

# Visa Guide

Bridge Mills Galway Language Centre



Galway Language Centre

## Immigration Information for visa requiring students

*Any potential student that does not hold an EU/EEA/ Swiss passport needs to apply for permission to remain in Ireland. The complexity of this procedure will depend on the country of origin of the student.*

*Below we have included a link to the **Department of Justice** website which provides information, guidance and resources for people who wish to come to Ireland to work or to study.*

*[You can access the website here.](#)*

*For students requiring visa pre arrival, the application for the entry visa is done outside the country and all documents must be submitted to the closest Irish Embassy or Consulate. In this instance we strongly recommend students get in touch with the relevant authority in order to be informed of the exact documents they will need to submit and the time it will take for their application to be processed.*

*For students that do not require an entry visa before coming to Ireland such as Brazilians, Mexicans, Argentinians and Chileans they will still be required to fulfill the following criteria to be given entry to Ireland once they are at any port of entry.*

- 1. Have paid the course fees in full.*
- 2. Have an acceptance letter.*
- 3. Hold medical insurance.*
- 4. Proof of sufficient funding.*



# Arriving in Ireland

Students coming from abroad must meet the minimum requirements set out on the previous page. The documents listed must be presented to the Irish Immigration Officer upon arrival to Ireland. To avoid any issues the student must make sure of the following:

- Have an **Acceptance Letter**, issued by the school office, stamped and signed by an office assistant or administrator (this will require the student to pay the course fees in full before coming to the country). To issue this letter we will require confirmation of payment and the Irish address where the student intends to stay for at least the first week including the phone number of the landlord or host family in case immigration wishes to prove these details. No hostels, hotels or B&B addresses will be valid for immigration purposes.
- They must be holders of a **Medical Insurance** policy which must be paid in full before coming to the country and must be in English. If we provide medical insurance, we will state as such on the acceptance letter.

**Proof of funding.** Students must have access to a minimum level of funding and be able to provide as proof of this a bank statement in their name.

If a student is getting health insurance with an agent please remember, the student will need the insurance to be valid in Ireland and to have it at hand at customs in case immigration officers ask for it.

If the student fulfils all the requirements, he/she will be granted a Student/Work (Stamp 2) visa for 1 to 3 months at the immigration in the airport. The length of this initial visa is granted solely at the discretion of the immigration officer.

During the time that the visa is valid the student must register at the immigration office to process their Irish Residence Permit (IRP Card) in order to extend their permission to remain in Ireland for the entirety of their course.

**If you are given a visa for 1 to 2 months upon arrival, contact us immediately.**

# Irish Residence Permit

## (IRP Card)

The next step for the student is to get the IRP Card. This card grants the student permission to remain in the country for 33 weeks (subject to change by the INIS). For the IRP card the student will need:

- A bank statement proving access to sufficient funds.
- Valid medical insurance in English that covers the student for the length of the whole course including holidays.
- An updated acceptance letter with the corresponding course code and stating 33 weeks of study. (The school office can provide a new acceptance letter)
- A debit/ credit card to pay the €300 fee once they are at immigration.
- Proof of address from a landlord or host family (The school can provide a Template)
- Passport valid for more than 6 months.
- Exam agreement: They will need to sign this agreement on the first day of class, this agreement is to confirm that they will do an exit examination at the end of their course.
- PEL Scheme: an insurance policy designed to safeguard a learner's academic journey. It provides protection in the case of school closure or other similar circumstances.

# Irish Residency Permit

## Renewal

If the student has completed a 33-week programme and wishes to extend their stay for another 33 weeks the student will need to renew their IRP. For the renewal of the IRP card the student will need:

- Valid medical insurance in English that covers the student for the full length of his/her stay (Course + holidays), and it must include their Irish address.
- Acceptance Letter from our school. (*provided by the school Office*)
- Attendance letter showing more than 85% attendance (*the attendance letter will be issued at the office upon request*)
- Bank statement with a sufficient balance. (*subject to Garda Office Requirements*)
- Old IRP Card: at immigration, they might require the student to hand in the old IRP Card.
- Exam cert: They will need the one issued by the school and the one obtained after their exit examination.
- Exam agreement: They will need to sign this agreement on the first day of class, this agreement is to confirm that they will do an exit examination at the end of their course.
- Passport: valid for the duration of their programme.
- PEL Scheme: provided by the school upon renewal of course.

The student can renew their student visa for a non-degree programme only twice.

This amounts to a total of 2 years studying English. The student can remain in the country after this period as long as they move towards a degree programme and have enrolled on this programme.

