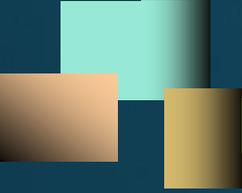


# CAO

## 2026 Entry

Brian Howard

Guidance Counsellor

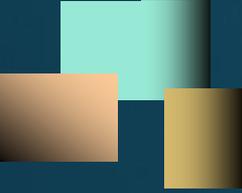


# It is the students responsibility to:

- Research thoroughly all the courses for which they are making application.
- Be fully up to speed with all aspects of the application system used (CAO) for these courses, i.e., procedures, dates, fees, rules, etc.

# Useful Resources

To assist with course research / application



## Publications

- College Prospectuses – 2026 Entry
- CAO Handbook 2026- online
- Directory of L.C. Entry Requirements - 2026 Entry
- CAO: A Guide for Parents and Guardians

## Newspapers

### The Irish Times

- Special CAO College Supplement - [irishtimes.com](http://irishtimes.com)
- Series of daily articles - Brian Mooney

### The Independent

- CAO Articles – [independent.ie](http://independent.ie)

## Internet

- Qualifax – [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie) Irish courses database
- CAO – [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) Contains links to course websites
- Careers Portal – [www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie)
- College websites (Addresses in CAO Handbook)

## People

- Relatives
- Past pupils
- Admissions/Academic staff of colleges
- Chat facilities on college websites

## Guidance Counsellor

- Access to information and advice

## Events

- Open Days / College Visits / Department events

# Points System

Honours Points	Honours Grade	% Bands	Ordinary Grade	Ordinary Points
100	H1	90 - 100	O1	56
88	H2	80 - 89	O2	46
77	H3	70 - 79	O3	37
66	H4	60 - 69	O4	28
56	H5	50 - 59	O5	20
46	H6	40 - 49	O6	12
37	H7	30 - 39	O7	0
0	H8	0 - 29	O8	0

# Sample Calculation

Paul

Subject	Level	Grade	Score
Irish	H	3	<b>77</b>
English	O	1	<b>56</b>
Maths	H	2	88+25= <b>113</b>
Geography	H	2	<b>88</b>
Biology	H	3	<b>77</b>
Physics	O	2	46
French	H	2	<b>88</b>
LCVP	C	Merit	46

