

Visa information for Academic Year students (December 2017)

1. Holidays and possibility to work

Under the new regulations (valid from 01 September 2016) students:

- Will be able to get a visa for for a maximum of 35 weeks
- Must study for 25 weeks and can take the remainder of the weeks as holidays (up to 10 weeks)
- Can continue to work part-time (up to 20 hours per week) while studying, but can only work full-time (40 hours per week) if they take their holidays of up to 10 weeks according to the holiday policy during the months of **June, July, August, September** and over the winter break from 15th December to 15th January
- Can stay in Ireland for a total of three 8-month courses, a total of 2 years, studying English
- Can take their first holidays after the student has completed 9 weeks of their course:

As per the holiday policy outlined by the Department of Justice holiday periods cannot at any point exceed 1/3 of the total weeks elapsed.

This means that students need to have completed 9 weeks of their course before they can take holidays for the first time. After 9 weeks they can then take up to 3 weeks of holidays as they need to have studied 3 weeks for each week they want to take the holiday.

For Academic reasons students need to have 4 weeks of their course remaining, i.e. cannot take holidays in their final 4 weeks.

NOTE: Students need to inform the school about their holidays periods BEFORE starting their programme and/or registering with GNIB.

Further information on the above can be found on <http://www.inis.gov.ie/> (go to: Our Services > Immigration > Schemes & programmes > I want to study a language course)

Please note that we will have an **induction meeting** with each student to clarify the above details, explain them how to get their Irish Residence Permit (IRP) Card (previously called: GNIB card), how to open an Irish bank account, etc., and help them to decide on the most suitable time to take their holidays.

2. Minimum attendance

As part of Irish Immigration regulations, non-EEA Academic Year students are required to have a minimum of 85% attendance. Failing to meet this requirement may result in visa withdrawal.

3. End-of-course exam

Academic Year students are obliged to sit a recognised exam at the end of their course according to the Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP) set out by the Department of Justice (students who do not comply with this requirement will not be permitted to obtain further immigration permission). At Atlas we are offering the **TIE and Cambridge** suite of exams: **PET, Cambridge First and Cambridge Advanced**. The regular registration fee for these exams is approximately €160 - €200. However, we will be discounting the exam fees to **€125 for our Academic Year students**.

Taking this exam is an obligation for Academic Year visa holders and failing to meet this obligation students are potentially jeopardising their visa status.

4. Evidence of Financial arrangements

Up to now immigration would only accept an Irish bank account as proof of funds. Recently it has become more difficult for students to open Irish bank accounts which has been causing some problems. Immigration has relaxed these regulations and students now have the following options to show proof of funds:

(a) A statement in respect of an Irish bank account showing sufficient funds (i.e. €3,000 for an Academic year), where the student can open an Irish bank account

Note: We have agreed with the bank we work with that it is sufficient to provide medical insurance that includes the student's Irish address in order to open a student account. Therefore, to make it easier for your students to open a bank account, we encourage you to purchase our medical insurance when registering a student on an Academic Year course. The price of our insurance is €135 for 8 months. Further information and an overview of conditions for Language Programme Students can be found on: <http://www.inis.gov.ie/> (go to: Our Services > Immigration > Schemes & programmes > Notice Regarding Evidence of Finances for all Non EEA Students)

(b) A current foreign bank statement (showing €3,000 or the equivalent in another currency) not less than one month old, together with a past statement, for an account in the student's name (as in his or her passport) accompanied by a debit card in the same name and same bank account

(c) Documentary evidence that money is held in trust for a student by a financial services body regulated in Ireland by the Central Bank of Ireland (e.g. Postal Money Order)

(d) A pre-paid credit or debit card(s) with the student's name and a verification of the amount(s) in credit

From past experiences we strongly recommend options b) or d) as these seem to be the easiest and quickest ways for students to provide proof of funds.

Further information can be found on: <http://www.inis.gov.ie/> (go to: Our Services > Immigration > Schemes & programmes > Notice Regarding Evidence of Finances for all Non EEA Students)

5. Online appointment system

The Immigration Office at Burgh Quay Dublin has launched an Online Appointment Management System for registrations. When students log on to the new system they will be able to make an appointment in a one hour time slot. Students are urged to book their appointments before they travel to Ireland. A good time for the appointment is around one month after the student's arrival. New appointments are generally released each day at 10.00am and 2.30pm Irish time.