Before moving to a degree programme the student must check that the University/college and degree they wish to pursue is listed in the [Interim List of Eligible Programme](#). Otherwise, the permission to remain will be declined.

# General Immigration Conditions for Long Term Students

Our school offers two different timetables which meet the criteria to allow students to register for the 8-month visa (Stamp 2). Nevertheless, the student will have to follow the General Conditions and Requirements attached to any Stamp 2 visa and follow the school rules (closely aligned to the Immigration rules). The general conditions are listed below for each eligible programme:

## i. **EWP Morning:**

- For visa renewals the student must have an attendance higher than 85%.
- The student must **arrive at the latest at 9.05am** or they will be marked as absent.
- The student **must not be absent for longer than 5 minutes** during a class period or they will be marked as absent.
- The student **cannot leave the class before 12.10pm** or they will be marked as absent.
- We are obliged to inform immigration if a student's **absence rate** from the course is higher than 25% in the first six weeks, or if their total projected attendance falls below 85%. *Before we contact immigration, we will issue three warnings to the student. Please refer to our Attendance Policy for more information on attendance.*
- The student is permitted to work up to 20 hours per week under normal conditions. However, the student may work for up to 40 hours during the months of June, July, August, September and from Mid-December to Mid-January **as well as** during their holiday period stipulated in their acceptance letter.



- **The student can take one break during the study term if they are registered for the morning class.** The study break period cannot at any point exceed 1/3 of the total study weeks elapsed. The holiday weeks can be accumulated. Holidays need to be requested at the time of booking otherwise the holidays will be allocated at the end of the course.
  
- ii. **EWP Afternoon:**
  - **Students must study for 25 consecutive weeks** and can take holidays for 8 weeks at the end of the course only, except in instances where the school is closed (i.e., at Christmas).
  - For visa renewals the student must have an attendance higher than 85%.
  - The student must **arrive at the latest at 1.05pm** or they'll be marked as absent.
  - The student **cannot leave the class before 4.55pm** or they'll be marked as absent.
  - The student **must not be absent for longer than 5 minutes** during a class period or they will be marked as absent.
  - We are obliged to inform immigration if a student's **absence rate** from the course is higher than 25% in the first six weeks, or if their total projected attendance falls below 85%. *Before we contact immigration, we will issue three warnings to the student. Please refer to our Attendance Policy for more information on attendance.*
  - The student is permitted to work up to 20 hours per week under normal conditions. However, the student may work for up to 40 hours during the months of June, July, August, September and from Mid-December to Mid-January **as well as** during their holiday period stipulated in their acceptance letter.

# Short-Term Language Students

If a student wishes to book a course for a duration no longer than 90 days, the student is generally not required to apply for a visa at the immigration office in Galway city. The student in this case will be granted a visa at their port of entry (airport) provided they can prove at customs with their return flight ticket that they intend to leave Ireland before 12 weeks have elapsed. The student might be required to show proof of being a holder of a private medical insurance that is valid in Ireland and that will cover the student for the duration of their stay in the state. The student may also be required to show proof of address.

If the student is required to apply for an entry visa before coming to Ireland, the student will have to apply through their nearest embassy. In this case the student can use an acceptance letter from the school as the reason why they need to enter the state. Please note that an entry visa does not necessarily guarantee entry to the state as this is at the discretion of the immigration officer at the port of entry to whom you need to show evidence that you meet all the requirements to legally enter and reside in the state for the period that you are intending to stay.

# What if your IRP permit is lost or stolen?

In the event that the student loses their Irish Residence Permit, or if it is stolen along with the student's other belongings, it is necessary to immediately report it to the nearest Garda Station and request a lost/stolen report.

If the student is abroad, they need to report it to the nearest police station and get a lost/stolen report from the relevant authorities.

Once they are in possession of said report, the student needs to go to their local immigration registration office with the lost/stolen report and their passport to get a replacement IRP card.

We understand that this can be a difficult experience and as such we encourage you to let us know so we can best assist you should this ever happen.

**It is worth noting that the student might be liable to pay another fee for the replacement card.**

# PPS Number

## Personal Public Service number

The Personal Public Service Number (PPS) is a code given by the social welfare office for taxation purposes. It also allows students to avail of certain benefits with regards to their employment.

Students who have a job will require a PPS number to pay tax. Failure to process this in advanced of your first pay will result in payment of Emergency tax (when students without a PPS number are paid, they are taxed at a rate of 60% of their salary and this is retained by the Tax office until the PPS number is obtained and the student registers his/her new employment for tax purposes).

