How Will the GradStart Benefit My Company?

Additional Information <https://gradhub.ie/gradstart-for-companies/>

GradStart is a 24-month graduate placement programme. The objective of GradStart is to assist Enterprise Ireland’s indigenous companies to scale and grow their businesses through the introduction of good graduate talent to deliver clearly defined projects.

This offer will be specifically targeted at the graduate community and helping companies attract additional graduate resources.

The initiative will support companies with ambitious growth plans to employ up to three graduates at any one time, with a minimum Level 6-degree qualification on the National Vocational Qualifications Framework or equivalent.

The offer will be available to all Enterprise Ireland client companies who meet the programme criteria.

**Companies must apply for either the standard 50% grant rate OR 70% grant rate applied to language proficiency. These grant rates are not transferrable or interchangeable.**

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**GradStart Offers Your Company:**

* Your company will be facilitated with the necessary tools required to effectively compete for graduate talent;
* Utilisation of graduates to help deliver on defined company projects and embed capability and/or support the company achieve its goals;
* Employment grant support for up to 3 graduates at any one time
* Potential to improve the skills base and competence available in the business.

Am I Eligible?

GradStart is open to all E.I. SME and mid-tier (less than 500 employees) companies, Large companies (in certain circumstances), HPSU Accelerate companies (see eligibility criteria below) and LEOs**\***.  The initiative is also available to eligible Údarás na Gaeltachta clients.

**\* LEOs are limited to 1 graduate on a 2-year contract at any one time and must have a minimum of 5 full time employees to qualify for support.**

**HPSU Accelerate companies:**

In order to be eligible for support for **1 graduate,** HPSU Accelerate companies must meet the following criteria:

* Have a minimum of 5 full-time employees (based in Ireland) at the time of application
* Have been approved an EI equity investment
* Have drawn down the equity investment at least 6 months prior to application for GradStart funding

**Eligible companies must be able to demonstrate satisfactory progress against business plan and evidence of appropriate funding for the duration of the placement.**

**Large Companies:**

Large companies\* – Up to 3 graduates at any one time

\*must not currently have a graduate programme in place*–*Graduate programme is defined as:

***Block in-take of graduates where an educational element is provided and programme is marketed* *as and recruited for as a ‘Graduate Programme’***

Companies should discuss potential eligibility with their Enterprise Ireland Development Advisor.

**Eligible Companies (See Section 5 Applicant Eligibility page 5/6 of the**[**Terms of Reference**](https://gradhub.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/639af0e8e5b1856c476f0e2f5529a213-1.pdf)**(ToR):**

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**Ineligible companies / Exclusions:**

* Partnerships
* Small enterprises in the agricultural sector are excluded in line with State aid guidelines.
* Companies with charitable status, commercial semi-state companies, “not for profit” organisations, trade associations, company representation bodies such as Chambers of Commerce, Sports Clubs and other non-commercial bodies or associations are not eligible to participate in GradStart

**Project Eligibility:**

Eligible projects must meet the following criteria:

* Applications from eligible companies;
* A project defined by the company linked to their overall growth plan and be part of the strategic development plan of the company;
* The company clearly demonstrates that it has an appropriate infrastructure (i.e. adequate work tools, desk/PC and support and access to work colleagues/supervisor or team leaders) to enable the graduate to fulfil the aims of the programme;
* The company identifies an in-company mentor to work with and develop the graduate on a daily/weekly basis;
* Activities that support the development of the graduate;
* If applying for 70% grant rate aligned to language proficiency, the company must clearly demonstrate how that language will be utilised to deliver on the project.

**Note:**

The company, at application stage, sets out the specific title, role and purpose of the graduate for the 2-year contract.

