

The background of the slide is white, decorated with numerous colorful splatters and dots. On the left side, there is a dense cluster of orange and red splatters of various sizes. On the right side, there are more sparse splatters in shades of yellow, green, and light orange. A dark gray rectangular box with a thin white border is positioned on the right side of the slide, containing the title 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
EVERTHING 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

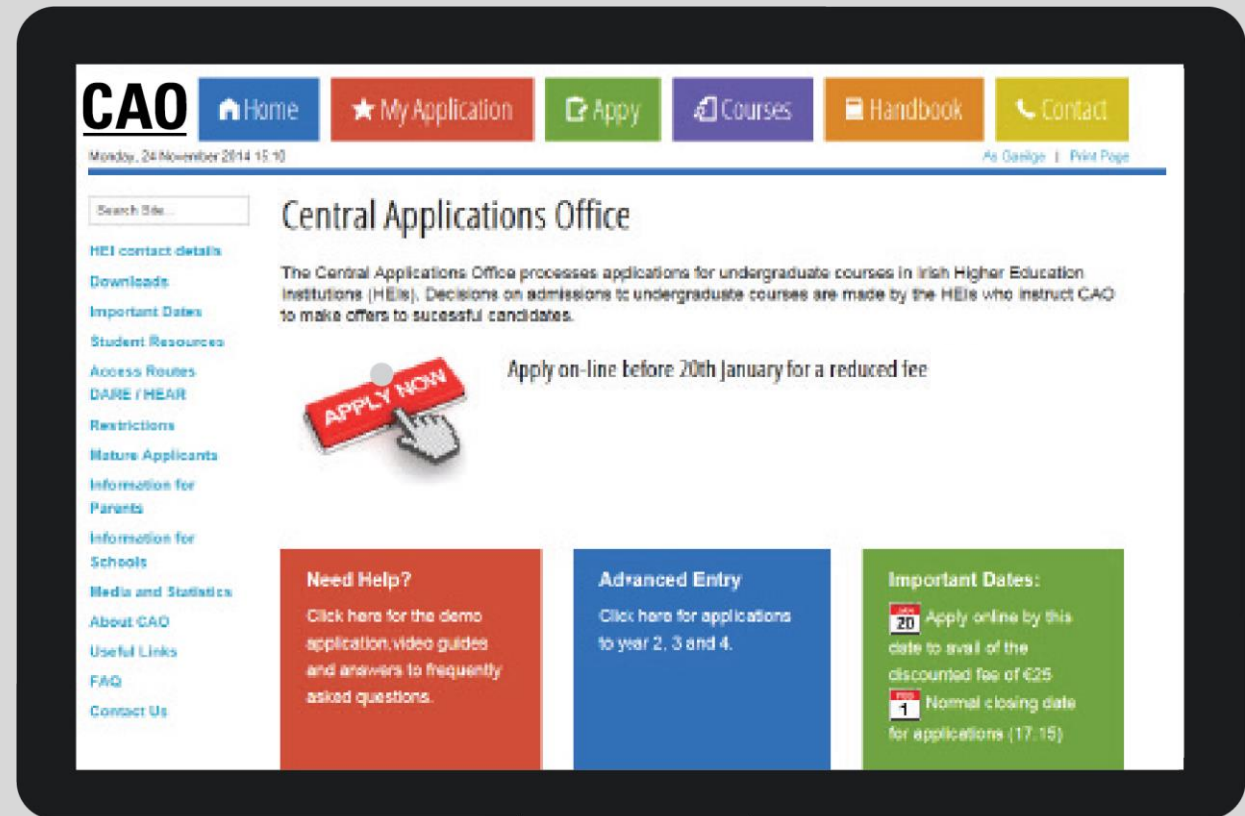
Applications must be made by 1 February at 5pm. Consult CAO Handbook for full details.

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.



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.