In order to get a PPS number, the student has to complete the following steps:

1. Register online at: [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie)
2. Once on the website, provide an email where the student will be sent a verification code.
3. Once the verification code is received, they can proceed to complete the first part of the registration which includes:
  - a. Fill in their personal details.
  - b. Create a password.
  - c. Provide a second email, to which the student must have access.
4. Once all details in the previous step are confirmed the student will be asked to provide the following:

- a. Their phone number (must be an Irish phone number) to receive a verification code.
  - b. Input the verification as requested by MyWelfare.
5. Once all the previous steps are completed then the student can proceed to request an appointment to apply for the PPS number.

To book an appointment the student needs to:

1. Log in to [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie) to choose the type of appointment they wish to make and for whom. In this case the student needs to choose Personal Public Service Number and book it for themselves.
2. On the following page they will be asked to input their full name and date of birth.
3. They need to clarify whether they wish for the appointment to be conducted in Irish or English and if they require a sign language interpreter.
4. They will need to choose the county and the office which is most convenient for the student to attend the appointment. Students residing in Galway City are advised to book the appointment at:

*Intreo Centre Galway, Sean Duggan Centre, Fairgreen Rd, Galway*

5. Next, the student must choose the timeslot and date they wish to book for, based on availability. Once they have chosen, they will be asked to confirmed once more the date and time chosen.
6. Once the appointment is confirmed the only step left is to present themselves 15 minutes before the chosen time at the chosen office with the documents that they have been told to present for their application to be processed.

# Exit Examination

All students holding a stamp 2 or 2A are required to complete an examination at the end of their course. As a school we are obliged by law to include an exit exam cost at the time of booking. The student should let us know at the time of booking if they have a particular preference out of the accepted exit examinations.

Students are obliged to sign an agreement at the beginning of the programme stating that Bridge Mills Galway Language Centre will enter the student for the appropriate end-of-programme exam and that the exams are mandatory. The student must sign the agreement stating that they understand the exam is mandatory and agree that they will sit the exam. This document is available for inspection in respect of each student.

Procedure for entering students for the required exams:

- The school is a TIE and ETAPP examination centre and can register students onsite.
- The school is a Cambridge examinations centre (PET/Cambridge First/Cambridge Advanced/CPE) and can register students onsite.
- The school is an IELTS testing centre and can register students onsite.
- The school can register students for Trinity Examinations as needed.
- The persons responsible for exam bookings are the members of the academic team: [academic@galwaylanguage.com](mailto:academic@galwaylanguage.com) [ados@galwaylanguage.com](mailto:ados@galwaylanguage.com)

A record of grades received will be available on request to students, INIS and relevant internal personnel and the relevant data protection permissions are agreed with students accordingly.

Examinations provided by the school are as follows (*exam fees are non-refundable after payment*):

<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Title of Award/ End of Programme exam</b>	<b>External Authentication Examining / Awarding Body</b>
EGTIE EGPET	TIE General English / PET	ACELS Cambridge English Language Assessment
EGF	General English / First	Cambridge English Language Assessment
EGA	General English / Advanced	Cambridge English Language Assessment
EGP	General English / CPE	Cambridge English Language Assessment
EGIELTS	General English / IELTS	British Council
EGETAPP EGTRINITYF EGTRINITYI	ETAPP Integrated Skills in English (ISE) Foundation Integrated Skills Exam (ISE) 1	ACELS Trinity Examinations UK Trinity Examinations UK

# Students Attendance

In accordance with the [Irish Naturalization and Immigration Service](#) the following are some of the restrictions that apply to full-time visa requiring Non-EEA students:

A student on a full-time language course may obtain immigration permission of up to 8 months for that course.

A full-time Language Course consists of a minimum of 25 weeks tuition and a minimum of 15 hours tuition per week. The minimum number of hours of teaching is therefore 375.

All tuition must be delivered during the hours 9am-5pm Monday to Friday and involve tuition on at least 4 of those days.

The minimum level of attendance on the course is 85%. ([www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie))

Students at Bridge Mills Galway Language Centre are expected to adhere to these rules for a number of reasons:

- We want each student to progress in their English Language Course and we see attendance as an important factor.
- In order to avoid any complications with INIS or GNIB it is important for students to regularly attend class
- If students would like to renew their visa, they must have attended at least 85% of their classes.

