

The background features a white canvas with numerous splatters of orange, red, and green paint. A dark grey rectangular box with a thin white border is positioned on the right side, containing the text.

Learning Beyond the Leaving Certificate

WE WILL LOOK AT

- **CAO**
- **STUDY ABROAD**
- **HEAR/DARE**
- **SCHOLARSHIPS**
- **GRANTS**
- **FURTHER EDUCATION**
- **APPRENTICESHIPS**

- **National Qualification Framework**
- **Explaining CAO process**
 - **Entry Requirements**
 - **Language Exemption**
 - **Points Systems**
 - **Making an application**
 - **Using Careers Portal**
 - **Comparing courses using Qualifax**
 - **Filling out CAO courses**

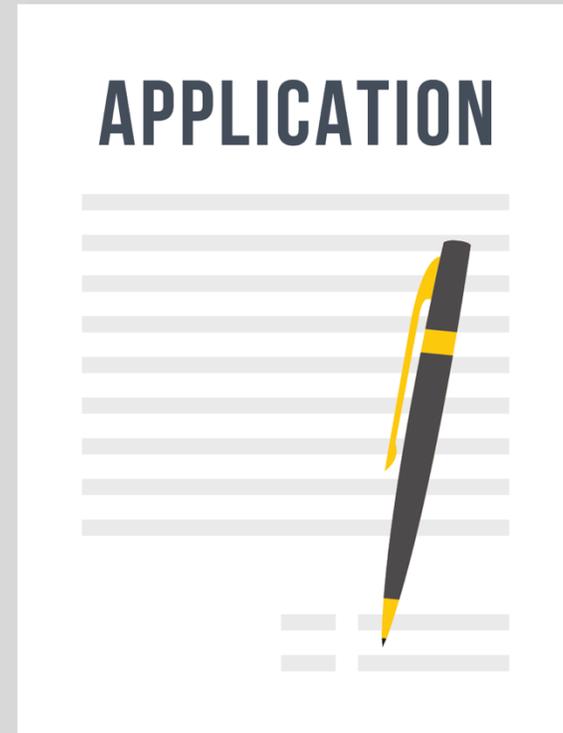
What is the CAO?

- CAO processes applications to undergraduate courses in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- Offers are issued and acceptances are recorded by CAO.
- Assessment of applications and decisions on admissions are made by HEIs Admissions Officers.

Application Process



www.cao.ie/handbook



www.cao.ie/apply

Timely Action

**DO NOT LEAVE
EVERYTHING TO
THE LAST
MINUTE!**



FEBRUARY

1st

DEADLINE

In order to be fair to all applicants, closing dates are strict and therefore action should be taken in good time.

