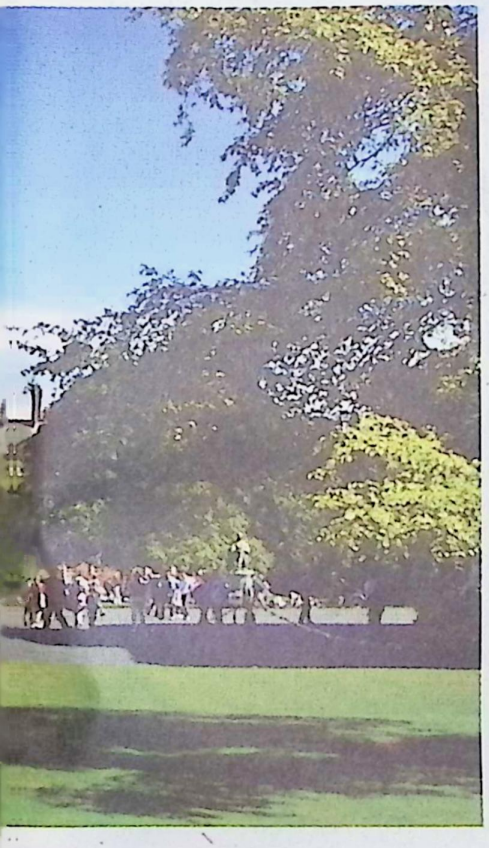
Completion of a PhD degree from an Irish university takes at least three years. But this duration can be extended (with scholarship) up to one or two years depending on the type of research and funding authority. Though duration of a post-doctoral degree varies from institution to institution, but it usually takes around two years. Like the United Kingdom, scholarships for a taught degree are extremely rare in Ireland. Maximum funding opportunities and scholarships are either from the government or from the industry. A person interested to study in Ireland should focus his concentration on research oriented subjects which will make it easy to get a suitable funding.



Government Scholarships

In recent days, Irish government is subsidizing massively research oriented projects and studies in different universities and institutes in Ireland. It has been five years since they introduced two different scholarship schemes, one for Scence/Engineering and another for Humanities/Social Science based studies. Under the National Development Plan and through Irish Research Council for Science Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) they provide *IRCSET Embark Initiative Scholarship* for science background students. A similar sister scheme called *IRCHSS Postgraduate Scholarship* is offered through Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Science (IRCHSS) for arts and social science based students. Both the schemes are considered as the most prestigious scholarships in Ireland in terms of status and funding level and the receiver is officially called "Government of Ireland Scholar". These schemes cover full tuition fees at international rate (such as at Trinity: •14,000) and also provide a maintenance grant of •16,000 per annum. In addition, it also provides research and travel expense and other miscellaneous costs including conference fees and so on. For a masters level degree it covers one year funding whereas a PhD degree receives three years funding with an assurance that it can be extended further in case if it is really needed. Call for the application for IRCSET Embark Initiative Scholarship scheme usually gets open twice a year, once in January (for starting in April) and in July (for starting in October). In 2007, 50 students were awarded this scholarship at each call (i.e. 100 in total) where around 20 scholarships were allocated for international students.

This year the number of scholarships has increased drastically from 50 to 165 in its first call. Closing date for the first call is **20 February 2008** and this deadline is hard. Application has to be submitted online at IRCSET official site www.ircset.ie. IRCHSS Postgraduate Scholarship scheme asks for application once a year on second week of January. Detail information about this scheme can be found on IRCHSS official site - www.irchss.ie.

In order to apply for IRCSET's scholarship, an applicant doesn't require an offer from a university in advance. But an applicant must find his suitable university and supervisor prior to submitting his application. Students who have already enrolled in a course are not eligible to apply for this scheme. Interestingly IRCHSS's scholarship differs at this point with IRCSET as only enrolled students can apply for this scheme. Other requirements are almost same for both the scholarships.

Best way to find a suitable supervisor is through visiting research groups listed in the official university websites. Most of the time academic stuffs or faculty members are listed in a special section called "People" at the group page. Faculty names are usually found hyperlinked to their personal page through which one can get to know their research areas and interests. Their contact information including email address, phone and/or fax numbers can also be found on their personal pages.

These two schemes separately evaluate four segments from an application: Academic Records, Personal Statements, Research Proposal and References. A first class honours degree (preferable) or at least an upper second class is required to apply. Two references, one from the proposed supervisor and another from a local guardian, preferably a faculty member of the latest degree awarding institution are required.

As an applicant has nothing to do with his academic record further and doesn't have any access to his references, the only area where he can put his maximum effort is to prepare the personal statement and research proposal. Usually proposed supervisor helps massively in writing a suitable research proposal. It's a good practice to write a proposal by exchanging it couple of times over the email between applicant and his supervisor. It fine tunes core matters and prunes unwanted errors from the proposal. A personal statement *must* focus applicant's desire to achieve a degree by research. In addition, it should illustrate his research background, publications (if any) and other achievements. IRCSET usually expects few questions (listed on the application form) to be answered in the personal statement whereas IRCHSS clearly mentions different criteria (listed on the call for application) that has to be explained in the personal statement.