

A GUIDE TO POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN DENTISTRY IN IRELAND

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ABSTRACT:

This guide aims at providing information for overseas students from the Arab world who are planning to take up postgraduate studies in the Republic of Ireland. It includes information which is largely available on the internet from the websites of Irish Universities and Dental Schools but we thought that gathering all the information in one guide would greatly benefit all perspective postgraduate students. In this guide we aimed at compiling as much data to serve overseas students and facilitate their search and course applications as well as providing them with some advice as to how can they improve their chances of obtaining a place in their chosen course. We also included some information about obtaining an Irish Entry Visa and about settling and living in Ireland. It is not, however, an exhaustive guide to all aspects of studying and living in Ireland. Rather, it concentrates on those things of most concern to overseas students wishing them all the best.

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الملخص العربي

دليل الدراسات العليا لطب الأسنان في أيرلندا

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يهدف هذا الدليل إلى توفير المعلومات للطلاب الأجانب من العالم العربي الذين يخططون للقيام بتحضير دراسات عليا في جمهورية أيرلندا. ويشمل هذا الدليل معلومات متاحة في أغلبها على شبكة الانترنت من خلال المواقع الإلكترونية للجامعات وكليات طب الأسنان في أيرلندا ولكننا اعتقدنا أن جمع كل المعلومات في دليل واحد يمكن أن يفيد كثيرا كل طلاب الدراسات العليا في ليبيا والعالم العربي. هذا الدليل يهدف إلى جمع البيانات لخدمة طلاب الدراسات العليا في الخارج ويسهل عملية بحثهم عن مجال التخصص الذي يرغبون فيه وكذلك تزويدهم ببعض النصائح لتحسين فرصهم في الحصول على مكان في مجال التخصص الذي اختاروه. شملنا أيضا بعض المعلومات حول كيفية الحصول على تأشيرة الدخول الأيرلندية وعن الاستقرار والعيش في أيرلندا مع ملاحظة أن هذا الدليل لا يشمل كل المعلومات بشكل شامل ولكنه محاولة لعرض ما أمكن جمعه بطريقة سهلة وميسرة. مع تمنياتنا للجميع بالتوفيق.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND GENERAL INFORMATION:

The population of Ireland is 4 million people, more than a third of the people live in the Dublin area. The five main cities are Dublin (the capital), Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford. English is the official language every one speaks. Gaelic is the everyday language in small rural areas of Ireland. Both languages are officially used in all aspects of life. Ireland is part of the European Union; hence, the Euro is the official currency¹.

VISAS AND PASSPORTS:

For Non-EU students an Irish entry study visa is needed to enter the country. All information related to applying, obtaining and the different types of Irish entry visas are available from the website of the department of foreign affairs².

TRANSPORTATION:

Every major city in Ireland experiences rush hour delays and parking is an ever greater and expensive problem. New cars are costly and that fuel price is expensive at about 1.65 Euro per litre; however, second hand cars are relatively cheap. Public transportation (buses, trains, trams, etc.) are available alternatives but if one has a family a car becomes and an essential luxury.

ACCOMMODATION:

Renting a house or an apartment in Ireland can be very expensive and vary widely according to the location and amenities near the property. Most accommodations come furnished and the price range for a three-bedroom house is (900-1300 euro/month). Smaller apartments closer to schools, universities and workplaces are as expensive as bigger houses further away. The most widely used websites for finding an accommodation are (www.daft.ie)³ and (www.rent.ie)⁴.

EDUCATION:

Almost 92% of the Republic of Ireland's population is Roman Catholic. Catholicism plays a large part in most public national schools where the kids normally start each class with a prayer and whole schools celebrate mass occasionally¹. This has largely changed in recent years with the establishment of new patronage schemes that caters for different religious and non-religious backgrounds such as Educate Together and the specific religious teachings^{5, 6}.

Community National Schools and also the availability of Muslim and Jewish National Schools which teach the Irish Curriculum in addition to the specific religious teachings^{5,6}. Foreign children join primary and secondary schools free of charge; however parents are expected to support their children's school through "voluntary" contributions for the school to cover its running costs. Higher education can be very expensive.

HEALTH:

Ireland's health care system is free to every resident in Ireland. Recently there have been some changes relating to foreigners having to pay for their medical care. For Non-EU students/visitors, private insurance is strongly advised since waiting lists for those without insurance sometimes stretch for more than a year.

