

Republic of Ireland

Demographics for Republic of Ireland

Population:	4,015,676 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$126.4 billion
Currency (inc code):	Euro (EUR)
Language(s):	English (official), Irish (official) (Gaelic or Gaeilge)
Internet country code:	.ie

Primary and secondary education

Under the Irish Education Act 2000, children are obliged to be educated between the ages of six and 16 years. The primary sector caters for children aged between six and 12 years however, most children enrol for first level (primary) school when aged four or five. The Department of Education and Science (DES) provides capital and recurrent funding for the 3,200 primary schools that serve approximately 450,000 pupils (www.des.ie).

The Irish second level (post primary) sector comprises of secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. There are over 360,000 students in this sector attending over 750 schools the greater proportion attend secondary schools which are privately owned and managed (mainly by religious orders and boards of governors). Post primary schools are largely funded by the State in the form of paying teachers' salaries, and providing capitation grants and other allowances. Second level education consists of a three-year junior cycle followed by a two or three-year senior cycle. During the final two years of the senior cycle, students opt to pursue: the established Leaving Certificate (LCE) (academic track); the Leaving Certificate Vocational Program (LCVP) (combination of vocational and academic); or the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) (practical focus). The National Council for

Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) advises the Minister for Education on shaping our education system, and the State Examinations Commission is responsible for the development, assessment, accreditation and certification of the second-level examinations – Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate.

Higher education

Students who successfully complete their Leaving Certificate studies can pursue undergraduate degree programs at various types of institution – University, Institute of Technology, Private College or College of Education.

For certain professions (medicine, veterinary medicine), the basic educational qualification must be acquired by attending university, for others (engineering, architecture, accounting) may be gained either by attending a University or an Institute of Technology. Various professional bodies specify entry requirements and offer educational programs to facilitate admission (accounting, law, physiotherapy, medicine).

Bachelor's degree programs usually take three (minimum) or four years to complete. Many four-year programs include a study abroad component (year) via the Socrates program. Certain undergraduate professional degree courses will take longer to complete such as veterinary medicine (five years) and medicine (six years). Postgraduate programs include Graduate Diplomas, Master's and Doctoral programs offered by universities, institutes of technology and other providers as shown in Table I. Graduate diplomas (normally one year duration) are offered in preparation for a Master's course. Master's programs (taught) take one year to complete while research Master's will take a minimum of two years. To progress to Doctoral programs, it is expected that the student has completed a Master's. Doctoral programs are offered by many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the minimum time for completion is normally three years.

The Central Applications Office (www.cao.ie) processes undergraduate applications to the majority of HEIs offering degree, diploma and certificate courses. Owing to excess demand for third level education, places are awarded on merit using the results of Leaving Certificate examination. International students who wish to pursue higher education in Ireland may use the CAO system or apply directly to an institution. Admission to postgraduate programs is by direct application to the college or university. The academic year in Ireland runs from September to June and most HEIs now have two semesters per year each of 15 weeks duration.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) (www.heai.ie) is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland. To assist in quality assurance matters, the Irish Universities Quality Board was established in 2003 and funded by the Universities and the Higher Education Authority (Table II).

Bologna cycles i	National framework of qualifications ii		Providers iii
	Awards	Levels	
3	Doctoral degree	10	Institutes of technology DIT Private colleges and other HEIs
2	Master's degree	9	
1	Postgraduate diploma		
	Higher Bachelor degree	8	
	Higher Diploma		
	Ordinary Bachelor degree	7	
	Higher certificate	6	
	Further education/ school awards	1-5	Entry from second level and further education and training

Source: www.nqai.ie

Table I. Ireland's national framework of qualifications

Structure of business and management education

Business and management degree programs are offered by all Irish universities, various private colleges and the institutes of technology. Universities and colleges provide little by way of non-degree management courses. Institutes (Irish Management Institute, the Institute of Bankers in Ireland, Marketing Institute of Ireland) in conjunction with academic and/or corporate partners frequently provide diploma or non degree management courses.

Bachelor's programs take three or four years to complete and the designatory titles and abbreviations used for degrees generally follow international style and mirror closely those used in the UK. The more commonly awarded undergraduate degree title is the Bachelor of Commerce (BComm), however, the Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) is now in popular usage. Some degree programs are interdisciplinary and include a language or law component. The degree title used usually reflects this – Bachelor of Commerce International (BCIT) or Bachelor of Business and Legal Studies (BBLs).

The opportunity to complete business degree programs either on a part-time basis or by distance learning now exists. In addition to business/management degree offerings provided by the UK's Open University, local universities and colleges are now delivering programs for the distance learner.

