



**MICRO-CREDENTIAL
LEARNER FEE SUBSIDY
GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS**



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

HEA

An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

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Summary of Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for Micro-credential Learner Fee Subsidy 2026, you must meet the published eligibility criteria in full for the employment category you apply under, and successful applicants must upload the **Applicant Eligibility Declaration Document** confirming this **before the course start date**.

Eligibility Criteria for EU Applicants

1. You must hold a valid PPS Number
2. You must live full-time in the Republic of Ireland
3. You must be EU / EEA / UK / Swiss passport holder
4. You must have lived in the EU / EEA / UK / Switzerland for 3 full years out of previous 5 years
5. You must be:
 - a. Currently **Employed** in the Republic of Ireland
 - b. Currently **Self-Employed** in the Republic of Ireland
 - c. **Unemployed** and in receipt of a Qualifying DSP Payment / Work Scheme
 - d. **Formerly Self-Employed** in the Republic of Ireland
 - e. **Returner:** You are a homemaker / on other caring duties, **OR** you are unemployed **and** economically dependent on a partner / spouse, for at least 9 of the last 12 months.
 - f. **Recent Graduate:** You completed and graduated from a full-time NFQ Level 8 Degree within the 12 months prior to the start of an approved course and do not fit into one of the above categories.

Eligibility Criteria for Non-EU Applicants

1. You must hold a valid PPS Number
2. You must live full-time in the Republic of Ireland
3. If you hold a passport from any other jurisdiction outside the EU / EEA / UK / Switzerland, you must have a **valid Stamp 4 / Stamp 5 / Stamp 6** on your IRP or GNIB card
4. You must have lived in the EU / EEA / UK / Switzerland for 3 full years out of previous 5 years **on a qualifying visa:**
 - a. Stamp 1 (all)
 - b. Stamp 3 (all)
 - c. Stamp 4 (all)
 - d. Stamp 5 (all)
 - e. Stamp 6 (all)
6. You must be:
 - a. Currently **Employed** in the Republic of Ireland
 - b. Currently **Self-Employed** in the Republic of Ireland
 - c. **Unemployed** and in receipt of a Qualifying DSP Payment / Work Scheme
 - d. **Formerly Self-Employed** in the Republic of Ireland
 - e. **Returner:** You are a homemaker / on other caring duties, **OR** you are unemployed **and** economically dependent on a partner / spouse, for at least 9 of the last 12 months.
 - f. **Recent Graduate:** You completed and graduated from a full-time NFQ Level 8 Degree within the 12 months prior to the start of an approved course and do not fit into one of the above categories.



Important Notes on Applicant Eligibility

1. You must be living full-time in the Republic of Ireland on the date the course starts.
2. Short absences outside the Republic of Ireland while enrolled on an approved course are permitted. Any absence **more than two (2) consecutive weeks** would be considered an extended absence and has implications for your ability to complete an approved course.
3. Unemployed applicants should consult their DSP Employment Personal Advisor / relevant DSP section before applying for an approved course, as **only the DSP can confirm** that taking a course will not affect a social welfare payment.

Definitions of Employment Categories

To be eligible for Micro-credential Learner Fee Subsidy 2026, all applications must be made under one of the following employment categories.

Employed / Self-Employed

You are either working for an employer or you are self-employed in the Republic of Ireland.

Unemployed / Formerly Self-Employed

You are not currently working, receiving a qualifying payment from the DSP (unless formerly self-employed in Republic of Ireland), and you are actively seeking employment.

➔ **NOTE:** Unemployed applicants should consult their DSP Employment Personal Advisor / relevant DSP section before applying for an approved course.

Returner

You are a homemaker / on other caring duties, **OR** you are unemployed **and** economically dependent on a partner / spouse, for at least 9 of the last 12 months.

➔ **NOTE:** If you are in receipt of any income of your own, including a DSP payment (except for Children's Allowance), you are **not eligible** to apply as a Returner.

Recent Graduate

You completed a full-time NFQ Level 8 Degree within the 12 months prior to the start of an approved course and do not fit into one of the above categories.

Application Stages

Step 1: Springboard+ Account

You must register a new account (<https://springboardcourses.ie/register>) or log in to your existing account (<https://springboardcourses.ie/login>) through the Springboard+ website.

Step 2: Apply for Course

Once logged in, you can search for the course you are interested in and choose the option **Apply Now**.

Step 3: Self-Declaration

You must select your **Employment Category**, answer **Yes** to all questions, and **consent** to supplying the acceptable supporting documentation (when requested) on the Self-Declaration section before progressing to the application form.