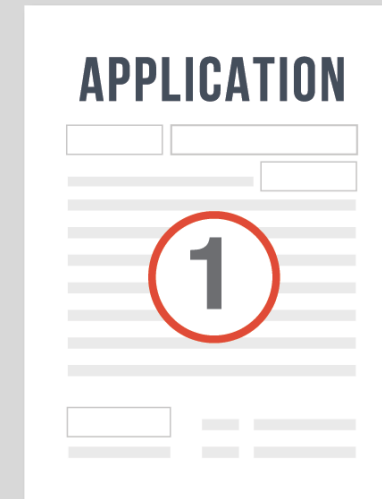
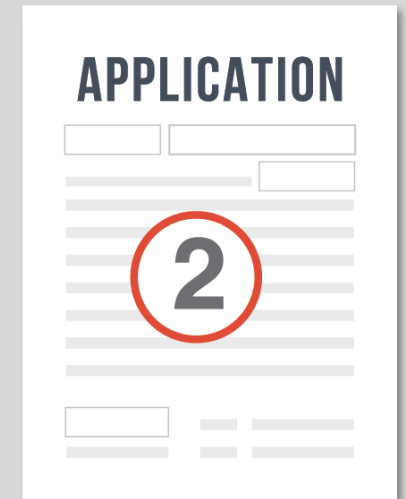
Choosing Courses

