

GRADUATE TO **EXPORT**

Guidance notes for businesses





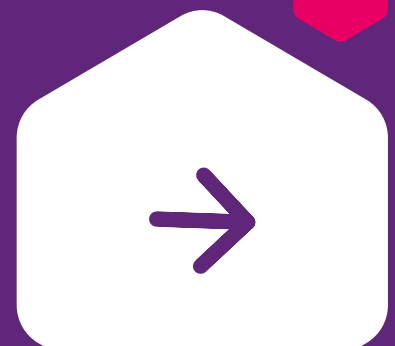
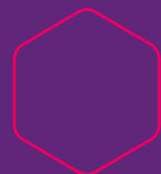
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND

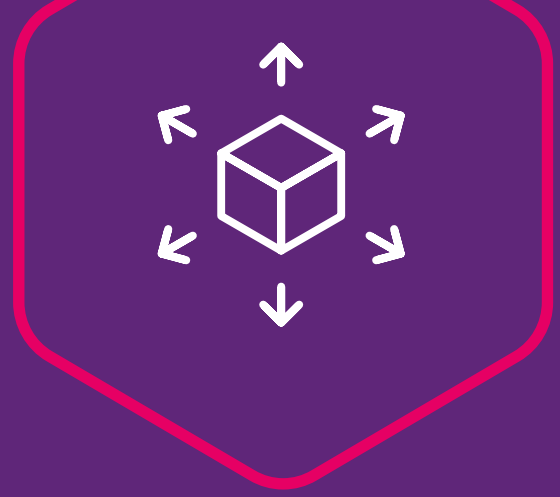
Invest Northern Ireland's ambition is to create wealth for the whole community; we will drive a regionally balanced, sustainable, productive, and prosperous Northern Ireland economy by unlocking the potential of businesses across the region.

We work with businesses to accelerate their growth by increasing external sales and innovation, creating good-quality jobs, boosting productivity and skills, growing inward investment, and reducing carbon emissions.

We also attract high-quality inward investment and support several sectors that offer high returns for the local economy.

We work closely with our stakeholders to maximise the benefits of City and Growth Deal projects, which will bolster our economic performance.



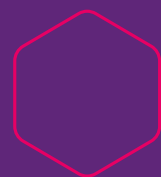


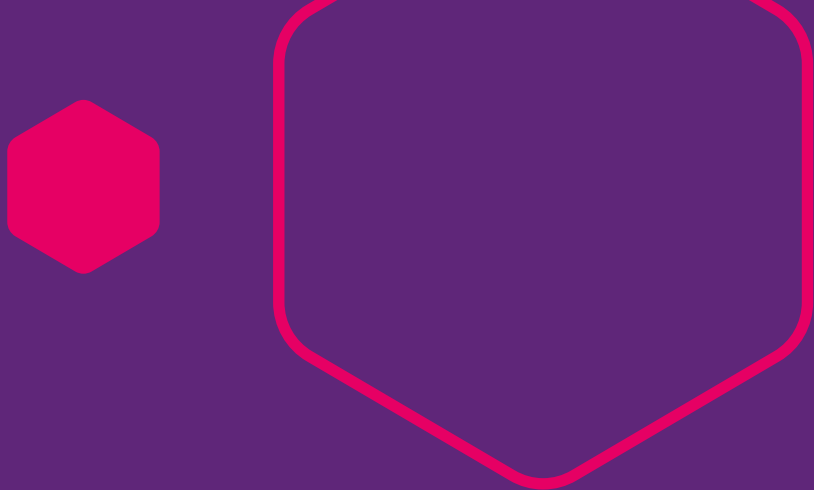
GRADUATE TO EXPORT PROGRAMME

Graduate to Export helps Northern Ireland companies achieve growth by providing 50% salary support up to a maximum of £21,000 to employ a graduate for a duration of 18 months. The programme is ideal for companies with a specific export opportunity in mind, or those looking to complete a market research project.

The graduate you employ will automatically enrol on a course to obtain a postgraduate diploma delivered by Ulster University and The Chartered Institute of Export & International Trade. This will provide graduates the opportunity to continue their professional development, and study towards a Masters level once the programme has completed.

Graduates will spend the first six months of the programme in Northern Ireland getting to know your business and commence their postgraduate studies. Graduates will then spend up to 12 months in an export market undertaking a market research project aligned to your company's export strategy. During this time, your graduate will have full support from your company, along with an academic mentor.