Step 4: Submit Application

Once the Self-Declaration section is filled in, you may complete the course application form and send this using the **Submit** button.

Step 5: Application Assessment

The course provider assesses your submitted application and updates the application status on the AMS to either **Successful** or **Unsuccessful**.

Step 6: Provisional Place Offer

If your application is **successful**, you will receive an email notifying you that you have received a provisional place offer.

Step 7: Acceptance of Provisional Place Offer

You must login to your account to accept the provisional place offer.

You will then be prompted to complete the ESF Mandatory Questionnaire. You have the option of Yes, No, or Prefer not to say in response to all questions. You cannot proceed until the questionnaire has been submitted.

Step 8: Request for Documentation

You will receive an automated email notification no more than 6 weeks before the course start date requesting you to upload documentation to confirm your eligibility.

Step 9: Documentation Upload

You must upload the **Applicant Eligibility Declaration Document** to each of the **five sections** on the **Document Upload Page** of your Springboard+ account.

Step 10: Documentation Verification

Your course provider **must verify** that the **Applicant Eligibility Declaration Document** uploaded to your account meets the standards required to verify your eligibility. Incomplete declarations are not acceptable.

Applicant Eligibility Declaration Document

You must determine your eligibility for Micro-credential Learner Fee Subsidy 2026 in line with the published eligibility criteria on the Springboard+ website.

<https://springboardcourses.ie/eligibility>

If you have determined you meet the published eligibility criteria in full and your application is successful, you must complete the **Applicant Eligibility Declaration Document** and upload this to your AMS account, when requested.

There are five sections on the **AMS Document Upload Page**, and a copy of the Applicant Eligibility Declaration Document **must be uploaded to each of these sections** for the system to recognise the process as complete.

Document Upload Page sections:

1. Evidence of Employment Status
2. Evidence of Current Residency in the State
3. Evidence of Valid PPSN
4. Evidence of Eligible Nationality / Visa
5. Evidence of 3 Year Residency (EU / EEA / UK / Switzerland)

Next Steps:

- Applicant Eligibility Declaration Document **confirms** that you are eligible: The course provider will update your status to **Enrolled** on the application system.
- Applicant Eligibility Declaration Document **does not confirm** that you are eligible: The course provider will update your status to **AdminCancelled** on the application system.

It is the responsibility of the course provider to review applications, offer provisional places, and determine eligibility; the MicroCreds team is not involved in any part of this process

Useful Information

If you have any queries on a particular approved course, please contact the course provider directly, as they are best placed to assist you. Contact details for course providers are available in the “More Details” tab under the relevant course on the Springboard+ website (<https://springboardcourses.ie/search>).

Recent Graduate Employment Category: Non-EU Applicants

Recent Graduates who are non-EU applicants holding a valid Stamp 4 / Stamp 5 / Stamp 6 **and** who have lived in the EU / EEA / UK / Switzerland for 3 full years (36 months) out of the previous 5 years on a qualifying visa may apply.

Please note, **Stamp 2 and Stamp 2A are not qualifying visas** and any time spent on these visas cannot be included when determining residency.

Returning Applicants

- Applicants can take a **maximum of three approved courses in 2026**.
- The AMS will **automatically block** any applicant currently enrolled on an approved course. You will need to **email the HEA MicroCreds team** who will confirm the number of micro-credentials you have enrolled on across all providers. If this is less than three, the MicroCreds Team will request a removal of the block on the applicant’s account.

MicroCreds Team

MicroCreds@hea.ie

Registration

- If you enrol on an approved course, you will be required to complete a **single registration** approximately mid-way through your course.
- The MicroCreds Team will notify course providers in advance of opening registrations on the AMS and will provide guidance on completing the registration process.

Qualifying DSP Payments for Unemployed Applicants

You must be in receipt of one of the following qualifying DSP payments / work schemes to be eligible to apply for Micro-credential Learner Fee Subsidy 2026 under the **Unemployed** category.

Which DSP payments are accepted?

- Jobseekers Pay-Related Benefit
- Jobseekers Allowance
- Jobseekers Transition Payment
- 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)
- Carer's Allowance
- Farm Assist / Fish Assist
- Bereaved Partner's Contributory or Non-Contributory Pension
- Blind Pension
- Deserted Wife's Allowance
- Signing on for social insurance credits

Which DSP work schemes / allowances are accepted?

- Tús
- Rural Social Scheme
- Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
- Short-Term Enterprise Allowance

All unemployed applicants should consult their DSP Employment Personal Advisor / relevant DSP section before applying for an approved course, as only the DSP can confirm that taking a course will not affect a social welfare payment