



Backwater Artists Group Membership Guidelines

Backwater Artists Group was founded in 1990 by graduates of the Crawford College of Art & Design. The aim of the group was to pool resources in the search for safe and secure studio space. This led to the temporary successive occupancies of two other premises before finally securing a home for the group in Wandesford Quay in 1999. Since our inception Backwater have provided studio spaces and access to facilities for over 400 artists. Our aim is to provide a stable and supportive environment for artists, for the production of visual art and for the establishment of a professional art practice, in the heart of Cork city.

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Our supports include:

- the provision of high-quality affordable studio spaces
- access to facilities relevant to artists individual needs including a darkroom, an exhibition/project space and a digital suite
- access to opportunities such as exhibitions, curators, professional development
- access to information relevant to the establishment of a professional art practice
- promotion opportunities through our website and social media channels
- advocacy for artists
- supports for graduates through our Bursary and Post Graduate programmes

Backwater currently supports 85 artists working in many different disciplines including painting, sculpture, printmaking, ceramics, metalwork, photography, mixed-media installation and new media, through studio and/or darkroom provision and through Backwater Artists Network.

The organisation's policy around studio usage is to ensure that the facilities are made available to as many artists as possible. There is a high demand for studios in the Cork area and as such the application process for studios at Backwater is very competitive. The process is designed to ensure that studios are awarded to productive and ambitious artists most in need of a studio space. It also ensures that a selection of artists from different stages in their career can gain access to the facilities.

Our 23 licenced studios are made available for 4 years, 8 years and 12 years. These fixed-term studio licenses and the associated terms allow for a steady flow of artists through the studios and ensure that the facilities are shared equally amongst members. Available studio licenses are awarded through an open-call process approximately every two years. The studios are not residential.

From time to time we also have a number of short-term studios available for 3-6 months. A waiting list is in place and there is a rolling deadline with this application process.

Backwater Artists Group are committed to supporting emerging artists through our Bursary and Post Graduate Programmes. Each year Backwater provide graduates of the MTU Crawford College of Art & Design (CCAD) with one Ciarán Langford Memorial Bursary and one Moving Image Bursary and we facilitate two Backwater Studios Graduate Residency Awards ('Paint Store' Bursaries) awarded by CCAD. We have been providing these awards since 1990 and over 130 artists have benefited.

Membership of the group provides artists with access to a creative community, and an invaluable platform from which to share skills and ideas and make contacts. It also enables studio artists to draw on our wealth of experience and expertise. Our city centre location ensures easy access to the cultural landscape of the city for artists.

Our studio facility consists of 28 studios in total comprising of 6 sculpture bays and 22 painting/mixed media studios, a darkroom, a digital suite/meeting room, a woodwork area, mitre press, underpinner and an exhibition/project space, Studio 12.

Membership Fee

Our membership fee is heavily subsidised with the help of grant aid from both the Arts Council & Cork City Council. Our standard studio membership fee is €151 per month, payable by direct debit bank transfer. For shared studios the cost is €160 per month (i.e. €80 per person). Our darkroom membership fee is €45 per month.

Studio Reviews

All long-term studio memberships (4, 8, 12 years) are reviewed on an annual basis.

Studios Shares are reviewed every three months.

Darkroom licences are reviewed every year.

Studio Extension guidelines

- **Short-term Studio:** Short-term studios are for 3 – 6 months. There is no option to extend this

membership beyond 6 months.

- **Backwater Artists Network Residency Membership:** This studio membership is for 6 months with no option for an extension.
- **4 Year Membership:** 4 Year members can apply for 8 Year membership when the 4 years is completed. This will entitle them to another 4 years at the studio if successful.
- **8 Year Membership:** 8 Year members can apply for 12 Year membership when their 8 years is completed. This will entitle them to another 4 years at the studio. 12 year licences are only given in exceptional circumstances where the applicant has made an extraordinary contribution to the organisation.
- **12 Year Membership:** There is no opportunity to extend membership beyond 12 years.
- **Ciarán Langford Memorial Bursary Award:** There is an opportunity available to apply for a 6 month extension once the award is finished. Monthly membership fees will be charged if an extension is granted.
- **Moving Image Bursary Award:** There is an opportunity available to apply for a 6 month extension once the award is finished. Monthly membership fees will be charged if an extension is granted.
- **Backwater Studios Graduate Residency Award:** There is an opportunity available to apply for a 3 month extension once these awards have finished. Monthly membership fees will be charged if the extensions are granted.
- **Darkroom Membership:** Darkroom membership is for the duration of one year with an opportunity for an extension.
- **Sharer Membership:** Sharer memberships cannot be extended beyond the 4 year limit.