Restrictions

RESTRICTED COURSES

MATURE APPLICANTS

HEAR
SOCIO-ECONOMIC
DISADVANTAGE

DARE
DISABILITIES/SLD

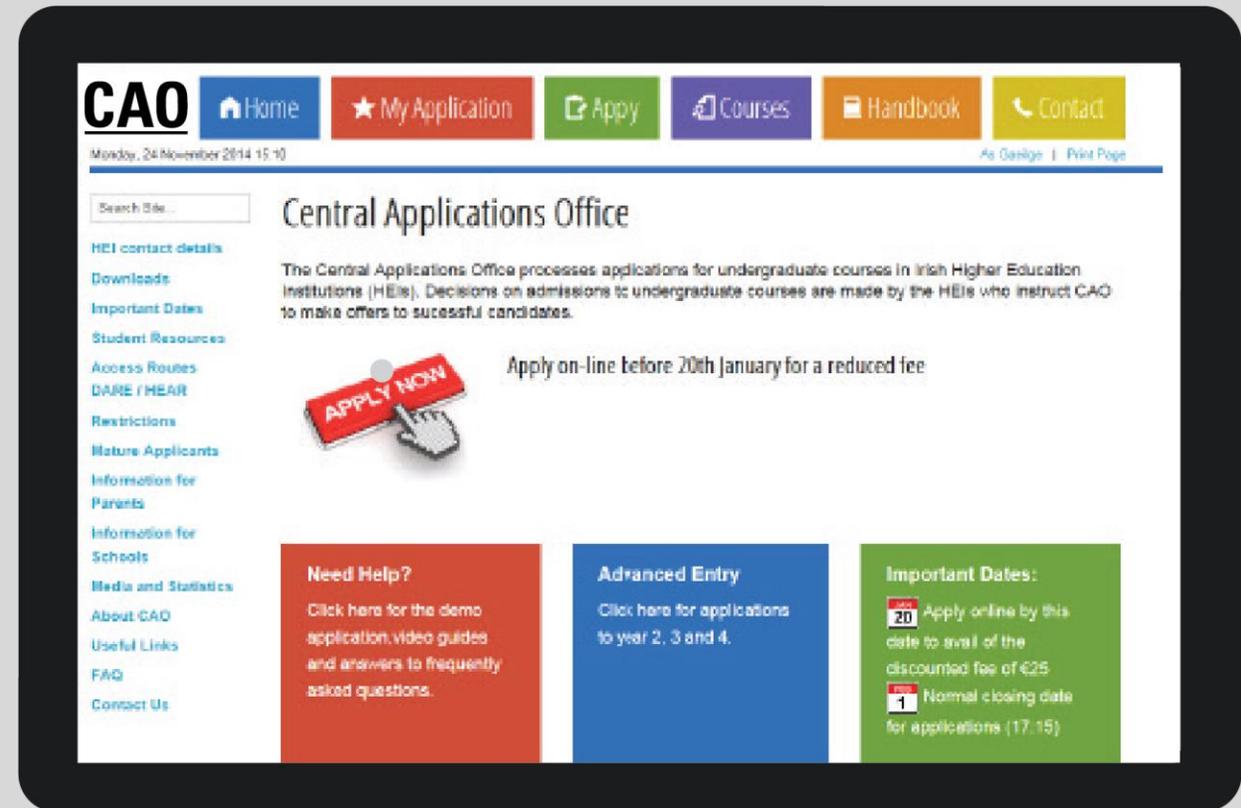
Applications must be made by 1 February at 5pm. Consult CAO Handbook for full details.

Making an Application

Applicants apply online at
www.cao.ie/apply

Carefully enter details such as your name, address, date of birth, schools attended, examination information, etc.

Make sure you inform CAO about all relevant qualifications and exemptions - select the relevant section(s) on the application form.



The screenshot displays the Central Applications Office (CAO) website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the CAO logo and links for Home, My Application, Apply, Courses, Handbook, and Contact. Below the navigation bar, the date and time are shown as Monday, 24 November 2014 15:10. A search bar is located on the left side. The main heading is "Central Applications Office". Below this, there is a paragraph explaining the CAO's role: "The Central Applications Office processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Decisions on admissions to undergraduate courses are made by the HEIs who instruct CAO to make offers to successful candidates." A prominent red button with a hand cursor icon says "APPLY NOW". To the right of this button, text reads "Apply on-line before 20th January for a reduced fee". Below the main content, there are three colored boxes: a red box for "Need Help?" with a link to a demo application, video guides, and answers to frequently asked questions; a blue box for "Advanced Entry" with a link for applications to year 2, 3 and 4; and a green box for "Important Dates:" which includes a calendar icon and text: "Apply online by this date to avail of the discounted fee of €25" and "Normal closing date for applications (17.15)".

CAO Application Number

- When you apply online your application number will appear on screen. You will also receive an email containing your CAO application number and an email verification code.
- Your application number is private, and it will be used in every correspondence between you and the CAO for the rest of the year.
- You will require your CAO application number, date of birth and password when you log in to your account via the 'My Application' facility to update your application.



Qualifications & Assessment

- You must complete the Qualifications and Assessments section(s) that is relevant to you.

For example, if you are a first-time Leaving Certificate candidate under the age of 23 with no other relevant qualifications, you will be asked to enter your school's name and address and the years attended. You must also tick the Leaving Certificate examinations box and subsequently indicate the year of your Leaving Certificate.

If you have a previous sitting of the Leaving Certificate, you must also remember to supply the year and examination number in the space provided on the application form.