Any change / revision to the graduate title, role or purpose made by the company post-letter of offer will result in the offer being **null and void and the grant being cancelled.**

**Ineligible projects:**

Any projects related to Sales and Marketing activities

[[1]](https://gradhub.ie/gradstart-for-companies/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1) Traded services are defined under the Industrial Development Act 1986 and Industrial Development Services Order 2010 (SI No. 81 2010) see <http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/Our-Clients/Eligibility-criteria.html>

**Eligible Expenditure**

Eligible Company Employment Costs:

* Salaries and wages of graduates approved under the GradStart (excluding Employers’ PRSI and Bonus).

**Ineligible Expenditure:**

* Recruitment Costs
* Bonuses related to the graduate’s salary
* Employers PRSI contributions
* Travel and subsistence in Ireland or Overseas
* Any accommodation costs
* Expenditure incurred prior to the date of receipt of the Application to Enterprise Ireland is ineligible

**Eligible Graduates:**

GradStart is open to graduates and postgraduates who meet the following criteria:

* Seeking graduate entry level positions;
* Have a recognised 3rd level qualification not less than Level 6 on the National Vocational Qualifications Framework, or recognised equivalent; or a postgraduate degree not less than Level 9 on the National Vocational Qualifications Framework, or recognised equivalent;
* Have a valid work permit to work in Ireland (if required) for the duration of the 24-month placement; OR
* Hold a 1-year working visa with the option to renew the visa to allow completion of the 2-year contract – neither the hiring company nor Enterprise Ireland will have any liability or responsibility should the graduate be unable to renew their working visa.
* Have graduated within the last four years i.e.; 2016; 2017; 2018 or 2019.
* Can provide proof of language proficiency where required by hiring company



What Funding is available from Enterprise Ireland?

This is a 24-month placement support to embed higher levels of graduate capability in our client companies. Enterprise Ireland will provide financial support of **€30k (€15k per year) or 50%** of individual graduate salary costs (whichever is the lesser), with a limit of three graduates at any one time.

Salary support is based on a full-time position. A graduate’s working week must be in line with a company’s standard working hours for full-time employees.

GradStart is funded under De Minimis aid. The limit of three graduates is based on a rolling calendar year subject to maximum De Minimis of €200,000 in a three-year period.  The rolling period starts from the application submission date.  The application submission date will also be the earliest date on which the new grant aided employees may be recruited.   *Graduates must be new graduates to the company, funding for existing graduates or employees will not be supported. If a company has hired a graduate under the G4IG or GBGI offer, funding to retain that graduate will not be supported by this offer.*

**In the event of any graduate contract issues arising, the company must notify their Enterprise Ireland Development Advisor of same at the earliest opportunity.**

for more information on funding (See Section 3 Duration & Funding page 2/3 of the [Terms of Reference](https://gradhub.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/639af0e8e5b1856c476f0e2f5529a213-1.pdf) (ToR):

**Language Proficiency**

Where a company has a **clear requirement** for a graduate with language proficiency and recruits a graduate with language proficiency**\***, Enterprise Ireland will provide financial support of **€42k (21k per year on a maximum allowable salary of 30k per year) or 70%** of individual graduate salary costs (whichever is the lesser), with a limit of three graduates at any one time.

Graduates must have graduated in 2016, 2017, 2018 or 2019.

The company must clearly demonstrate the specific purpose of a language graduate and how that language will be utilised to deliver on the project.

Companies that intend to apply for funding under GradStart should contact their Enterprise Ireland Development Advisor in advance of submitting an online application for funding.

Project support is subject to:

* Not exceeding the De Minimis limit of a rolling €200,000 over 3 fiscal years
* All companies must identify a suitable in-company mentor
* Compliance with company and graduate eligibility as set out in this document
* The graduate’s working week being in line with a company’s standard working hours for full-time employees

Note: GradStart is administered under De Minimis. Where companies have exceeded their De Minimis limits, they will not be eligible for these employment grants.

**European Regional Development Fund**

GradStart is generally funded under De Minimis aid.

However, GradStart is also eligible for funding by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Enterprise Ireland under the Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020.