University	Constituent universities	Recognised/associated colleges
The National University of Ireland (NUI)	NUI Galway NUI Maynooth University College Dublin University College Cork	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) National College of Art and Design The Shannon College of Hotel Management St Angela's College of Education for Home Economics Institute of Public Administration (IPA)
University of Dublin – Trinity College (TCD)		St Catherine's College of Education for Home Economics The Church of Ireland College of Education The Froebel College of Education Marino Institute of Education
Dublin City University (DCU)		St Patrick's College of Education Mater Dei Institute
University of Limerick (UL)		Mary Immaculate College of Education

Source: www.heai.ie

Table II. *Universities in Ireland and recognised/associated colleges (selected)*

Graduate business education includes graduate diplomas, Master's and Doctoral programs. A graduate diploma (one year duration) is normally offered to allow students to change discipline (the Diploma in Business Studies) or deepen their understanding within a particular area (Entrepreneurial Studies (DES)).

Master's programs include programs leading to a general business degree (Master in International Business) and programs in specialised areas (Master in Accounting). Currently, 11 Irish institutions offer MBA programs. This program is normally of one year's duration but may be taken over two years by students on a part-time basis. To gain admission to an MBA program candidates must have at least five years' work experience and a high GMAT score. An Executive MBA (EMBA) is also offered by several institutions to allow working executives to continue their professional and personal development by attending classes in the evenings and/or at weekends.

Doctoral programs in business and management are offered in universities, institutes of technology and one private college. The organization of the

program varies across institutions – some have taught components to be completed by doctoral candidates whereas others focus entirely on the research. In addition to submitting the completed dissertation, students attend for a “viva voce” where they are expected to satisfactorily defend their research. Many Irish institutions are currently reviewing their doctoral programs (content and regulations) and assessing the extent to which they reflect good practice as dictated by the Irish Universities Quality Board in recently published guidelines.

During the 2002/2003 academic year there were 205 business management students registered for PhD programs (in HEA funded institutions). At Master’s level, 2,149 students were enrolled in business/management programs while 13,135 students were pursuing undergraduate business studies either on a full- or part-time basis.

The majority of business and management program offerings at universities and institutes of technology are validated by Irish institutions. In certain cases program offerings are validated by overseas institutions – this is commonly the case in some of the private business colleges.

There is growth in the number of international alliances formed by educational institutions which facilitate faculty and student exchange programs promoted by the EU. Irish business schools and colleges are involved in many linkages in facilitating student exchanges or in coordinating program offerings.

All universities and institutes of technology rely largely on government funding for their capital projects, teaching and research activities. In recent years, institutions have been encouraged to tap other sources for funds which have resulted in major endowments from corporations. In addition educational bodies, research institutes are also used to fund the sector.

There has been a major drive by universities and colleges to attract individuals who are good teachers and also research active. It is now becoming more common in Irish universities and colleges that individuals who have not attained a PhD will not get tenure. An exception to this is likely in the case of an individual joining faculty with established business credentials and experience. An increasing number of faculty members within business schools are non Irish. Another interesting development within business schools more recently is an increasing number of international faculty exchanges.

Estimated

- Number of institutions with undergraduate business degree programs: 27.
- Number of institutions with business Master’s degree programs: 20.
- Number of institutions with business Doctorate programs: 15.

Most important issues facing business schools

There are many important issues facing Irish Business Schools such as resources (human and financial), governance arrangements and international competition.

The recruitment of excellent faculty, many would argue, is the major challenge facing Irish business schools. Sometimes this challenge is specified in terms of competition between the USA and other schools internationally to recruit outstanding (and internationally mobile excellent faculty). An increasing number of tenured faculty in Irish business schools are non Irish, however, there are still difficulties in attracting top class faculty and post doctoral personnel. Over the past decade Ireland's economic fortunes have improved dramatically so many of our brightest graduates tend to opt for a non-academic career, the financial inducements of the market being hard to resist.

There is intense competition in Ireland for research funding and more emphasis is placed on larger projects as evidenced in the Science Foundation of Ireland (SFI) research awards program. The SFI funding program is a welcome development but it is difficult to source funding for the smaller research project that business students are likely to be engaged in.

All business schools in Ireland are publicly funded and spending is monitored closely by the internal and external authorities. The difficulty here lies in getting the appropriate balance between accountability and creativity.

The shift towards the European Higher Education Area as proposed in the Bologna Accord is a welcome development as it is forcing personnel (faculty and administrators) in business schools to review course management and design and to modify program offerings. All business school program offerings in Europe will soon have a similar structure (Bologna cycles: as shown in Table I) to those in Ireland and this will allow increased outward student mobility for undergraduate education. Irish business schools will need to engage in more aggressive marketing, not only to recruit local students but also to attract top international ones.

Due to changes in demographics, Irish business schools aim to raise the proportion of non-Irish students to 10 percent of the total student body. While Ireland has a strong reputation as an international study destination (particularly for undergraduate medical education) there is intense competition in recruiting local and international business students from the USA (due to education sponsorship arrangements) and UK institutions (reputation and proximity). The countries of origin of international students in Ireland are now very diverse and it is a challenge for host schools to take care of student diversity both in academic and non academic context. Faculty need to ensure that course offerings are as relevant for the international as the local student.

Ann Bourke

Dean of Teaching and Learning, UCD Business Schools