- 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

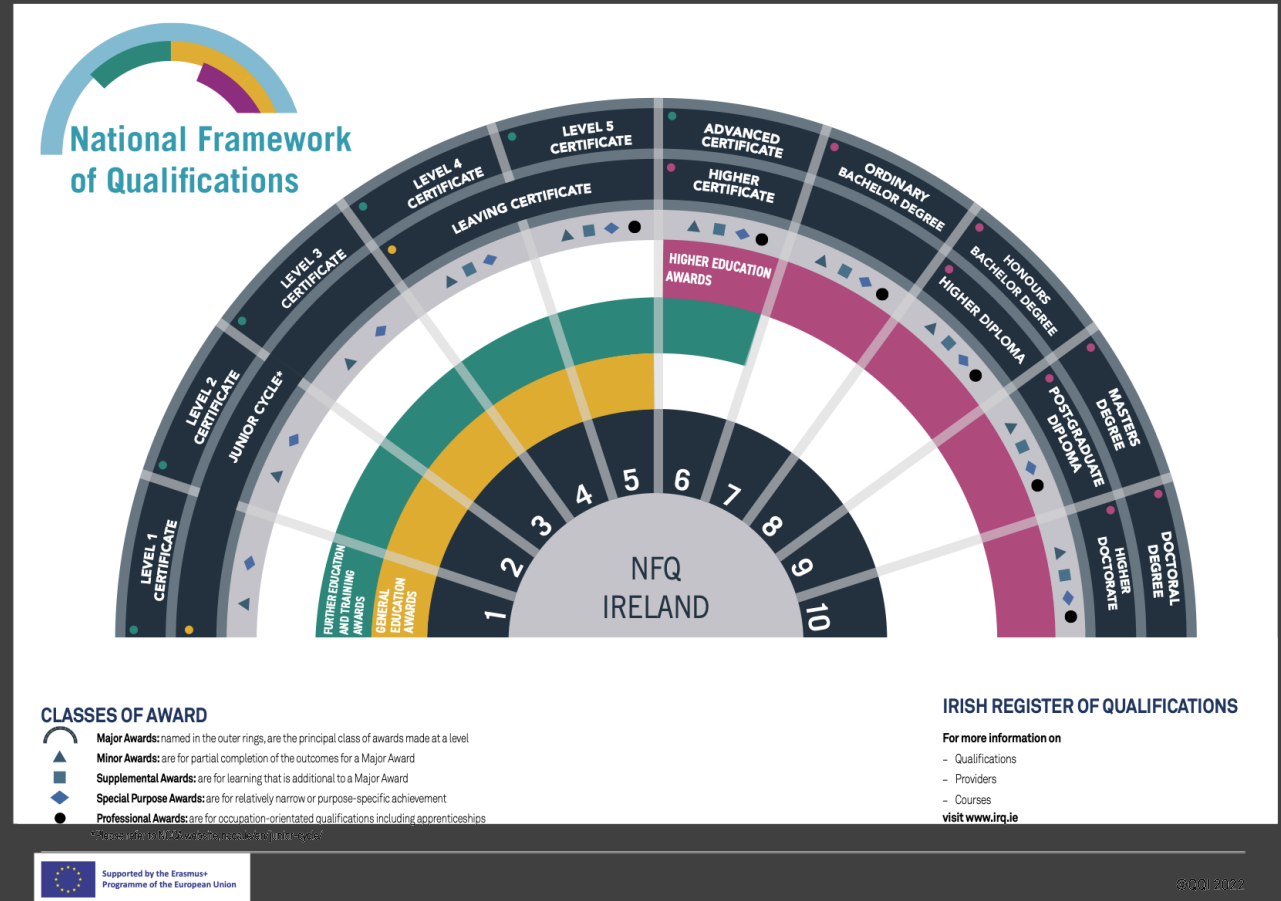


Level 8 and Level 7/6 lists (Course Choices)

- There are 2 course choice lists (Level 8 and Level 7/6) and applicants may make up to 10 course choices on each list.
- Your choices on one list do not in any way affect your choices on the other list. They may be considered two separate applications on one form.
- It is possible to receive an offer on both lists. You may then decide to accept either your Level 7/6 or your Level 8 offer.
- Alternatively, you might not wish to accept either offer.

A graphic of a white application form with a red circle containing the number 1. The form has the word 'APPLICATION' at the top, followed by two input boxes. Below these are several horizontal lines for text entry. At the bottom, there are more input boxes and lines.A graphic of a white application form with a red circle containing the number 2. The form has the word 'APPLICATION' at the top, followed by two input boxes. Below these are several horizontal lines for text entry. At the bottom, there are more input boxes and lines.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS



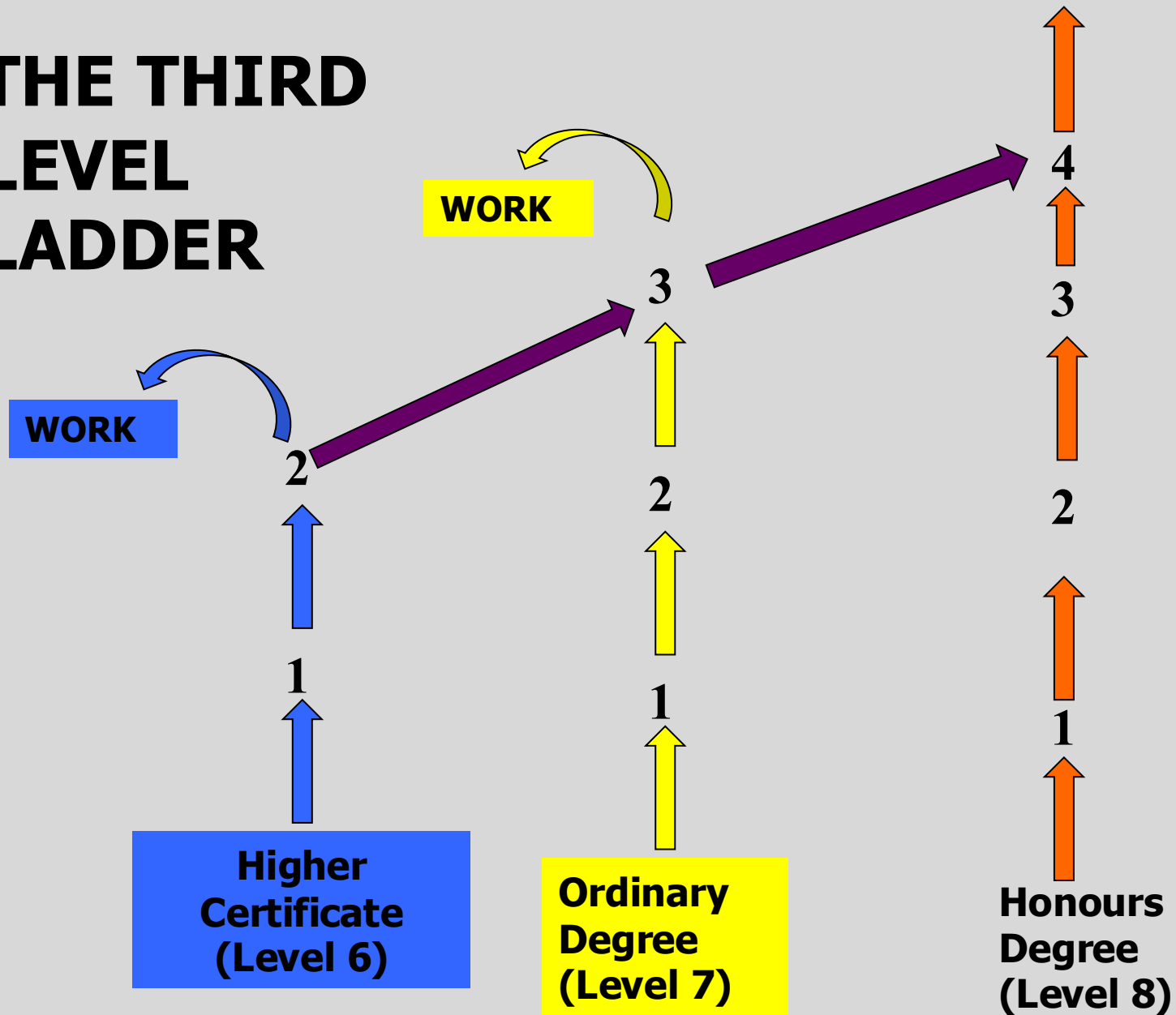
CAO – General Info

- 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.

THE THIRD LEVEL LADDER





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 for some courses

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

Points are only considered from 1 sitting of the Leaving Cert.

SUBJECT SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

1. BASIC ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- 3RD LANGUAGE?

2. SPECIFIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- SCIENCE(S)? LANGUAGE? Specific grade in a subject

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:

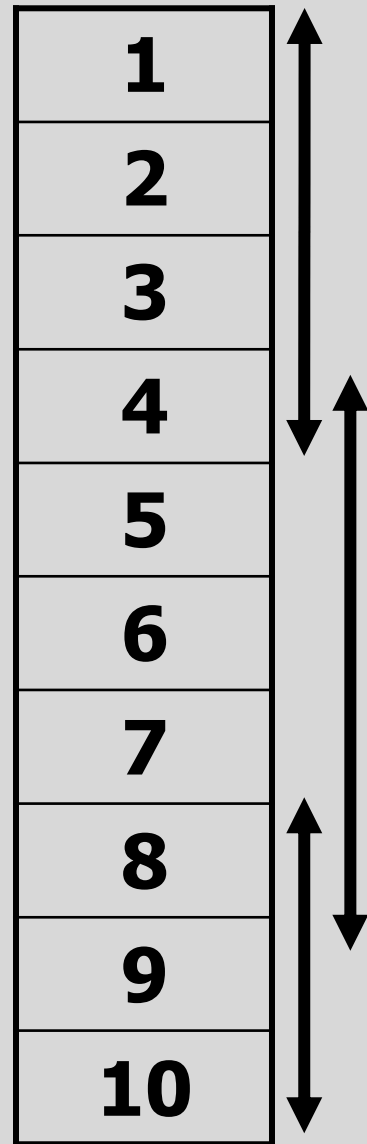
Genuine Order of Preference

- 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

Order of Preference

- If you learn nothing else from this presentation let it be this...