STUDYING DENTISTRY IN IRELAND:

There are two Dental Schools in Ireland. These are: Trinity College in Dublin⁷ through the Dublin Dental University Hospital⁸; and the University College Cork⁹ through the Cork Dental University Hospital¹⁰. Each dental school graduates about forty undergraduate students each year. The programmes offered by the two dental schools are accredited by the Dental Council of Ireland at undergraduate level and by the Irish Committee for Specialist Training in Dentistry for postgraduate programmes. Both dental schools are also the centre for secondary and tertiary dental care in their region. They offer advanced dental care in all specialties.



Fig: 1. Preclinical training laboratory at Dublin dental hospital.

THE DUBLIN DENTAL UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL:

The Dublin Dental University Hospital⁸ is affiliated to Trinity College Dublin and shares the same campus. It runs a number of postgraduate courses/diplomas for dentists and dental technicians. This includes the following:

Dental and Dental Technicians Courses

- Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Dental Technology (P. Grad. Dip.)
- Diploma of Clinical Dentistry (P. Grad. Dip.)
- Conscious Sedation in Dentistry (P. Grad. Dip.)
- Doctorate in Dental Surgery (D.Ch.Dent.), and this includes:
 - Dental Surgery (Paediatric Dentistry) (D. Ch. Dent.).
 - Dental Surgery (Periodontics) (D. Ch. Dent.).
 - Dental Surgery (Prosthodontics) (D. Ch. Dent.).

ORAL BIOSCIENCES:

This includes Basic and Applied Oral Biosciences

- Cell Biology of Oral Tissues
- Materials Science
- Oral and Applied Microbiology

DENTAL AND DENTAL TECHNICIANS COURSES:

Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Dental Technology (P. Grad. Dip.)

- Duration: 18 months part-time
- Admission Requirements: Applicants must possess a dental technology degree or equivalent qualification. Entry to training in Clinical Dental Technology would normally follow a minimum of a three year period of general professional training. Applicants must have evidence of satisfactory protection against Hepatitis B. Applicants will also need to include an additional 300-word statement indicating why they wish to undertake the course.
- Course Details: The Postgraduate Diploma course is held over an eighteen-month period. The course provides a wide background of focused education and training in clinical dental technology techniques to enable the Clinical Dental Technician to work clinically to the highest national and international standards both safely and independently. A comprehensive education in the theoretical and clinical principles of treatment of edentulous and partially dentate patients is provided. The course leads to the award of Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Dental Technology (P. Grad. Dip. In Clinical Dental Technology).

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Postgraduate diploma in Clinical Dentistry (P. Grad. Dip.)

- Duration: 2 Year(s) Part Time
- Course Details: This course is designed to fill the need, identified by the Dental Council, for a continuing education programme for the dental profession. The course aims to combine a 'hands-on' approach with theory. Students have a choice of nine modules, of which they must successfully complete six in order to obtain their Postgraduate Diploma. Students have to provide their own nursing care and patients on some modules. The modules offered are: adhesive dentistry, removable prosthodontics, fixed prosthodontics, periodontal therapy, endodontics, oral medicine, orthodontics, dento-alveolar surgery and paediatric dentistry. In addition a core course covering cross-control of infection, medical emergencies in dental practice, ethics, malpractice and risk management and other issues will be taken by all participants. The course is assessed by a combination of objective structured clinical examinations, completion of clinical competency and continuous assessment.

Postgraduate Diploma in Conscious Sedation in Dentistry (P. Grad. Dip.)

- Duration: 18 months part time
- Course Details: The Postgraduate Diploma course is held over an eighteen-month period. The Course is aimed at primary care dental practitioners providing support for those patients with dental anxiety and undertaking dentistry in a safe, effective and anxiety free manner. It also aims to provide a recognised education and training programme that will equip dentists with the knowledge, skills and experience to safely and independently use conscious sedation techniques in their own clinics.

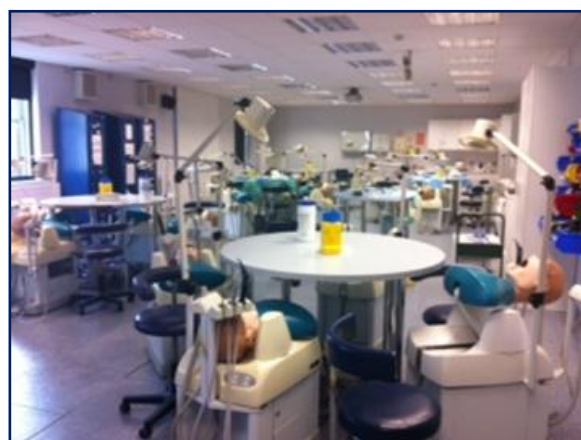


Fig: 2. Preclinical training laboratory at Cork dental hospital.

