



Eligibility Criteria for HCI Micro-credential Fee Subsidy 2024-2025

The HCI Micro-Credential Fee Subsidy has been introduced to enable more learners to address critical skills gaps and engage with lifelong learning through short, flexible courses known as micro-credentials.

The eligibility criteria for the HCI Micro-Credential Fee Subsidy has been set out by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and will be administered by the course provider you are applying to during the admissions or registration process. **Please contact the course provider with any questions you may have.**

HCI Micro-Credential Fee Subsidies are available on identified micro-credentials only and are limited. Course providers will administer the subsidy on a first come first serve basis unless otherwise stated.

To be considered eligible¹ for the HCI Micro-Credential Fee Subsidy, you will need to:

- 1) Be living fulltime in the Republic of Ireland**
- 2) Have your own, valid PPS Number**
- 3) Meet the nationality/visa requirement**
 - a) You are an EU/EEA/UK/Swiss national or;
 - b) You have Stamp 4/Stamp 4 EU FAM, Stamp 5, or Stamp 6 on your Irish Residence Permit (IRP) card. This includes those resident here on Stamp 4 on the basis of:
 - i) Having permission to remain in Ireland as a family member of an EU citizen or;
 - ii) Having official Refugee/Subsidiary Protection status in Ireland /being here on the basis of refugee family reunification or;
 - iii) Having been granted Humanitarian Leave to Remain in the State (prior to the Immigration Act 1999) or;
 - iv) Having permission to remain following the Minister's decision not to make a deportation order.
- 4) IMPORTANT: in addition to 1.2.3 above you must:**
 - a) Have lived in either the EU, the EEA, the UK, Switzerland for at least 3 out of the last 5 years
 - b) Any period the Department of Justice can count towards Citizenship can count towards residency (except stamp 2 & 2 a).
 - c) If you have Refugee/Subsidiary Protection status in Ireland, residency is counted from the date you applied for International Protection.

¹ The HEA reserve the right to modify eligibility and other entry criteria.

Note 1: Applicants who are in receipt of an eligible DSP payment are not expected to demonstrate that they meet the Nationality/Visa requirement or 3 of the previous 5 years EU/EEA/UK/Swiss residency requirement.

Note 2: The process for determining eligibility is undertaken by the third level institution to which the student is attending.

5) Ukrainian Applications:

As per existing guidance under Note 1 of existing and current eligibility criteria:

Note 1: Applicants who are in receipt of an eligible DSP payment are not expected to demonstrate that they meet the Nationality/Visa requirement or 3 of the previous 5 years EU/EEA/UK/Swiss residency requirement.

Applicants who are in employment or returning to the workforce, would need to demonstrate their eligibility in line with existing guidance i.e., ostensibly on the same basis as an Irish citizen, including the residency requirements for 3 out of the last 5 years in the EU, the EEA, the UK, Switzerland.

Employed Ukrainians under Temporary Protection and in receipt of a Temporary Protection Letter, are still required to meet the residency requirement i.e., a student must have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least 3 of the 5 years prior to entry to their third level course of study in order to qualify to participate in the programme.

6) NON-EU APPLICANTS:

Residency for 3 out of previous 5 years in the EU/ EEA/ UK/ Switzerland:

Non-EU applicants, with the exception of “Unemployed” status and in receipt of a qualifying DSP payment, must provide evidence limited to the following visas for three out of previous 5 years residency in the Republic of Ireland:

- Stamp 1
- Stamp 3
- Stamp 4 / Stamp 4 EU FAM / Stamp 4D
- Stamp 5
- Stamp 6

NOTE 1: Stamp 2 & Stamp 2A are not reckonable towards residency and cannot be included in determining 3 out of previous 5 years residency.

NOTE 2: Residency in another qualifying jurisdiction outside the Republic of Ireland (and in the EU/ EEA/ UK/ Switzerland) for non-EU nationals is assessed on a case-by-case basis and proof of equivalent visas is required. Holiday or educational visas are not acceptable.

7) Employment Status

When applying for the HCI Fee Subsidy through a participating University you must indicate your current employment status:

- **Employed** - Working either for yourself or someone else. The sector you are working in and the size of the company.
- **Unemployed** - Not currently working, receiving a qualifying welfare payment from the Department of Social Protection (unless you are formerly self-employed) and actively seeking employment.

8) Education and other entry criteria

- Entry requirements to courses are set by individual course providers and may include recognition of prior experience and learning.

Appendix A. List of Eligible DSP Payments for unemployed applicants.

Which DSP payments are accepted?

- Jobseekers Benefit
- Jobseekers Transition Payment
- Jobseekers Allowance
- One Parent Family Payment
- Disability Allowance
- Qualified Adults of Working Age, where they can establish an entitlement to a qualifying payment in their own right.
- Carers Allowance
- Farm Assist/Fish Assist
- Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory or Non-contributory Pension
- Blind Pension
- Deserted Wives Allowance
- Working Family Payment
- DSP work schemes: Community Employment Scheme, Rural Social Scheme and Tús.

If you are signing for social insurance contribution credits, you may also be eligible.

If you are formerly self-employed, you do not need to be in receipt of a Department of Social Protection payment.

NB: If you are thinking of taking up a HCI Micro-credential course you **should contact your local social welfare office** before enrolling on the course to let them know of your plans, and to check whether you need to go through any further steps with that Departments' services or if it will impact your payment. Participation on an HCI Micro-credential course does not provide any guarantee of continuation of a Social Protection payment.