To be eligible for ERDF the projects must be carried out in one of the following counties (this may be different to the location of the applicant): Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, Sligo, Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath, Galway, Mayo or Roscommon.

Graduates employed in SMEs **only** are eligible. Graduates employed in large companies are not eligible for ERDF co-funding.

Right to Appeal

All clients have the right to appeal the decision by the approving authority within 2 months of the decision by contacting their DA to discuss committee/authority decisions, or by appealing in writing to the Secretary to the Board

**Legal and State Aid Basis**

The legal basis for GradStart is Section 25 of the Industrial Development Act, 1986, as amended, and Section 7 of the Industrial Development Act, 1998. The State Aid basis is Aid under De Minimis Aid – Commission regulation EU no. 1407/2013

**Funding Approval Process**

There are no call close dates. The process is not competitive. Applications will be evaluated by the company’s Development Adviser and put forward for recommendation by the appropriate Department Manager in Enterprise Ireland. Applications will be assessed using the criteria below for each project submitted:

* The potential impact of the project on the strategic direction of the company;
* The commitment of the company to enhance its capability;
* The quality of the proposed infrastructure within the company to enable the graduate to fulfil the aims of this initiative;
* Previous enterprise Ireland financial support and performance against targets;
* All companies must identify a suitable in-company mentor;

The company, at application stage, sets out the specific title, role and purpose of the graduate for the 2-year contract.  Any change / revision to the graduate title, role or purpose made by the company post-letter of offer will result in the offer being null and void and the grant being cancelled.

**Time period for approval and drawing down grants**

There will be three claim periods. The first claim period will be on receipt by EI of the company signed letter of offer, graduate employment contract, copy of the graduates, qualifications and a tax clearance certificate. This claim will be for 25% of the approved eligible employment costs.

The second claim period for the remaining 25% of the approved eligible employment costs will be payable on completion by the graduate of the twelve-month placement / fulltime employment in the company.

The third claim period for 50% of the approved eligible employment costs will be payable on completion by the graduate of the 24-month placement/fulltime employment in the company.

The company will need to provide a valid tax clearance certificate, proof of graduate payment, copy of graduate payslip, director’s statement and the relevant claim form.

Companies must incur and pay for all expenditure and submit claims for payment no later than the final claim date noted in their letter of offer. Any balance unclaimed after the final claim date will be cancelled.

Please see Section 12, page 10/11  of the [terms of reference](https://gradhub.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/639af0e8e5b1856c476f0e2f5529a213-1.pdf) for further details.

**Evaluation of projects that the graduates are working on**

Enterprise Ireland reserves the right to evaluate the company projects that graduates are working on throughout the 24-month period.  The programme manager for GradStart may make contact with the company and/or the graduate hired at any point throughout the 24-month period.

**Company Responsibility**

Companies are responsible for attracting interviewing and hiring their own graduate(s). Enterprise Ireland has designed and developed a dedicated graduate website – [www.gradhub.ie](http://www.gradhub.ie/) – where companies can advertise their own graduate job opportunities to attract graduates.



How do I Apply?

Please read the [terms of reference](https://gradhub.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/639af0e8e5b1856c476f0e2f5529a213-1.pdf) before applying to the GradStart

**Company Application Process**

All company applications for funding should be discussed with [your Enterprise Ireland Development Adviser](https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/Our-People/DA%20Finder/) prior to submission.

You can apply via the Enterprise Ireland [Online Application System](https://secure.enterprise-ireland.com/Xtranet/CredentialManagement/cmLogin.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fXtranet%2fDefault.aspx)

**Prior to applying please note:**

* Contact your assigned Enterprise Ireland Development Adviser to discuss your application
* First time applicants will be required to register on the Enterprise Ireland Online Application System
* All Údarás na Gaeltachta companies must apply directly to Údarás na Gaeltachta.

APPLY HERE - <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/Company/Esetablish-SME-Funding/GradStart.html>