Add the 6 best scores shown in **RED**

**Points = 499**

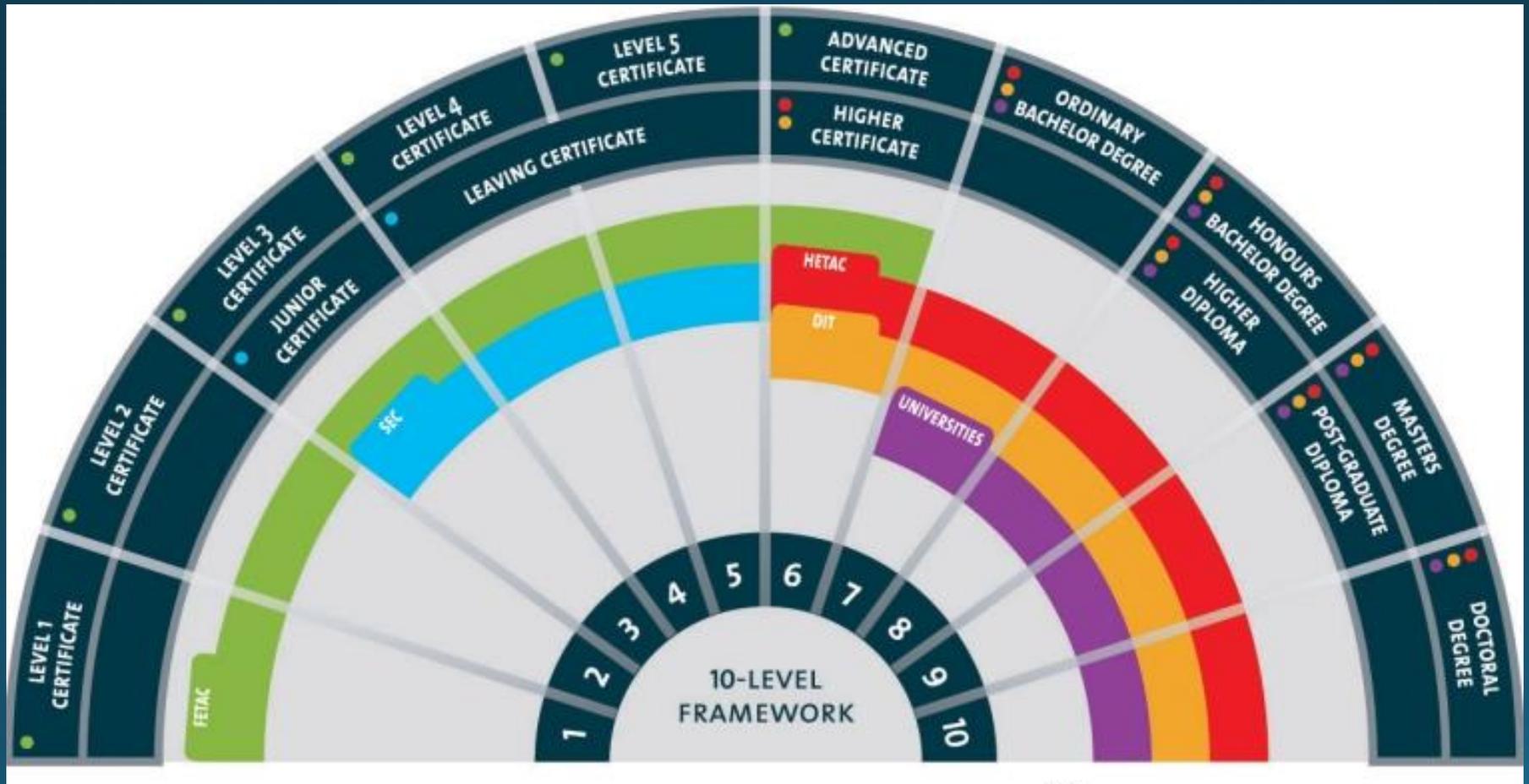
# CAO

- Centralised application system for 30 Irish 3<sup>rd</sup> level institutions, including **9 fee-paying** colleges.
- Every applicant should now have access to the 2026 CAO Handbook– contains application and course information
- [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)
- **Application Dates and Fees**

Online Application	Fee	Closing Date
Early Discounted	€35	20 January 2026 (5pm)
Normal	€50	1 February 2026 (5pm)
Late - <i>restricted courses</i>	€65	1 May 2026 (5pm)
<b>Change of Mind</b>	<b>No Fee</b>	<b>1 July 2026 (5pm)</b>

# CAO Course Levels

3 types of courses students can apply for under the  
**National Framework of Qualifications**



# CAO Course Application

These are applied for on 2 separate lists on a single form:

## Level 6 & 7 Courses

Ordinary Degrees (7)  
Higher Certificates (6)

Up to 10 Course Choices

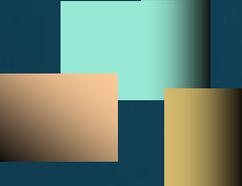
## Level 8 Courses

Honours Degrees (8)

Up to 10 Course Choices

- Must be possible for applicant to meet entry requirements for courses listed here.
- The courses are clearly labelled in the CAO Handbook, i.e. Level 6, 7 or 8.
- N.B. – Care must be taken with courses marked **'Restricted'**.
- These courses cannot normally be applied for after February 1<sup>st</sup> due to extra assessments required.