As part of the postgraduate diploma, graduates will have several modules and assignments to complete over the 18-month period. Teaching will take place for the duration of the placement, including whilst your graduate is in market. Graduates will be expected to fully participate in all aspects of the programme.


Ulster University will also provide academic mentoring to your graduate for the duration of the programme. Your graduate must be in place before the training programme starts.

We strongly recommend that you read these guidance notes in full and speak to your Invest NI client executive before proceeding with an application to the Graduate to Export programme.

The Graduate to Export programme is open to all Invest Northern Ireland client companies that meet the eligibility criteria. **Find out more about becoming an Invest Northern Ireland client company.**

This document will help you to complete an application to participate in the programme.

There are limited places available on the programme, and we reserve the right to apply a competitive process to the applications received. More information on this process can be found in this guide.





COMPANY ELIGIBILITY

The programme is open to Invest NI client companies who can:

- Identify a market research project in a new or existing market aligned to their strategic marketing plan (projects based in Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland are eligible under this programme)
- Demonstrate that the project requires the skills of an entry level graduate
- Provide support to a graduate while in market

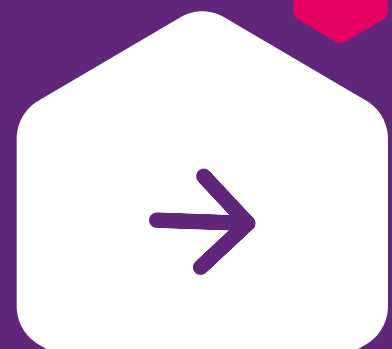
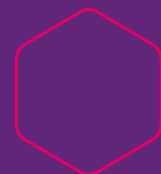
While this programme is targeted at SMEs, large companies may also apply.

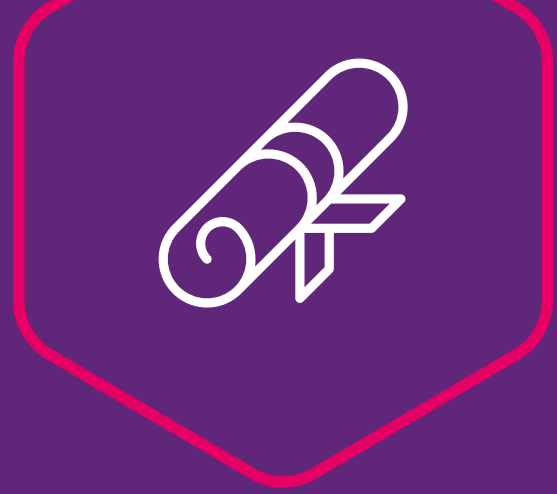
Businesses owned by Invest NI staff members are not eligible to apply.

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAMME

At the end of the 18-month programme your company will have:

- Secured a deep understanding of your target export market
- Received a comprehensive market research project or market entry plan for your target market outside of Northern Ireland
- The opportunity to hire your graduate to implement the findings of the market research project





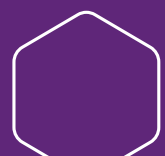
INFORMATION ON “DE MINIMIS” AID

Support offered under Invest NI’s Graduate to Export programme is classed as “de minimis” aid under Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2381. If you have been offered government funded business support such as grants or subsidised consultancy from other government departments, InterTradeIreland, local councils or any other source over any period of three years this might impact on your eligibility to receive assistance under this scheme.

The maximum amount of de minimis aid that a company can normally be offered over any three year period in previous accounting years is €300,000 although sectoral restrictions apply to fishery and aquaculture (maximum €30,000); primary production of agricultural products (maximum €20,000); and road freight transport (maximum €100,000). Where an undertaking is part of a group of companies the de minimis limit applies to the combined Group within Great Britain and Northern Ireland and not individual companies within the Group.

Please note that it is your responsibility to check whether the support you have received was classed as ‘de minimis’ aid. If in doubt, please check with whoever provided you with the support.

To allow us to determine whether awarding this grant will breach this limit, we will ask you to provide us with the date and value of any de minimis aid your company has received during its current and two previous accounting years. Where your company is part of a group of companies you will need to provide information for all group companies.





APPLICATION PROCESS

There are limited places available on the programme, and we reserve the right to apply a competitive process to the applications received.

Graduates must be recruited from outside your business and cannot be a current employee within your organisation.