**PLACE YOUR
COURSES IN
GENUINE
ORDER OF
PREFERENCE**



**To do otherwise is a
grave mistake.**



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 CAO 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

NO

NO

YES

YES

NO

YES

NO

YES

YES

YES

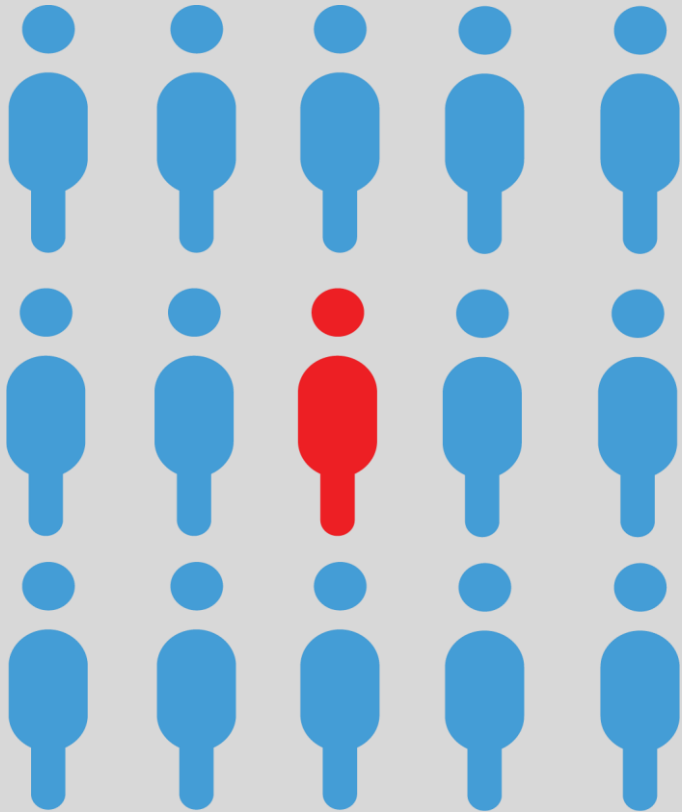
All Lower
Preference
Courses
Disappear From
Students
Preferences

Student
s
Points
Total

= 445

Cut Off
Points
for
Course

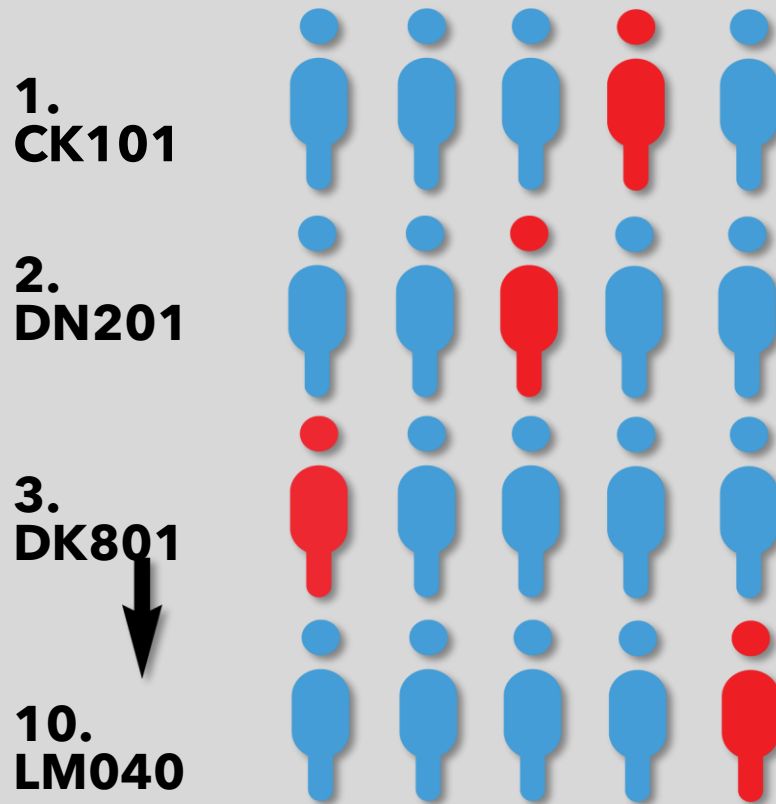
The Offer Process - Example



EXAMPLE
- no results yet!