# Making an application

- 
- Applications are made online – one application only. (€10 charge if 2 applications sent)
  - 2 steps:
    - (a) Create Application Account
    - (b) Log in and enter details
  - Applicants will receive their CAO number on their Receipt of Online Application and by email.
  - [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) → **Apply & My Application**
  - Demo of application form available

- [Contact a HEI](#)
- [Applicant Resources](#)
- [Downloads](#)
- [Important Dates](#)
- [Have a Question?](#)
- [Mature Applicants](#)
- [Access Routes](#)
- [DARE / HEAR](#)
- [QQI FET/FETAC](#)
- [Entry to Medicine](#)
- [Restrictions](#)
- [Parents / Guardians](#)
- [Guidance / Schools](#)
- [Media and Statistics](#)
- [Useful Links](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

# 2026 CAO Application Form

## Applicant's Personal Details

Enter your name as you would want it to appear on official HEI registration records.

**Forename(s)**

**Surname**

**Date of Birth**

**Sex**  Male  Female  I'd prefer not to say

Please Note: You should enter your name and date of birth as it appears on your Birth Certificate or Passport. If you wish to apply under a different name, HEIs will require proof of identification at registration.

As stated in the CAO Handbook, an applicant may only present one application in any one year (either online or paper). If you think you may have already submitted an online application, please check using the "My Application" facility. There will be no refunds given to applicants who make more than one application.

**I have NOT already received a 2026 CAO Application Number nor have I applied by post.**

**Home address**  Rep. of Ireland  Other Country

**Address Line 1**

**Address Line 2**

**Address Line 3**

**Address Line 4**

**Postal Code**  
(e.g. H91 X25V)

**Postal Address:** (created from name and address entered above)

Tick the following box if the postal address looks correct.  
Otherwise, change your name and address above.

**The postal address is correct.**

**e-mail address**

**Confirm e-mail**

**Contact Telephone**

**Do you wish to receive sms text messages from CAO?**

Yes

No

**Do you wish to receive sms text messages from the HEIs you apply to?**

Yes

No

**Country of Birth**

**Nationality**

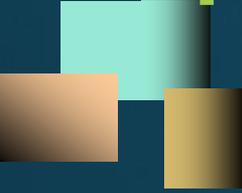
**Qualifications & Assessment Summary :**

Please tick the qualification/assessment categories that are relevant to you.

You may tick more than one category, if necessary.

1.  Irish Leaving Certificate Exams (1985-2026) [Help?](#)
2.  QQI FET/FETAC Level 5/6 Exams (2002-2026) [Help?](#)  
(Including Post-Leaving Certificate Courses leading to QQI FET/FETAC level 5 or 6 awards)
3.  GCE A/AS Levels/GCSE (2006-2026) [Help?](#)  
(England, Wales, Northern Ireland Exams, and International GCE/GCSE Exams)
4.  Other School Leaving Exams [Help?](#)  
(e.g. School Leaving Exams outside of UK & Ireland, Baccalaureate, Scottish Exams, pre-1985 Irish & UK exams, Leaving Cert Applied, Level 3 BTEC, GNVQs, VCEs, Irish Matric Exams, GCE/GCSE pre-2006, etc. - See 'Help?' link for further information.)
5.  Other Further Education [Help?](#)  
(Any other Further Education courses that you have undertaken that do not fall into one of the other categories on this application form. See 'Help?' link for further information.)
6.  Third-Level Higher Education [Help?](#)  
(required regardless of whether you passed, failed, or did not take examinations)

# Supplementary Entry System



## DARE

Disability Access Route to Education - third level admissions scheme for school leavers with disabilities.

Very important to indicate on CAO form that applicants wish to be considered for this scheme.

**Advice Clinics**

**[www.accesscollege.ie](http://www.accesscollege.ie)**

## Exemptions from Minimum Entry Requirements

Some HEIs have language matriculation requirements. If you are seeking an exemption from minimum entry requirements such as Irish (ROI applicants only) or a third language you must do the following:

- **Apply for exemptions without delay. You must go to [cao.ie/exemptions](https://cao.ie/exemptions) for full details on seeking an exemption from minimum entry requirements.**
- If applying to TCD, University of Limerick and Mary Immaculate College you must contact the Admissions Office directly - see [cao.ie/admissions](https://cao.ie/admissions) for contact information
- In the case of **NUI Institutions\***, applicants must apply online. The form is accessible at [exemptions.nui.ie](https://exemptions.nui.ie).