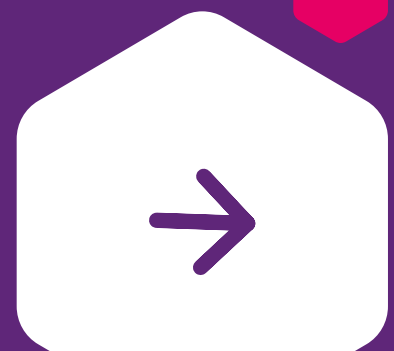
Applications for more than one graduate per year will be considered by the Graduate to Export programme manager and client executive on a case-by-case basis. Applications will not be accepted outside of the timeframes specified online.

Details on the application process and closing date for submissions are available on the **Graduate to Export webpage**.

In the application you will need to provide details on:

- The product(s) and or service(s) that you wish to research
- The target market outside Northern Ireland that you wish to research
- The market research project, its objectives, milestones, and risks
- How the project fits with the strategic marketing plan for your company and with **Invest NI's Business Strategy**
- The mentor and company support you can provide the graduate
- Project costs

If you have any questions about the application process, please speak to the Graduate to Export programme manager or your client executive.



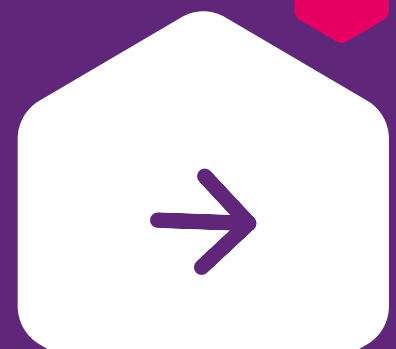
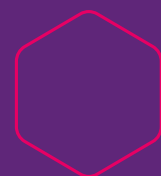



APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

Invest NI must allocate its resources to the projects that contribute the most to our Business Strategy and offer best return for the local economy. As a result, we will assess all applications and select the projects that best meet these objectives.

Invest NI will firstly assess:

- That your application form is complete and has sufficient information included to allow an accurate assessment of the project
- That your market research project is outside of Northern Ireland
- That your project is for a new product in a new or already existing market, or an existing project in a new market
- That your project would not proceed without Invest NI assistance
- That your business is viable



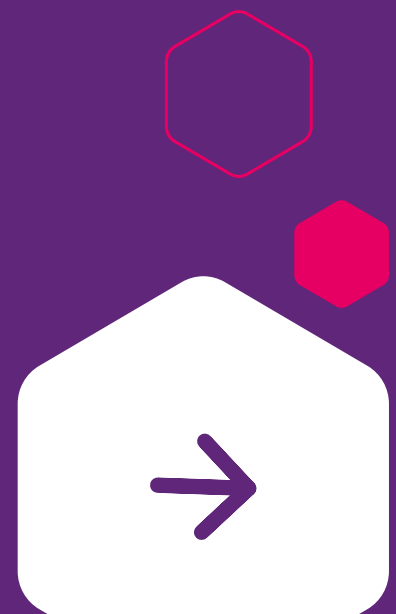


The project will then be scored against the following criteria:

- Potential impact of the project against the strategic direction of your company
- Quality of project proposed for your graduate
- Evidence of sufficient support for your graduate while in market, and identification of a mentor
- Budget allocated for your project
- Any risks to the project's success

Successful projects will be ranked according to their score and the highest scoring projects will be issued a Letter of Offer to participate on the programme.

Unsuccessful applicants will be offered feedback and can apply again in the future.





GRADUATE RECRUITMENT

Your company is responsible for recruiting and employing the graduate for the duration of the programme. If a visa is required for the export market, your company is responsible for the application process, and all associated costs. Invest NI will not be liable should your graduate be unable to obtain a visa.

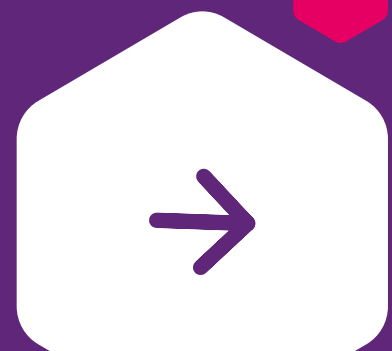
Companies must seek Invest NI approval of their recruitment pack and job description prior to starting the recruitment competition.