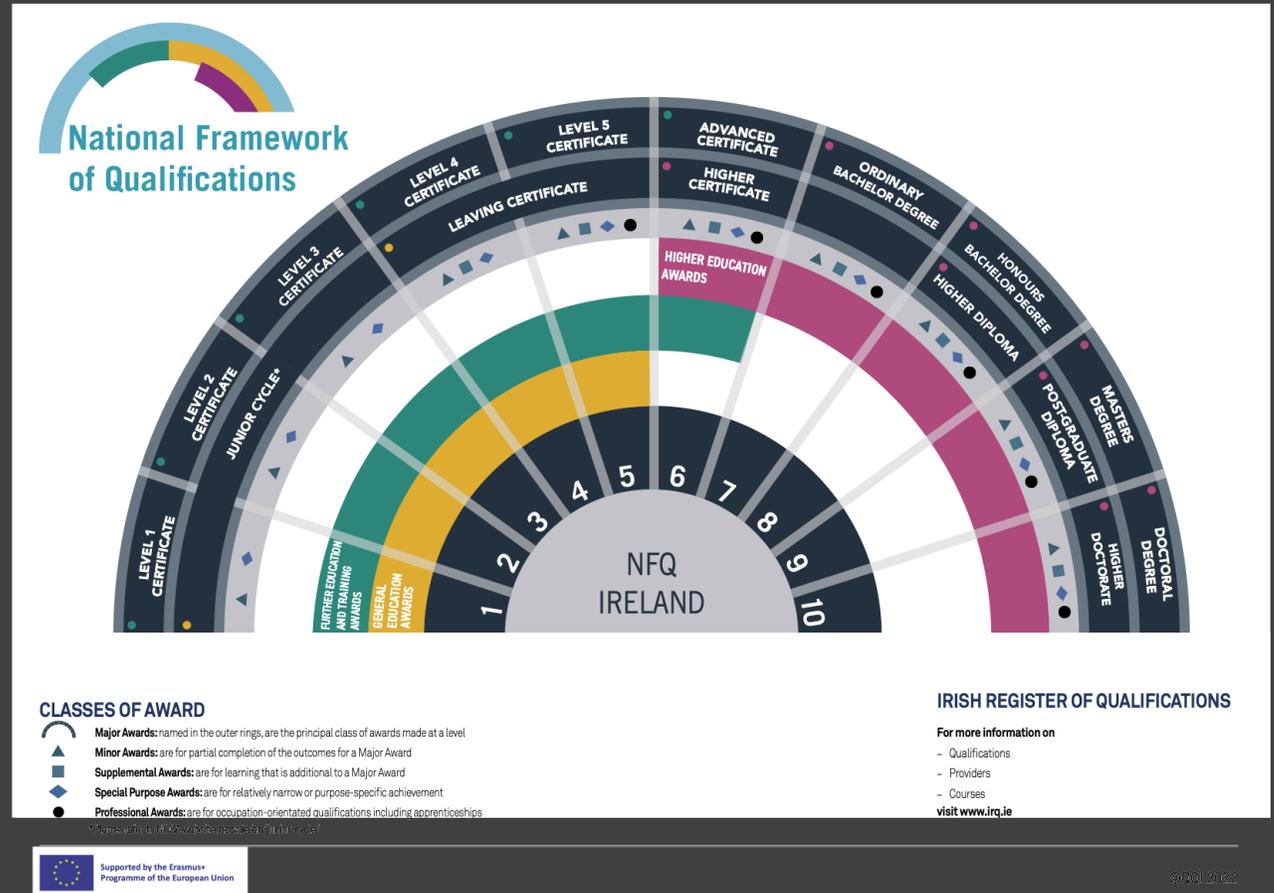


Choosing Courses

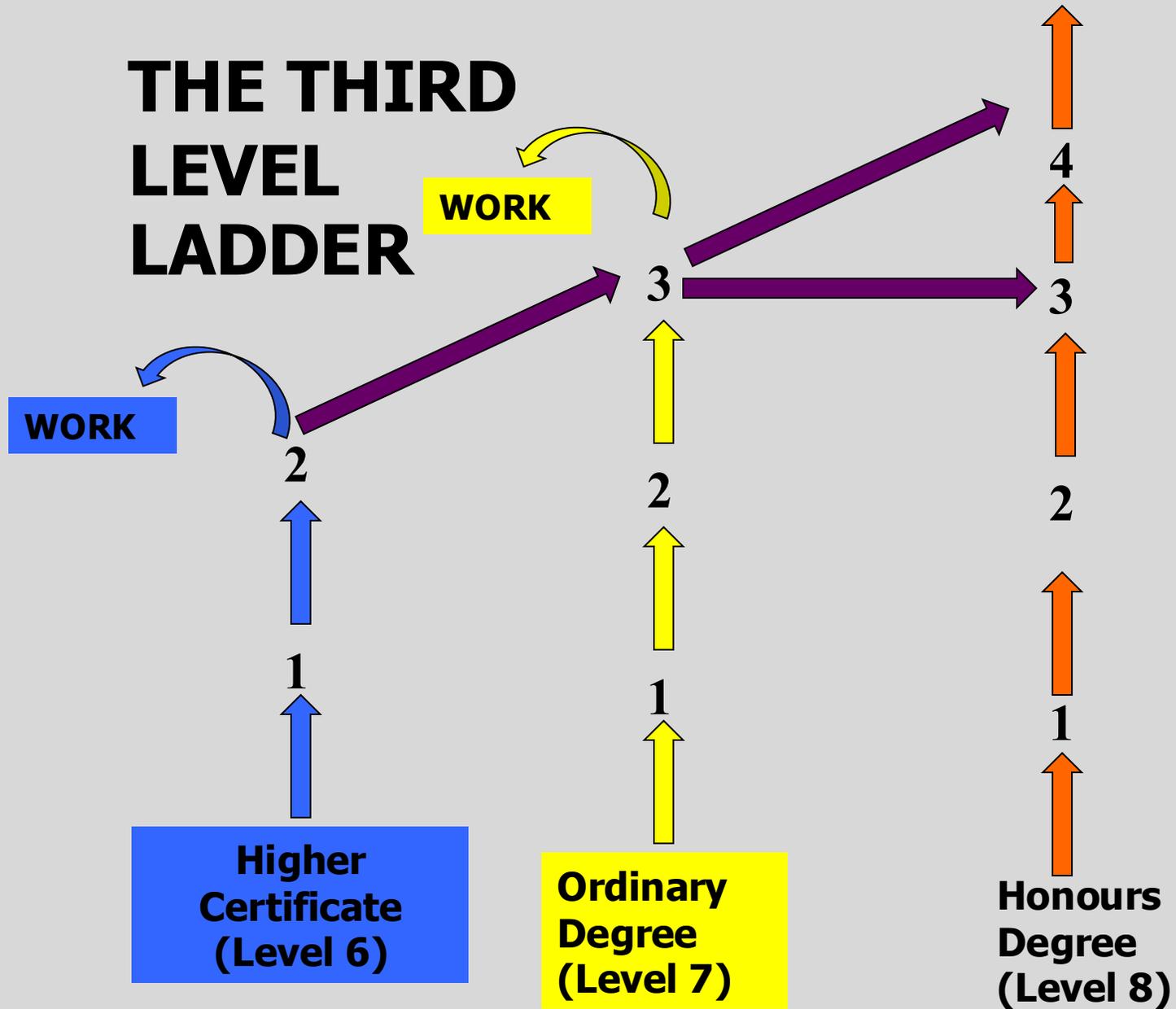
- Consult your Guidance Counsellor.
- Discuss your options with family and friends.
- Details about courses may be found in HEI prospectuses and by consulting HEI websites.
- A course search facility is available at www.cao.ie/courses



NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS



THE THIRD LEVEL LADDER



CAO – General Info

- There are 3 types of courses students can apply
- These are applied for on 2 separate lists on a single form:

Level 6 & 7 Courses		Level 8 Courses
Ordinary Degrees (7) Higher Certificates (6)		Honours Degrees (8)
Up to 10 Course Choices		Up to 10 Course Choices

- The courses are clearly labelled in the CAO Handbook