Extension Criteria

- Use of studio space
- Need for studio space
- Contribution to group activities

Additional Criteria for Eight & Twelve Year Membership

- The artist must have a proven record of committing time to the studios activities which could include serving on the board of directors, serving on committees, helping out with events, invigilation, sharing their skills and expertise.

Application form guidelines

All application forms are available through email from the Backwater office.

The Backwater Studios Graduate Residency Award is awarded by MTU CCAD, you will need to contact

MTU CCAD to apply for this award.

Assessment Criteria

Short-term applications will be assessed by two members and successful applicants will be placed on a waiting list.

For available 4 year membership, a sub-committee of Board members (Membership Committee), the Studio Director and an independent external adjudicator will assess the applications submitted. 8, 12 year membership applications will be assessed by the Membership Committee and the Studio Director. The first stage of the application process requires the submission of an application form and supporting material. Shortlisted applicants are then interviewed before a final selection is made by the panel.

The questions in the application form are designed to give us a clear idea of your career to date, your work practices and how you will contribute to the organisation. Please provide as much details as possible about how you will use the studio space, whether you are preparing for an exhibition, have undertaken a commission, are working towards a particular project or are collaborating in some way.

Please tell us what kind of space you need and where possible we will take this into account when we are awarding studios. We would like to determine your need for a studio space. Please provide as much information as possible about this. Please note that preference will be given to artists who do not have a studio space as opposed to those who have adequate studio space in their own home already. We will also consider the needs of those who need a subsidised workspace over those who clearly do not.

The criteria used to assess applications for membership are as follows:

- Practicing professional artist (see professional criteria below)
- Quality of work as indicated by portfolio
- The artist must have a proven need for a studio space
- The artist must be willing to contribute to the studio group
- Overall quality of application

The criteria used to assess professionalism are as follows:

- Has received art education to third level or can satisfactorily demonstrate equivalent experience and achievements
- Shows a consistent record of exhibiting and/or developing their practice

- Has a clear and well documented career trajectory
- Communicates their art practice clearly and presents themselves in a professional manner

In addition to the above assessment criteria applicants will be grouped as follows and the highest scoring applicants from each group awarded studios:

- Emerging artist (graduate–5 years)
- Mid-career artist (6 -10 years)
- Established artist (11 years+)

As indicated these categories are based on the duration of the applicant's career and a guide to the panel as to the general demographic of the applicants.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

At Backwater Artists Group, we consider all people without bias. We embrace inclusivity, equality, diversity and fairness in all areas of our practice. Our approach is driven by a proactive desire to build a thriving community of working artists within our organisation, which is built on mutual respect, professionalism, openness, kindness, and support.

We are committed to adopting the best possible practice in relation to Equality, Human Rights & Diversity within our organisation. To this end, we aim to select a diverse community of Visual Artists through our procedures for membership.

Memberships & Awards

Short-term Studio Membership:

Number of studios: 1-4 studios per year

Duration: 3-6 months

Eligibility: Practicing professional artists

Process: Application. Those who meet the criteria are passed by two of our Board members and placed on a waiting list. When one of these studios becomes available, it is offered to the person who is next on the waiting list.

Membership status: Short-term licenced

Deadline: Rolling deadline

Extensions: Studios are first offered first on a 3 month basis and can be extended to 6 months on request. There is no option to extend beyond 6 months.

Membership Fee: €151 per month payable by direct debit bank transfer

Four-Year Studio Membership:

Number of studios: 10 (8 x painting/mixed media, 2 x sculpture).

Duration: 4 years

Eligibility: Practicing professional artists based in the Cork area.