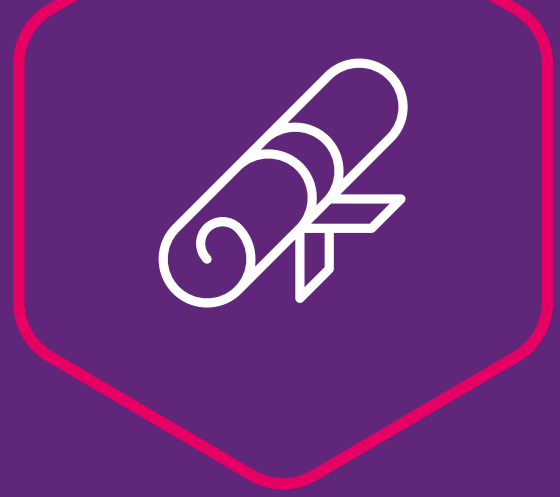
You should not recruit a graduate before your application has been assessed and approved by Invest NI, a Letter of Offer is issued and signed, and the recruitment pack and job description are approved.

A copy of your graduate's CV or completed application form must be shared with Invest NI for approval, prior to making an offer of employment. Any expenditure incurred before this will be considered as ineligible.

Your company will have the opportunity to highlight its recruitment opportunity on the **Graduate to Export webpage**.

Please note that the title of the supported role is "Graduate Key Worker". This job title must be included in the contract of employment issued to the graduate. This will ensure that your claims against the Letter of Offer can be vouched.





GRADUATE ELIGIBILITY

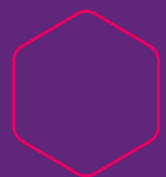
The programme is open to graduates who have:

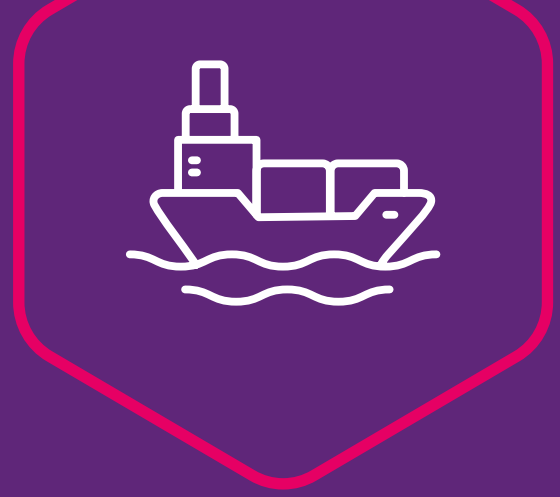
- A pass degree in any discipline
- Graduated in the last five years
- Pre-existing legal status to live and work in Northern Ireland
- A willingness to spend considerable time outside Northern Ireland

Invest NI will not support the employment of family members or shareholders.

SUPPORT FOR GRADUATES

You will be responsible for appointing a company mentor to support the graduate during their time on the programme, and to ensure that all knowledge is retained within your business. Full details of the mentor support must be detailed in your application form.





GRADUATE SUPPORT OVERSEAS

Employers will provide financial assistance towards some costs associated with the in-market placement, such as travel, insurance, and subsistence.

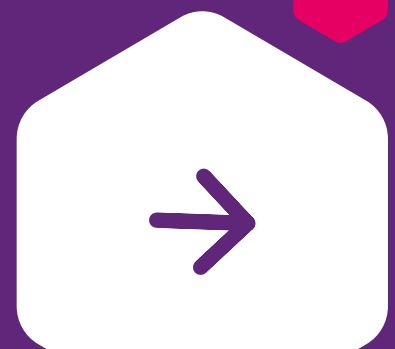
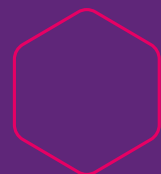
You will be expected to have the appropriate infrastructure in place in your target market to support the graduate in completing their project.

INVEST NI SUPPORT TO GRADUATES OVERSEAS

Invest NI will continue to fund the training programme whilst the graduate is in market.

Ulster University will use a variety of delivery methods to facilitate distance learning throughout the duration of the programme.

Invest NI has a network of offices around the world, which can support and signpost you and your graduate to additional sources of advice and resources in the market.





MAKING A CLAIM ACCESSIBILITY

The first claim can be made three months after the date of appointment of the graduate and subsequent claims can be made at intervals of no less than three months.

All claims should be emailed to **claims@investni.com**

For further information on making a claim, speak to your client executive or visit our **submitting claims page**.

If you have a disability which affects your ability to access or complete the application form, please contact us so we can discuss your needs and ensure that you are able to apply.

Please call our Business Support Team on **08001 814 422** between 8.30 and 17.00 Monday to Friday, or send us an email via the **Contact Us** form on our website.