- N.B. – Care must be taken with courses marked "*Restricted*". These courses cannot be applied for after February 1st due to extra assessments required.



You will get offered a place for the course **highest on your list** that matches all three criteria

- 1 College requirements
- 2 Course requirements
- 3 Course Points score

Third Level Entry Requirements

Minimum Entry Requirements

E.g. UCD

- Pass 6 subjects
- At least 2 H5 & 4 O6/H7
- Pass in:
 - b Irish – unless exempt
 - b English

Specific Subject Requirements

E.g.

- **Engineering(UCD)**
 - H4 Math's
 - H6 laboratory science
- **French Law(UCD)**
 - O6/H7 French

N.B. Entry Requirements can be satisfied over more than one sitting of the Leaving Certificate

SUBJECT SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

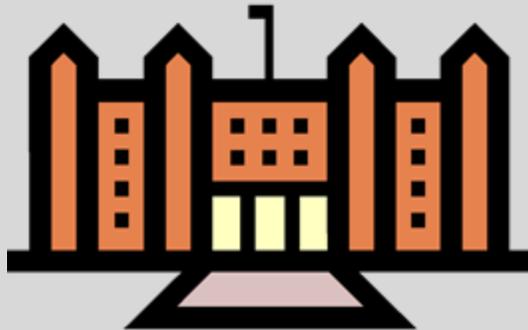
1. BASIC ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- 3RD LANGUAGE?

2. SPECIFIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- SCIENCE(S)? LANGUAGE?

3. SELECTION SYSTEM



APTITUDE TEST/INTERVIEW
PORTFOLIO/PROJECT

LEAVING CERTIFICATE

- POINTS SYSTEM:
- 6 BEST SUBJECTS

Language Exemption – GC will assist with this

Apply directly to:

- Admissions office of the college for further details
 - NUI's – Download form
 - Trinity – Direct (paper application)
 - UL – Direct (online application)

***All above need supporting documentations**

***Ensure this is noted on Statement of Application in May**

Points System

- Points are calculated from **ONE** sitting of the Leaving Certificate only
- Points total is calculated from **SIX** best subjects
- 25 Bonus points are awarded for honours Mathematics – **only if math's is one of your top 6 subjects**

Higher		Ordinary	
GRADE	POINTS	GRADE	POINTS
H1	100		
H2	88		
H3	77		
H4	66		
H5	56	O1	56
H6	46	O2	46
H7	37	O3	37
H8	0	O4	28
		O5	20
		O6	12
		O7	0
		O8	0

Making an Application

- Applications can be made online.
- Always keep proof of sending application: online – print screen receipt, paper – obtain certificate of postage.
- Form is very straight-forward to fill out.
- www.cao.ie

****VERY IMPORTANT****

- Students must fill out both course lists in:

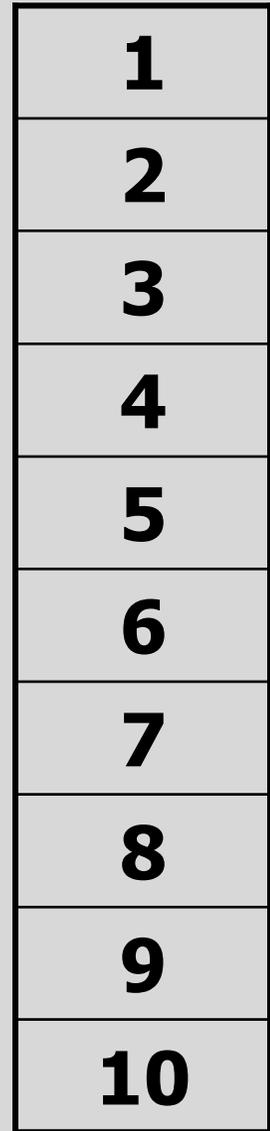
Genuine Order of Preference

- They should **NOT** put down courses on the basis of their predictions of next year's cut off points or their own points scores.
- Why? – Look at how places are allocated.

After Making Application

- Receive CAO number and Statement of Course Choices – **check this carefully.**
- Some students may be called for extra assessments.
- Receive Statement of Application Record – **check details carefully.**
- Change of Mind facility becomes available – **use sparingly and carefully.**
- Leaving Cert. Results are sent to CAO.
- Places are allocated and offered online.
- Students accept, ignore or defer offered places.
- Further rounds of offers are made until all course places are filled.

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



Dream Courses

Realistic Courses

Banker Courses



Sample Application form

You need to enter
your choices in
**order of
preference** – your
top preference at
the top of the list.

WHY?



Course Choices (stored on the GAO computer)

Entry to 1st Year

N.B. An application should not be made for any course without first consulting the information literature of the institution offering that course.

Level 8 Course Choices:

1. [AL852](#) Accounting
2. [BN113](#) Horticulture
3. [CK202](#) Accounting
4. [PD101](#) Education - Primary Teaching
5. [DN500](#) BA Degree - joint honours (full-time) - Archaeology / Geography (AGY)

[Change DN500 course options >](#)

6. [TR003](#) History
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

[Change Level 8 Course Choices >](#)

Level 7/6 Course Choices:

1. [CR052](#) Construction
2. [DK762](#) Communications in Creative Multimedia
3. [GA374](#) Tourism Management
4. [SG136](#) Computing - Software Development
5. [WD076](#) Forestry
6. [TA315](#) DNA and Forensic Science
7. [LM180](#) Equine Science
8. [DB571](#) Business Studies

- 9.
- 10.

[Change Level 7/6 Course Choices >](#)

Places Allocation

Note:

- The position of a course in a student's preference order does not in any way affect their chance of getting a place on that course – they will get the highest they are entitled to by their results
- 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.
- Students should think carefully about not accepting one of these offers, as they may not receive any further offers.
- Regardless of whether or not they accept a course in round 1, they will still be offered a higher preference course in subsequent rounds if they become entitled one.