Process: Open call every one-two years. Application and interview. A panel of two Board members/Studio Director and an external panellist review and score the applications and make a short-list for interviews.

Membership status: Long-term licenced. Four-year members are also members of the company and can attend and vote at the AGM.

Deadline:

Extensions: 4 Year members can apply for 8 Year membership when the 4 years is completed. This will entitle them to another 4 years at the studio, not an additional 8 years.

Membership Fee: €151 per month payable by direct debit bank transfer

Eight-Year Studio Membership:

Number of studios: 10 (8 x painting/mixed media, 2 x sculpture).

Duration: 8 years

Eligibility: Only available to existing 4 year members

Process: Application and interview. Assessed on their contribution to group activities and asked to prepare a short proposal on how they could develop their input into the studio, should they be awarded the licence.

Membership status: Long-term licenced. Eight-year members are also members of the company and can attend and vote at the AGM.

Deadline: Rolling deadline

- **Extensions:** 12 year memberships are by invitation to apply. This will entitle them to another 4 years at the studio, not an additional 12 years. 12 year licences are only given in exceptional circumstances where the applicant has made an extraordinary contribution to the organisation and shows a consistent record of exhibiting and/or developing their practice.

Membership Fee: €151 per month payable by direct debit bank transfer

Twelve-Year Studio Membership:

Number of studios: 3 (2 x painting/mixed media, 1 x sculpture)

Duration: 12 years

Eligibility: Only available to existing 8 year members

Process: Application and interview. 12 year memberships are by invitation to apply. They are only awarded to members who have made an exceptional contribution to the studio. They are assessed through application and interview based on the following;

- Shows a consistent record of exhibiting and/or developing their practice.
- Contribution to group activities and asked to prepare a short proposal on how they could develop their input into the studio, should they be awarded the licence.

Membership status: Long-term licenced. Twelve-year members are also members of the company and can attend and vote at the AGM.

Deadline: No deadline. Invited to apply.

Extensions: There is no opportunity to extend membership beyond 12 years.

Membership Fee: €151 per month payable by direct debit bank transfer

Sharer Membership:

Number of studios: 7

Duration: 4 years

Eligibility: A maximum of 7 longer term members (4 year, 8 year and 12 year) can share their studios for up to 4 years with another artist.

Process: Sharers must be approved for our short-term waiting list before being considered for a share. The share may be terminated at any time by either Backwater Artists Group or the licenced member artist who is facilitating the share. Sharers must contribute in the same way as any other member of the group. Shares are reviewed by the board every three months.

Membership status: Short-term licenced

Deadline: Rolling deadline

Extensions: Sharer memberships cannot be extended beyond the 4 year limit.

Membership fee: €160 per month (i.e. €80 per person)

Ciarán Langford Memorial Bursary Award:

Number of studios: 1

Duration: 6 months (October to March)

Eligibility: 4th year MTU CCAD student

Process: Students complete an application process before their degree and Backwater staff follow up by assessing the applicant's degree show exhibit. The successful applicant is announced at the MTU CCAD awards ceremony.

Membership status: Short-term licenced

Deadline:

Extensions: There is an opportunity available to apply for a 6 month extension once the award is finished. Monthly membership fees will be charged if an extension is granted.

Membership fee: None

Description: We have been providing this award to graduates of MTU Crawford College of Art & Design since the early 90's. It includes full use of a free studio for 6 months from October to March, full access to Backwater's facilities including darkroom, digital suite, woodwork room, equipment hire, exhibition/project space, a solo exhibition opportunity in our Studio 12 exhibition space or other venue to include technical support, artists fee and PR support. Please note: new work must be produced for this exhibition. It also includes mentorship from a relevant art professional. Full worth of the Bursary is €5,000.

Moving Image Bursary Award:

Number of studios: 1

Duration: 6 months (October to March)

Eligibility: 4th year MTU CCAD student

Process: Students complete an application process before their degree and Backwater staff follow up by assessing the applicant's degree show exhibit. The successful applicant is announced at the MTU CCAD awards ceremony.

Membership status: Short-term licenced

Deadline:

Extensions: There is an opportunity available to apply for a 6 month extension once the award is finished. Monthly membership fees will be charged if an extension is granted.