- These are the applicants for CK101 - Arts in UCC.
- The examination results have not yet been released, so these applicants are in no particular order.
- We are going to trace the progress of the applicant marked in red.

After the Results are Released

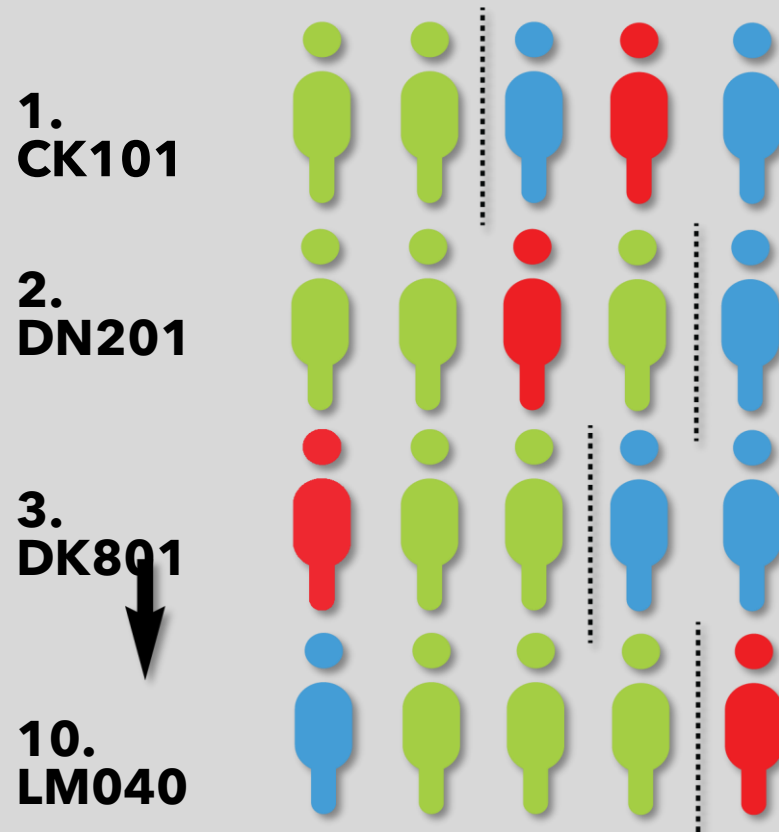


EXAMPLE

- LC results have been released.

- Applicants are placed in a queue for each course they applied for. Their position in the queue is determined by their points.
- The applicant with the highest points is placed at the top of the queue.
- The points achieved by the applicant in red determines her position in the queue for each course she has applied to.

Round 1 Offers



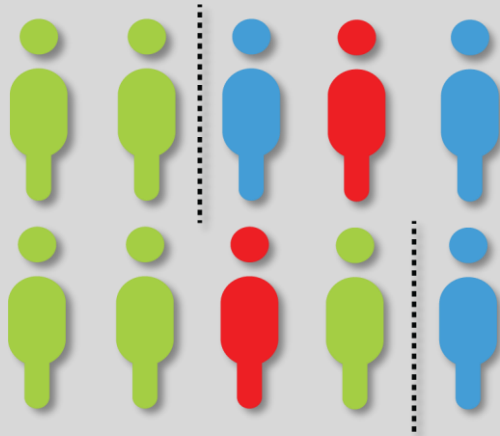
EXAMPLE - HEIs issue R1 offers

- The applicants marked in **GREEN** have enough points to be offered places.
- The applicant marked in **RED** has enough points for her second preference.

Round 1 Offers – contd.