## The Responsibility of the School

It is the obligation of the school to adhere to the guidelines set out by INIS. We therefore make all of our Visa Requiring students aware of the guidelines and restrictions when they enroll and oversee them within our school.



We meticulously document the attendance of each student through daily class registers. This attendance is then recorded each week on the school database which allows us to calculate continual attendance and also the final attendance rate.

## **Employee Responsibility**

- a) It is the responsibility of the teaching staff to monitor student attendance accurately in their Class Registers.
- b) Teachers must be vigilant in enforcing the 5-minute rule. That is, if students are 5 minutes late or if they leave 5 minutes early, they will be marked absent for that particular period of class.
- c) Teachers are required to keep their attendance records up to date with the correct student names and current rate of attendance.
- d) The Academic Administration Staff have to record the weekly attendance figures in the school database. This information is available for viewing by INIS, GNIB and the Department of Justice on request.
- e) Teachers must make the Academic Administration staff aware of any prolonged absences of students (for example 2 days in a row) from their class.

## **Student Responsibility**

- a) Each student is expected to be punctual for class. This avoids disruption to the class and also ensures a higher rate of attendance.
- b) If a student is absent from class, they are expected to notify the school with a valid reason. Where possible they should provide the school with any medical certs or documentation that might explain their absence. Students can contact the school regarding absences via email on [support@galwaylanguage.com](mailto:support@galwaylanguage.com) or by phone on +353 91 566468

- c) Any contact made through the school's social media accounts will not be considered.
- d) Any contact made with the school by a third party on behalf of another student will not be considered.
- e) Students can request their rate of attendance from the school at any time. They simply email [support@galwaylanguage.com](mailto:support@galwaylanguage.com) with an attendance request and it will be sent out as soon as possible.
- f) Any renewal student that wants to book a Long-term programme must have a minimum attendance of 60% or more in order to renew their course with us.

## Student Holidays

- a) As part of the student's Study/Work Visa (Stamp 2) students are entitled to 8 weeks' holidays out of the 33 weeks (8 months) of their visa.
- b) For visa requiring students studying in the afternoon (Mon-Thur 13:00-17:00) these holidays must be taken at the end of their course.
- c) For students studying in the **morning** (Mon-Fri 9:00-12:15) they are allowed to take one break during the course provided:
  - a. they informed the GNIB office of the holiday dates when they applied for their visa.
  - b. the holiday period they wish to take constitutes 33% of the time they have studied. For example, if you have completed 9 weeks of your course you may take 3 weeks' holiday.
  - c. once a student has registered their holidays with the immigration office and the school, they cannot change the dates.

## Disciplinary Procedure

Should a student arrive 5 minutes late for class, or leave 5 minutes early, they will not be marked present for that particular period of class. As the minimum attendance required on the course is 85% it is pertinent that students are punctual and remain in class until it finishes.

The school operates on a three-strikes law. The students are afforded two warnings regarding poor attendance and following the third warning will be expelled from the school with their contact details being passed on to the Dept. of Justice and INIS. In the event that a student's attendance rate has fallen below 85% and the student has not contacted our office with a valid reason they will be sent their **1st Official Warning** by the school via email.

If the student's attendance rate falls to 75% they will be sent a **2<sup>nd</sup> Official Warning**. To ensure that the student is aware of the gravity of their situation, the Student Support Officer will contact them to discuss how they might improve their attendance rate going forward, and how the school might support them in the same.

Should the rate of attendance drop to 60%, the student will be sent a **3<sup>rd</sup> and Final Warning**. At this stage we will take into account how much of their course is left and what the specific circumstances of the student are. In the unlikely event that the student fails to improve immediately following the Final Warning, or in the event that the student does not communicate with the school, it will be understood as a withdrawal from the course. The INIS and GNIB will be notified in this instance, and the school will follow the decisions of INIS regarding visa requests and any decision on the renewal of visas or the cancellation of visas. In the unlikely event that the school is obliged to expel a student, GNIB and INIS will be notified. The student's agent (if there is one) will also be contacted by the school to notify them of the situation. At this point the student will not be recompensed for any classes remaining on their course.

Please note that the renewal of the student visa will be determined by the immigration authorities only and it will be based on your course attendance. If the school records show that the student attendance is lower than 85% the student may only be granted a 3-month extension on their visa. This extension is provided to give the student an opportunity to get their attendance above 85%. If the student manages to successfully attend more than 85% of the lessons during this 3-month period, the student will be granted the remaining 5 months of their visa. If this is the case the student will be required to pay a further €300 for their new visa extension.