Membership fee: None

Description: We have been providing this award to graduates of MTU Crawford College of Art & Design since the early 90's. It includes full use of a free studio for 6 months from October to March, full

access to Backwater's facilities including darkroom, digital suite, woodwork room, equipment hire, exhibition/project space, a solo exhibition opportunity in our Studio 12 exhibition space or other venue to include technical support, artists fee and PR support. Please note: new work must be produced for this exhibition. It also includes mentorship from a relevant art professional. Full worth of the Bursary is currently €4,000.

Backwater Studios Graduate Residency Award:

Number of studios: 2

Duration: 9 months

Eligibility:

Process: Application and award

Membership status: Short-term licenced

Deadline: usually late May just before the MTU CCAD degree show

Extensions: There is an opportunity available to apply for a 3 month extension once these awards have finished. Monthly membership fees will be charged if the extensions are granted.

Membership fee: None

Description: This Backwater Studios Graduate Residency Award Scheme also known as 'The Paint Store Bursary' provides an opportunity for graduating students to continue and advance their practice, educational opportunities and/or career options. This residency, awarded by the CIT Crawford College of Art & Design (MTU CCAD), provides the successful applicant with studio space in Backwater Artists Group Studios for 9 months and access to MTU CCAD library in return for assistance in MTU CCAD Materials Shop (5 hours per week). Two of these awards are awarded each year. Please contact MTU CCAD admin office.

Backwater Artists Network Membership:

Number of studios: 0

Duration: Indefinite

Eligibility: Professional Practicing Artist

Process: Application

Membership status: Associate member

Deadline: Rolling deadline

Extensions: NA

Membership fee: €100 per year

Description: Offers a shared city centre focal point and opportunities to connect for professional artists working in isolation from studios in their own homes or in single privately rented studios. Opportunity to connect to a well-established artists community in the heart of Cork city. Opportunities for artists to meet each other at social, learning or discursive events and to learn from other invited

artists and arts professionals. Visibility, promotion, exhibition and residency opportunities. Discounted rates for specialist workshops and courses run by BAG. Access to curators, support from the BAG administration and access to facilities also on offer.

Backwater Artists Network Project Studio Residency Membership:

Number of studios: 2

Duration: 6 months

Eligibility: Members of Backwater Artists Network

Process: Application

Membership status: Short-term licenced

Deadline: TBC

Extensions: None given

Membership fee: €141 per month payable by direct debit bank transfer

Backwater Artists Network members can apply for a 6 month project studio space at Backwater (There are 2 of these studios available per year). Aimed at artists who need the use of a studio to complete a particular project.

Darkroom Membership:

Number of studios: None. Darkroom and Digital Suite access only.

Number of members: 8 associate members maximum. Also accessible to inducted BAG members

Duration: 1 year (12 hours per week in 2 x 6 hour slots)

Eligibility: photographers and lens-based artists

Process: Open call, application and interview.

Membership status: Short-term licenced

Deadline: usually May when space and/or when space is available

Extensions: Opportunity for an extension on an annual basis

Membership fee: €45 per month

Conditions of use: All darkroom usage is booked using a shared calendar. Each user has a set quota of time per month, which must be entered into the timetable one week in advance or earlier. Regular slots are advisable. Associate users will be granted 12 hours per week (2 x 6 hour slots). Access to the darkroom is dependent upon induction; proof of the ability to work safely and independently and under the condition that failure to comply with safety standards may result in suspension or termination of access.

The Board and the Membership committee reserves the right to assess membership requests and issues on a case-by-case basis whilst still adhering to these guidelines.

Backwater Artists, A Company Limited by Guarantee, Company No: 203784 | Charity No:11875 |
Wandesford Quay, Cork, T12E26D

Staff:

Studio Director Elaine Coakley, elaine@backwaterartists.ie

Studio Manager Elize de Beer, elize@backwaterartists.ie

Darkroom Assistant Sean Daly, darkroom@backwaterartists.ie

Board: Orla O'Byrne (Chairperson), Pdraig Spillane (Company Secretary), Cassandra Eustace, Dermot Harrington, Fiona Kelly, Laura Edgerton, Aoife Mc Cann