## Mature Section

Click on "Mature Applicant Form" to update your mature application form. This must be completed by 17:00 on 1st March 2026.

[Mature Applicant Form »](#)

## Disability

If you wish to disclose a disability or Dyslexia/ Significant Literacy Difficulties or Dyscalculia/ Significant Numeracy Difficulties or apply to the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) click on the 'Modify Disability (& DARE Application) Status' button below.

[Modify Disability \(& DARE Application\) Status »](#)

## Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) ([Further Information](#))

(for school leavers, resident in the Republic of Ireland, who are underrepresented at Higher Education due to their socio-economic background)

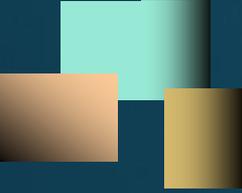
The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a third level admissions scheme for school leavers, resident in the Republic of Ireland, who are underrepresented at Higher Education due to their socio-economic background.

You must complete all relevant Sections (1-7) of the online HEAR application by 17:00 on 1 March to be considered for HEAR.

**Click on the HEAR Application button below to complete your online HEAR application.**

[HEAR Application »](#)

# Making an application



**\*\*VERY IMPORTANT\*\***

Students must fill out both course lists in:

## **Genuine Order of Preference**

- Whatever course an applicant would most like to get onto on the basis of their research should be put down number one on the form.
- If they don't get this whatever course they would next like to get onto should be put down number 2, etc, etc.
- They shouldn't put down courses on the basis of predictions of next years cut off points or their own points scores.

**Business Studies – DCU**  
100 places to be offered

Applicant Position	Points Score
1	563
2	535
3	525
4	522
5	511
6	511
7	505
8	500
9	490
--	--
--	--
15	455
16	445
17	440
18	435
19	422
20	410
21	404
--	--
--	--
98	341
99	336
<b>100</b>	<b>333</b>
101	324
102	312
103	311
104	305
105	293
--	--
--	--
182	265

**Course Cut Off Points = 333**

# Course Merit Lists

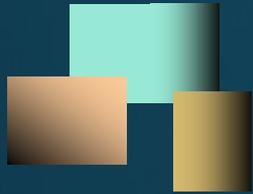
**Commerce – UCD**  
100 places to be offered

Applicant Position	Points Score
1	560
2	535
3	525
4	520
5	510
6	510
7	505
8	500
9	490
--	--
--	--
15	455
16	445
17	440
18	435
19	420
20	410
21	405
--	--
--	--
98	345
99	340
<b>100</b>	<b>336</b>
<b>101</b>	<b>336</b>
<b>102</b>	<b>336</b>
103	315
104	310
105	305
--	--
--	--
182	265

**Course Cut Off Points = 336\***

← Last place to be filled

← Random Selection to be used



# A Students Course Preferences - Example

1	2	3
AL020	GY004	CR105
600	560	595
595	535	595
590	525	590
580	520	580
**	**	**
**	**	**
**	**	**
**	**	**
**	**	**
495	485	475
480	480	475
470	475	470
465	465	465
460	460	460
460	455	460
460	445	460
455	440	455
455	435	455
450	420	450
450	410	445
450	405	440
450	405	435
445	405	430
435	400	430
**	**	**
**	**	**
**	**	**
**	**	**
280	325	280
275	315	275
275	310	275
270	305	270

NO

NO

YES

YES

NO

YES

NO

YES

YES

YES

All Lower Preference Courses Disappear From Students Preferences

Students Points Total = 445

Cut Off Points for Course

# Round 2

1
AL020
600
595
590
580
**
**
**
**
**
<b>496</b>
480
470
465
460
460
460
<b>456</b>
455
450
450
450
<b>445</b>
435
**
**
**
**
280
275
275

