

# Aspiring vet going extra mile (1,600 of them) to fight for her dream job



Hannah McFall is hoping she can raise funds to become a vet

**By Anna Maguire** - 08 August 2013

A [Northern Ireland](#) graduate who dreams of being a vet has set up a website seeking donations to continue her education.

Hannah McFall, from Carrickfergus, is looking for sponsorship to fund the last leg of her journey to qualify as a vet.

The 21-year-old obtained a triple distinction in a BTEC National Diploma in Applied Science at Newtownabbey's Northern Regional College, before graduating earlier this year with a first class honours Bachelor of Science degree in bio-veterinary science at the University of the West of England.

While Hannah escaped the hike in university tuition fees, which saw costs in other parts of the UK rise to up to £9,000 a year, she would now face a staggering bill of up to £111,600 to complete a crucial second degree in veterinary medicine at The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in [Edinburgh](#), before she can qualify.

Hannah said her life-long determination to work as a vet has only strengthened as she progressed through further education, but she said the costs involved are more than she could ever dream of matching.

Four other universities in the UK offer similar courses, but the associated living costs mean those options are unfeasible, and grants are hotly contested.

Without an alternative in [Northern Ireland](#), she has now been accepted on a four-year veterinary science course 1,600 miles away in Slovakia.

Despite the language and cultural barrier, the annual €7,000 (£6,056) tuition fees and comparatively cheap living costs make the course at the University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Kosice a viable alternative. But she still falls short of the €28,000 (£24,258) needed to fund her tuition fees.

The determined graduate has set up the webpage in a bid to secure sponsorship from charities and animal-related businesses, which she is methodically contacting.

Any donations received will be funnelled through the charity Diggles directly on to the Slovakian university.

A spokeswoman from Diggles said it is helping 17 other graduates - one of whom is currently studying in Slovakia - but Hannah is the only one from Northern Ireland.

The resourceful graduate is not bitter about having to publicise herself to achieve her dream job. Hannah is critical of the system however, which she claims prioritises privilege over academic merit.

"Some of the veterinary science/medicine courses I looked at in the UK ask for a 2.2. If they are asking for a 2.2, it's obviously not about having the best grades, it's about being able to produce the money," she said.

"I don't think that's the best attitude. I think it's unfair to me and people in the same situation. I just do not have the financial means.

"My parents support me in everything I do. My mum does not work. My dad is a paramedic and he works every single shift he can get."

She warned that the lack of local courses for veterinary students is pushing away a generation of homegrown vets.

"It's discouraging people from pursuing their dream of becoming a vet in the first place. And if you go away to study, you are over there for a considerable amount of time - things change and people decide they want to stay away," she said.

"If politicians want to have homegrown vets working here, there needs to a lot more financial support."

To find out more about Hannah McFall's appeal, log on to: <http://vetinthemaking.weebly.com/index.html>

## BACKGROUND

Aspiring vet Hannah McFall is not alone in her quest to qualify. While she says she is the only student from Northern Ireland to take the route she has by heading to [Eastern Europe](#), she will leave for Slovakia in September with around 30 other veterinary graduates from across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. On completion of her post-graduate course in June 2017, she will be required to sit an exam set by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the regulatory body for the veterinary profession, to practise in the UK.



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