DOCTORATE IN DENTAL SURGERY (D.CH.DENT.)

- Closing Date: 28th February of each year
- Course Details: The Dublin Dental University Hospital provides a clinical doctorate programme those results in the award of a Doctorate in Dental Surgery (D. Ch. Dent.) from Trinity College Dublin. Currently there are three individual strands available to applicants:
 - Paediatric Dentistry
 - Periodontology
 - Prosthodontics

The three year clinical training programme is recognised as meeting the entry criteria for the specialty FFD examinations held by the Faculty of Dentistry, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. It is the intention of the courses to develop clinical skills in the light of currently available scientific knowledge. There is a significant academic component including design and completion of a research project with the submission of a thesis at Doctorate level at the end of the third year. The thesis will be the subject of a viva voce examination.

1) Paediatric Dentistry.

The Paediatric Dentistry Training Programme prepares the student both didactically and clinically to manage the child patient (0-16 years) at specialist level in a variety of settings (clinic,

hospital, and private practice). Clinical experience is provided under consultant supervision the Dublin Dental University Hospital and in two Paediatric General Hospitals.

2) Periodontology.

This course in Periodontology focuses on the management of periodontal conditions and the planning and execution of oral Implant therapy. The course includes didactic and clinical components and provides the basis for continuing professional development after completion of the programme. Students will be instructed in clinical periodontics and Implant Dentistry with emphasis on the scientific basis for treatment. The course is currently accredited by the European Federation of Periodontology.

3) Prosthodontics.

This programme prepares the student for the clinical practice of prosthodontics at specialist level and provides the basis for continuing professional development after completion of the programme. Students will thoroughly explore the prosthodontic literature and become competent in the clinical and laboratory aspects of fixed and removable prosthodontics, including dental implantology. Students will learn how to diagnose, plan and execute high quality prosthodontic treatment for a range of patients.



Fig: 3. Orthodontic clinic at Cork dental hospital.

ORAL BIOSCIENCES:

This includes basic and applied oral biosciences.

CELL BIOLOGY OF ORAL TISSUES:

The primary focus of this research theme is to understand the molecular regulation of cellular events within oral tissues. These include an investigation into the role of inflammation in the progression of oral cancer and understanding the mechanism of pain transmission and modulation.

In addition to investigating the role of periodontitis in systemic disease, the utilization of dental pulp stem cells in neuron-protection and tissue engineering to generate bone tissue on titanium.

MATERIALS SCIENCE:

The Dental Materials Science Research Unit undertakes research into a variety of dental materials routinely employed in clinical practice.

The projects currently under investigation include:

- Research into developing an ideal posterior filling material to replace dental amalgam.
- The performance of all-ceramic restorations including porcelain laminate veneers, crowns and bridges.
- The performance of dental cements when employed in conjunction with dental ceramics and include investigations into the corrosive potential of acid-base cements and the apparent strengthening mechanism of resin cements on controlled porcelain surfaces.

ORAL AND APPLIED MICROBIOLOGY:

The Microbiology Research Unit in the Division of Oral Biosciences¹¹ currently conducts research in four areas.

- Mycology: Research in this area is directed towards investigating the epidemiology, drug resistance and molecular pathogenesis of *Candida* species.
- MRSA: Current research on Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) focuses on the application of high-throughput DNA-based screening technologies to rapidly identify particular clones and strains of MRSA in order to identify sources and routes of transmission. Other research focuses on the evolution and emergence of new MRSA strains by transfer of genetic elements from a range of staphylococcal species.
- Biofilm control in waterlines: Current research involves the development of large-scale automated centralised water treatment systems for minimising microbial contamination in water systems throughout healthcare facilities.
- Periodontal Microbiology: This research theme is focused on investigating the pathogenic mechanisms of *P. gingivalis* and novel strategies to eradicate biofilms of these organisms.



Fig: 4. An opened clinical area at Dublin dental hospital.

CORK DENTAL UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL:

The Cork Dental University Hospital¹⁰ is located in a 90 chair facility on the campus of Cork University Hospital, the main hospital in the south of Ireland. There are three clinical postgraduate taught courses (Doctorate in Clinical Dentistry) run by the Cork Dental University Hospital in addition to the Postgraduate Research Masters and PhD in Dentistry.