7 round one places not accepted

← Last place to be filled - Round 1

← Last place to be filled - Round 2

2
GY004
560
535
525
520
**
**
**
**
**
485
<b>482</b>
475
465
<b>463</b>
455
<b>445</b>
440
435
420
410
405
405
405
400
**
**
**
**
325
315
310

3 round one places not accepted

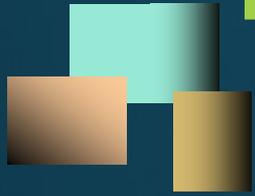
← Last place to be filled - Round 1

← Last place to be filled - Round 2

Round 2 cut off points - 456

Round 2 cut off points - 463

# So – what is the best way to fill in the courses?



1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10



**Dream Courses**



**Realistic Courses**



**Banker Courses**

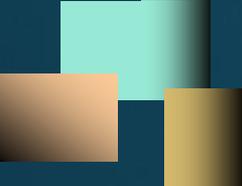
# Places Allocation

## Note:

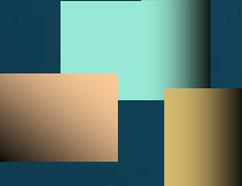
- The position of a course in a student's preference order does not in any way affect their chance of becoming entitled to a place on that course – points only.
- The exact same procedure takes place for both lists on the form, hence students may get 2 offers in August – one from each list, may accept only one.
- Applicants should think carefully about not accepting one of these offers, as they may not receive any further offers.

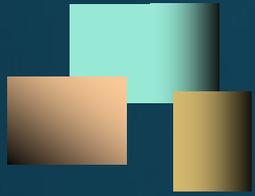
**Regardless of whether or not a course is accepted in round 1, a higher preference course will still be offered in subsequent rounds if an applicant becomes entitled to one.**

# CAO Timetable 2026 Entry

- 
- **20<sup>th</sup> January, 2026**  
Closing date for receipt of early online applications
  - **1<sup>st</sup> February, 2026**  
Closing date for receipt of normal applications
  - **5<sup>th</sup> February to 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2026**  
Courses may be changed online including 'restricted' (€10).
  - **1<sup>st</sup> May, 2026**  
Closing date for receipt of late applications
  - **5<sup>th</sup> May, 2026**  
Change of mind becomes available (free).
  - **Before/By 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2026**  
Receive Statement of Application Record Email
  - **1<sup>st</sup> July, 2026**  
Latest date for receipt of change of mind form in CAO.
  - **Mid August, 2026 (Date TBC)**  
First round of offers will commence.

# In Summary

- 
- Research courses thoroughly
  - Apply as early as possible
  - Put courses in order of preference
  - Retain proof of application
  - Be careful with change of mind



# Deferral of a place

## Seeking a deferral

If the HEI has confirmed to you that it operates deferred entry to the course in question (check!), then on receipt of an Offer Notice:

1. Do **NOT** accept the offer in the manner shown on the Offer Notice.
2. Email **IMMEDIATELY** to the Admissions Office of the appropriate HEI, setting out the reason(s) for the request. Include
  1. your name as on CAO application,
  2. your CAO number
  3. the code of the course you wish to defer.
3. Mark "**Deferred Entry**" in the subject line of the email.
4. The email must **arrive in the Admissions Office at least two days before the "Reply Date"** shown on the Offer Notice.
5. The **HEI will communicate the decision to you**. If the deferral is not granted, you may then accept the offer for the current year by the reply date.
6. You must **send all communications about deferral to the appropriate Admissions Offices** and **NOT** to CAO.

# Deferral of a place

## Taking up a deferral

- In order to take up the deferred place:
  - You must **reapply through CAO in the succeeding year**
  - **Pay the appropriate application fee**
  - Place the deferred course as your **only preference** on the application form.
  - Indicate your deferral by ticking the box on the form.
- **NOTE:** You will breach the conditions of your deferred place if you enter more than the single deferred course code on your application. In that event, you will forfeit the guaranteed place and enter the competition for places in the normal way.
- Full details in the CAO Handbook 2026, page 32.