Science - 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	340
99	335
100	330
101	325
102	315
103	310
104	305
105	295
--	--
--	--
182	265

← Last
 place to
 be filled

Course Cut Off Points = 330

Science - Maynooth
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
100	335
101	335
102	335
103	315
104	310
105	305
--	--
--	--
182	265

← Random
 Selection
 to be used

Course Cut Off Points = 335*

A Students Course Preferences

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

All Lower Preference Courses Disappear From Students Preferences

Student
s
Points
Total

= 445

Cut Off
Points
for
Course

NO NO YES YES NO YES NO YES YES YES

ROUND 2

1
AL020
600
595
590
580
**
**
**
**
**
495
480
470
465
460
460
460
455
455
450
450
450
445
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
480
475
465
460
455
445
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

Round 2 cut off points

CAO 2025.26 Timetable

- 5th November 12 noon
 - CAO facility opens
- 20th January, 5.00 p.m.
 - Closing date for discounted application fee of €35
- 1st February, 5.00 p.m.
 - Normal closing date for applications €50
- 5th February, 12 noon
 - Change of course choices facility opens for introducing restricted courses or by restricted-category applications
- 1st March, 5.00 p.m.
 - Closing date for amending course choices (restricted courses)
- 1st March, 5.00 p.m.
 - Closing date for online HEAR/DARE forms
- 10th March 5.00 p.m.
 - Supporting documentation due at CAO office
- March/April:
 - Most tests/interviews for restricted courses held in March and April
- May 5th - July 1st
 - Free change of mind facility opens
- 1st July
 - Change of mind and CAO closes until offers in August

STUDY ABROAD OPTIONS

UCAS

- Applications to UK
- www.ucas.com
- Max 5 courses not listed in any order
- Personal Statement
- Academic Reference
- Initial closing date 15th October 2025
 - Oxford, Cambridge, most medicine, veterinary medicine/science & dentistry
- 14th January 2026 - Equal consideration date for applications for most undergraduate courses
- Course place offers before results

Europe/EUnicas

- Eunicas offers European university application support for up to 8 degree programmes taught through English
- www.eunicas.ie
- Closing dates vary
- Some colleges have no fees
- Entry requirements can be lower than CAO

Don't be the one in six!

What is the Number 1 cause of drop outs in Third Level courses?



What causes the drop outs?

"The most popular reason for students to drop out, based on the Why Students Leave report published by the National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in 2015, is that the student chose a course that did not suit them"

"Students also have a role to play by researching their course of study thoroughly before applying to ensure that it is really what they want to do and that they feel they will be able to get through the difficult parts of the course"

Peter O'Donovan – Trinity News, Jan 2017

REACH⁺

www.susi.ie - grant application

- **KEY ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

- Approved full-time course.
- Lived three of last 5 years in Ireland, the EU, the EEA or Switzerland.
 - Income level.
- Progression through education.
- A major award e.g. Level 5,6,7 or 8.
- Applications made online through:
 - www.susi.ie
 - Apply as early as possible
 - Grant covers approved courses in Ireland and UK and other EU states

TYPES OF STUDY

Level	Ireland		Northern Ireland		EU Including UK	
	Maintenance	Fee	Maintenance	Fee	Maintenance	Fee
PLC	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Under Graduate	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Post Graduate	✗	* Up to €2000 awarded ✓	✗	✓	✗	✗

*A Post Graduate costs €10,000

Scholarships

Colleges offer a variety of scholarships that students can apply for

<https://careersportal.ie/scholarships/index.php>

POST LEAVING CERT COURSES (PLC)

- Full time 1 - 2 years - Level 5/6
- Provided by Education & Training Boards (ETB)
- Range of Disciplines - engineering, business, computing, sport/leisure, nursing, theatre
- Enter world of work/ steppingstone to University
- Apply directly to each PLC college (no centralised system)
- Apply early because interviews take place in April and many courses fill up quickly

www.apprenticeship.ie

- Wide range of options: Construction, Motor, Electrical, Hospitality, Financial Services, Accounting and Auctioneering
- Combination of on-the-job and off-the-job phases
- Qualifications range from Level 6 to Level 9
- First step is to find a SOLAS approved employer
- Earn as you learn: Training Allowance for off-the-job-training
- Apprentice Rate of Pay depends on occupation and employer