DOCTORATE IN CLINICAL DENTISTRY COURSES (DCLINDENT)

This is a full-time programme running for 36 months from the date of first registration for the programme. Candidates meeting the entry requirements will enter a specific training pathway:

- Dental Surgery (including Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Oral Medicine and Oral Radiology)
- Oral Health and Development (including Paediatric and Preventive Dentistry, Orthodontics and Dental Public Health)
- Restorative Dentistry (including Fixed and Removable Prosthodontics, Endodontics and Periodontology).

Candidates will be required to complete a three year programme and accumulate 270 credits, and a thesis for the degree must also be prepared, under the direction of the Supervisor. Upon successful completion of the prescribed modules (including a research thesis completed under supervision of a staff member of the Dental School), students will be awarded a D. Clin. Dent.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH MASTERS AND PHD IN DENTISTRY:

These are available in most departments of the Cork Dental University Hospital. The applicant should Contact the relevant department with the research proposal to identify a proposed supervisor. Once applicant has established a supervisor and proposed research area have discussed, the applicant can start the application procedure online. There is no specific closing date for applications for Research Masters and PhD's as there are four start dates throughout the year - October, January, April and July.

MASTERS IN DENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH (MDPH) (MDPH):

The programme is designed with the busy professional in mind, contact teaching occurs on Thursday and Fridays allowing the professional

to continue in work while studying and managing other commitments.

COMMON APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN DENTISTRY IN IRISH UNIVERSITIES

Original or Certified True Copies of the following documentation must be submitted:

- 1) Applicants not resident in the European Union ("Non-EU Students") must:
 - Have a primary Dental degree.
 - Have a minimum of two years postgraduate experience in dentistry in a range of clinical and educational settings.
 - Possession of a Membership diploma from one of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons (MFDS/MFD/FDS/FFD) preferable.
- 2) Academic transcripts from the Registrar of the University(s) including the applicant's final degree results.
- 3) Reports/Letters from two academic referees indicating the applicant's potential for postgraduate study.
- 4) Birth certificate and/or copies of the applicant's passport.
- 5) IELTS or TOEFL score for applicants whose first language is not English. Language School Certificates are not accepted.
- 6) College of Medicine and Health: IELTS 6.5 with no individual section lower than 6.5 or TOEFL score of 230 computer-based, 570 paper-based.
- 7) Official documentary evidence of financial support OR funding. If the proposed funding is from private sources candidates are required to submit an original Bank Statement (with account balances and the equivalent amount in Euros) or such evidence as would indicate that they will be in a position to meet the anticipated expenditure.
- 8) Official translation to English of the original documentation of applicants whose documentation is not in English.
- 9) Research proposal - in the case of the research programme.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE FACULTY OF DENTISTRY OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF IRELAND (MFDSRCSI) EXAMINATION¹³

The MFD RCSI¹³ is an examination that can be taken by dentists at any stage of their career. The examination does not require specialist knowledge as what is expected is that which would be reasonably expected of a dental school graduate with 1-2 years post-qualification

experience. The examination places a strong emphasis on clinical dentistry, with some questions on the underlying relevant clinical sciences. The examination consists of two parts. In the United Kingdom the MFD Examination is being actively replaced by the Diploma of Membership of the Joint Dental Faculties at The Royal College of Surgeons of England (MJDF RCS Eng)¹², which is an assessment, developed jointly by the Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) and the Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons of England¹². It is believed that this replacement will also apply to the Republic of Ireland in the near future.

IRISH DENTAL COUNCIL EXAMINATION¹⁴

This examination is aimed for dentists applying for full registration in the register of dentists under the provisions of section 27 (2) (d) of the dentists act 1985. The examination is held in two parts :

Part 1. Includes an examination in:

- The application of the basic sciences to dentistry incorporating written papers in the following subjects:
 - General and oral anatomy
 - Physiology and biochemistry
 - Pharmacology, Pathology and Microbiology
- A practical examination in operative techniques in the clinical subjects e.g. a class II cavity and restoration, a class IV cavity and restoration, or a crown preparation.

Part 2. includes a theoretical examination to test the candidate's knowledge of the subjects necessary for the practice of dentistry including general medicine/general surgery, restorative dentistry (conservative dentistry, prosthetics and periodontology), preventive dentistry, paediatric dentistry, therapeutics, anaesthesiology, radiology, law and ethics and an examination in the clinical aspects of these subjects. The examinations are aimed at searching and testing, to a standard not less than that required of an Irish graduate, the knowledge and skill required for the delivery of primary dental care to patients.

Passing this examination entitles the candidate to practice dentistry in Ireland only without restrictions and there is no ongoing entitlement to registration in the United Kingdom or any other EEA Member State. The full details and requirements for the examination are available from the Irish Dental Council website¹⁴.

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