

# Connect2...

## Financing Further and Higher Education for Students who are Asylum Seekers or Refugees



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www.connect2learn.org.uk

This factsheet contains details of the financial support available to asylum seekers and refugees and relates solely to Northern Ireland (NI).

Before advising a client it is important to establish the client's status, as the rights differ in important respects.

A client who describes her/himself as a refugee may:

- have **refugee status** with or without indefinite leave to remain. Since 2005 individuals are no longer automatically given indefinite leave to remain. They may be given leave for 5 years, and then have their status reviewed. In most cases indefinite leave to remain is granted after the 5 year period.
- have **exceptional leave** to remain/enter. This will only apply if leave was given before 1 April 2003
- be an **asylum seeker** (status during the process of applying for refugee status)
- from 1 April 2003, have **humanitarian protection** or **discretionary leave**

Some of the above terms may appear unfamiliar; however it is the terminology used by the Home Office when dealing with asylum seekers and refugees. The person should have documentation from the Home Office confirming their status.

### General Information

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are not necessarily provided free for people who need support with English language skills. Contact local colleges for details of courses or see EGSA's factsheet Connect2...ESOL.

Colleges and universities may have a department or member of staff dealing specifically with overseas students. This will be a useful point of contact for the potential student.

EGSA Connecting Adults with Learning  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 40 Linenhall Street, BELFAST, BT2 8BA  
General Enquiries 028 9024 4274

Learners' Line 0845 602 6632



## **Higher Education**

Universities and colleges charge two levels of fees: the lower home fee (the fee NI students pay) and the higher overseas fee.

### **Refugees and those granted leave to enter or remain**

Students who have been granted refugee status with or without indefinite leave to remain and are ordinarily resident in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man on the first day of the first academic year of their course, are entitled to home fees and are eligible to apply for student loans and grants to help with living costs.

Students who have been granted humanitarian protection, discretionary leave, exceptional leave to remain/enter or, in some cases, indefinite leave, are entitled to home fees in higher education. They may be entitled to apply for student loans and grants to help with their living costs if their course is eligible and they have been ordinarily resident in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for three years before the start of their course.

Refugees, and students with humanitarian protection, discretionary leave, exceptional leave or, in some cases, indefinite leave status who have been living in the UK for at least 3 years, are treated in the same way as UK students.

Further information on the student loans and grants available to UK students can be found in EGSA's factsheets [Connect2...Financing Full Time Higher Education](#) and [Connect2...Financing Part Time Higher Education](#).

### **Asylum Seekers**

If the student is an asylum seeker, it can be more difficult to receive funding for higher education than if they had other status to remain in the UK.

- Asylum seekers can study at university but they are likely to be charged overseas tuition fees.
- Overseas fees are substantially higher than the home student rate. The overseas fee can range from £6,500 to £18,700 each year depending on the course, level and institution.
- Some universities may charge asylum seekers home fee rates for certain courses, check with the relevant institution for further details.
- Some universities may only charge home fee rates or offer other support to part-time students, check with the relevant institution for further details.
- Asylum seekers are not eligible for student loans or grants no matter how long they have lived in the UK.

**Please note:** If an asylum seeker is in higher education and a positive decision is made on their status it is important that they tell the institute immediately, as they can be reassessed for student support. If they are granted refugee status they will be eligible for fee assistance for the remaining years of the course and also for the current year, if their status has changed within 3 months of the first day of the course. They will also be eligible for support with living costs from the first quarter following change in status.

If the decision is to grant humanitarian protection or discretionary leave, they must also meet the 3 year residency requirements in order to access support for fees and learning costs.

### **Further Education**

Fees in the further education sector are charged at two levels: the home rate and the overseas rate. The home rate is usually published in the college prospectus. The overseas rate can be in the £2,000 - £4,000 range depending on the course, level and institution.

### **Refugees and those granted leave to enter or remain**

Students who have been granted refugee status in the UK are entitled to home fees in further education. They are also eligible to apply to their Education and Library Board (ELB) for help with fees and for a course grant.

Students who have been granted humanitarian protection, discretionary leave, exceptional leave or, in some cases, indefinite leave are entitled to home fees in further education. They may be entitled to help with their fees and a course grant if their course is eligible and they have been ordinarily resident in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for 3 years before the start of their course.

Refugees and students with humanitarian protection, discretionary leave, exceptional leave or, in some cases, indefinite leave status who have been living in the UK for at least 3 years, are treated in the same way as UK students.

Further information on the student loans and grants available to UK students can be found in EGSA's factsheets [Connect2...Financing Full Time Further Education](#) and [Connect2...Financing Part Time Further Education](#).

## Asylum Seekers

In most cases asylum seekers are charged overseas tuition fees. However students may be eligible to pay home fees if:

- they have applied for asylum and have been waiting for over six months for the Home Office to make a decision about their claim; or
- they have been refused asylum in the UK but have been granted support under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. They should have a letter that says they have been granted this support.

For full information about who is entitled to home fees and free courses in further education in Northern Ireland, download the circular “FE 06/07 Further Education Residence Requirements” from the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) website: [www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-further-education/fe607-residence-requirements.htm](http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-further-education/fe607-residence-requirements.htm)

Further education support is discretionary and at the moment funding is available only to students who meet the eligibility requirements in the formal regulations.

