / his Bursary for one academic year and for that period only, must notify and obtain prior written approval from the NCBI.

Where a student changes course, the Bursary payments will be deferred until the student reaches the point on the new course where participation on the original course ceased.

Where a student withdraws completely from his / her course, they must immediately notify NCBI and NCBI will reserve the right to seek reimbursement of part or all of the bursary amount transferred to the student.

10. Determination of disputes

Every question or dispute which shall arise in relation to the interpretation of this scheme shall be determined by the NCBI whose decision thereon shall be final.

Appendix 1 - Approved courses for the 2023 NCBI Bursary scheme

“Undergraduate” pertains to:

- a. A **full-time** undergraduate course of not less than two years duration in one of the approved institutions listed in schedule

1 to this Appendix, and

- b. a **full-time undergraduate** course of not less than two years duration pursued in a university or third level institution which is maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from public funds in another E.U. member state, with the exception of the following:

- Courses in colleges of further and higher education (other than those courses which are at higher national diploma level or higher).

Schedule 1 – Approved educational institutions

- National University of Ireland, Dublin (UCD)
- National University of Ireland, Cork (UCC)
- National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG)
- Maynooth University (NUIM)
- Trinity College Dublin
- Dublin City University / St Pat's Drumcondra
- University of Limerick
- Technological University of the Shannon
- TU Dublin - Blanchardstown
- South East Technological University
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
- Atlantic Technological University - Galway-Mayo
- Atlantic Technological University - Letterkenny
- Technological University of the Shannon – Midwest
- Technological University of the Shannon – Midlands
- Atlantic Technological University - Sligo
- TU Dublin - Tallaght
- South East Technological University - Waterford
- Munster Technological University, Kerry (MTU)
- Munster Technological University, Cork (MYU)
- TU Dublin – City Centre
- National College of Art and Design
- National College of Ireland - Dublin
- Dublin National College of Ireland

- Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
- St. Angela's College, Lough Gill, Sligo
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)
- Dublin Marino Institute of Education
- Carlow college
- St. Nicholas Montessori College Ireland

For the avoidance of doubt, the following full time undergraduate courses are excluded:

- Courses provided in a college which are offered in private commercial third level colleges in Ireland, and which are validated by that college, and;
- Courses provided elsewhere in colleges akin to private commercial colleges in Ireland.

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