## Contacts

### **UKCISA: The Council for International Education**

Advice line for students: 020 7107 9922 (1 - 4pm, Monday – Friday)

W: [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk)

UKCISA offer advice to international students about issues including immigration, fees, financial hardship, welfare and finding legal advice. UKCISA cannot help you to claim asylum, but they can offer advice about your fee status and whether you are eligible for student support.

### **NICEM – Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities**

T: 028 9023 8645

W: [www.nicem.org.uk](http://www.nicem.org.uk)

### **NICRAS – Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

T. 028 9024 6699

W. [www.nicras.org.uk](http://www.nicras.org.uk)

### **Skill (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities)**

Skill produces information booklets on funding for students with disabilities, including educational trusts, some of which are not restricted to UK residents.

T: 028 9028 7000

W: [www.skillni.org.uk](http://www.skillni.org.uk)

## **Education and Library Boards**

Belfast Education and Library Board  
T: 028 9056 4000

North Eastern Education and Library Board  
T: 028 2566 2280

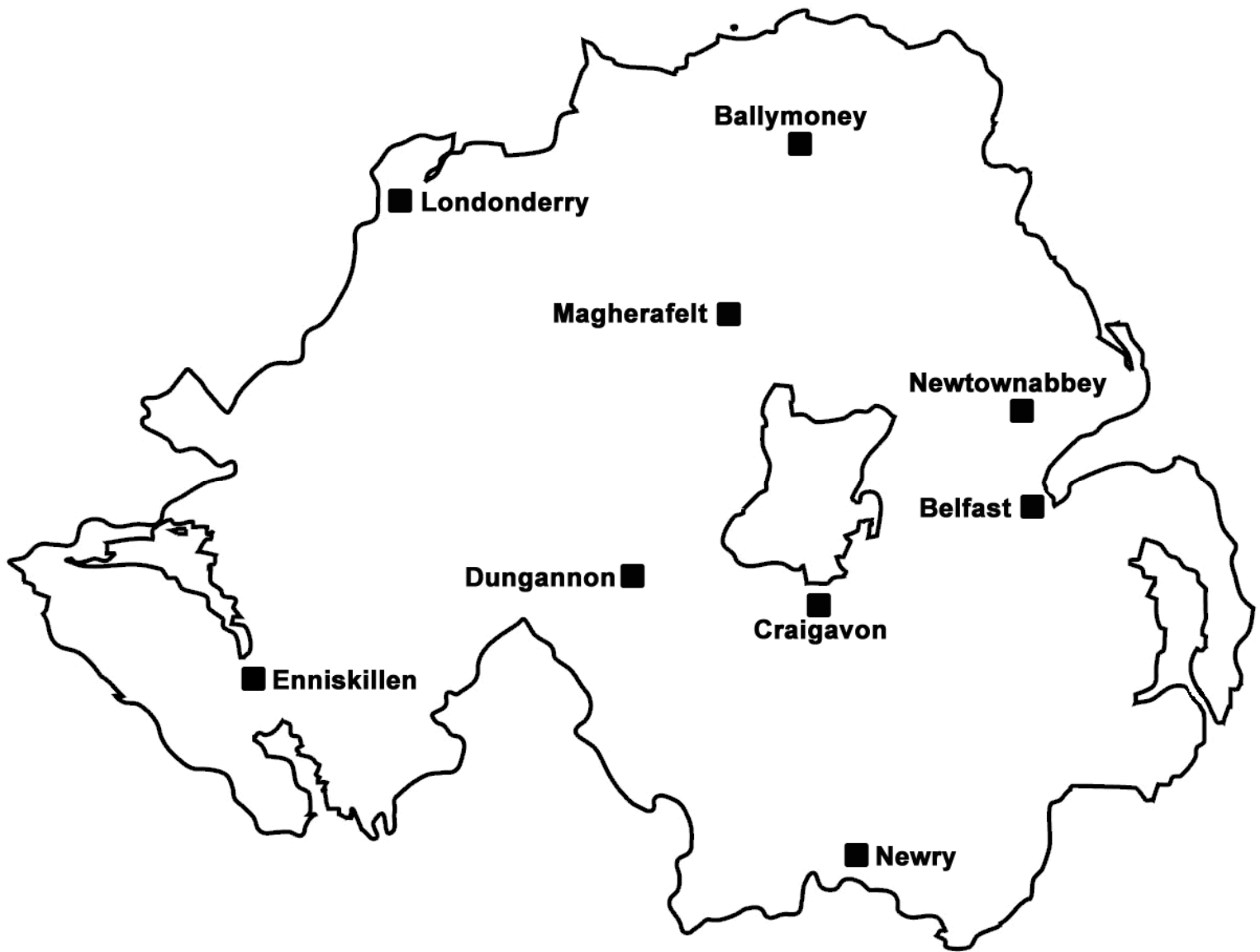
Southern Education and Library Board  
T: 028 3751 2432

South Eastern Education and Library Board  
T: 028 9056 6200

Western Education and Library Board  
T: 028 8225 4546

# EGSA across Northern Ireland...

## 0845 602 6632



Every effort is made by EGSA to ensure that information is as accurate and comprehensive as possible at the time of going to print. However students should be aware that regulations can change at short notice and are therefore advised to check the current situation with their local ELB or the appropriate college or university contact.