1.
CK101

2.
DN201

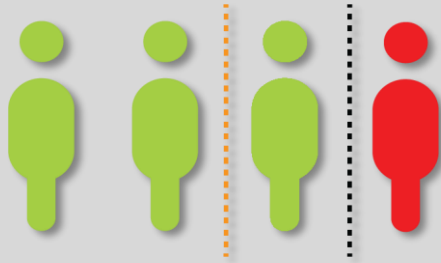


EXAMPLE - HEIs issue R1 offers

- The applicant in **RED** is offered her second preference, the highest preference course that she has enough points for, and she will now disappear from the queue for all her lower choices.
- Placing DN201 as her second preference meant that she would prefer to receive an offer on DN201 than on any other course except CK101 - which is her first preference.

Round 2 Offers

1.
CK101

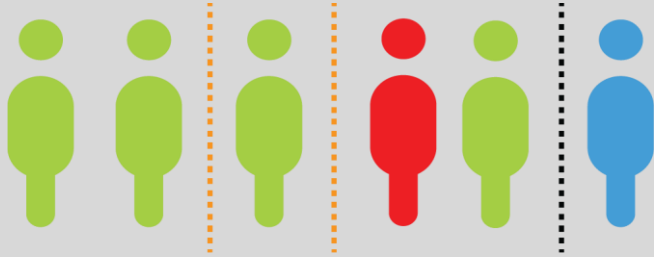


EXAMPLE - R2 offers

- After Round 2 offers are issued, our applicant is now in first place on the waiting list for her first preference course.
- She has already accepted her 2nd preference course. **Accepting or not accepting** her 2nd preference course will not prevent her from receiving an offer of her 1st preference course if she is deemed eligible by the institution in a later round.

Round 3 Offers

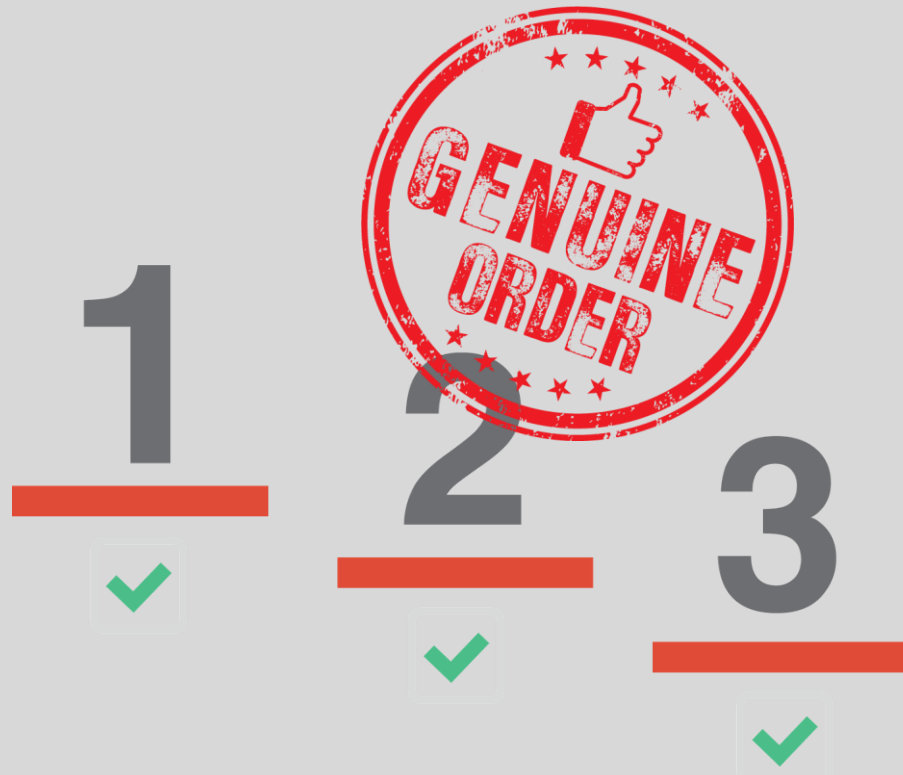
1.
CK101



EXAMPLE - An offer is issued in R3 for her 1st preference!

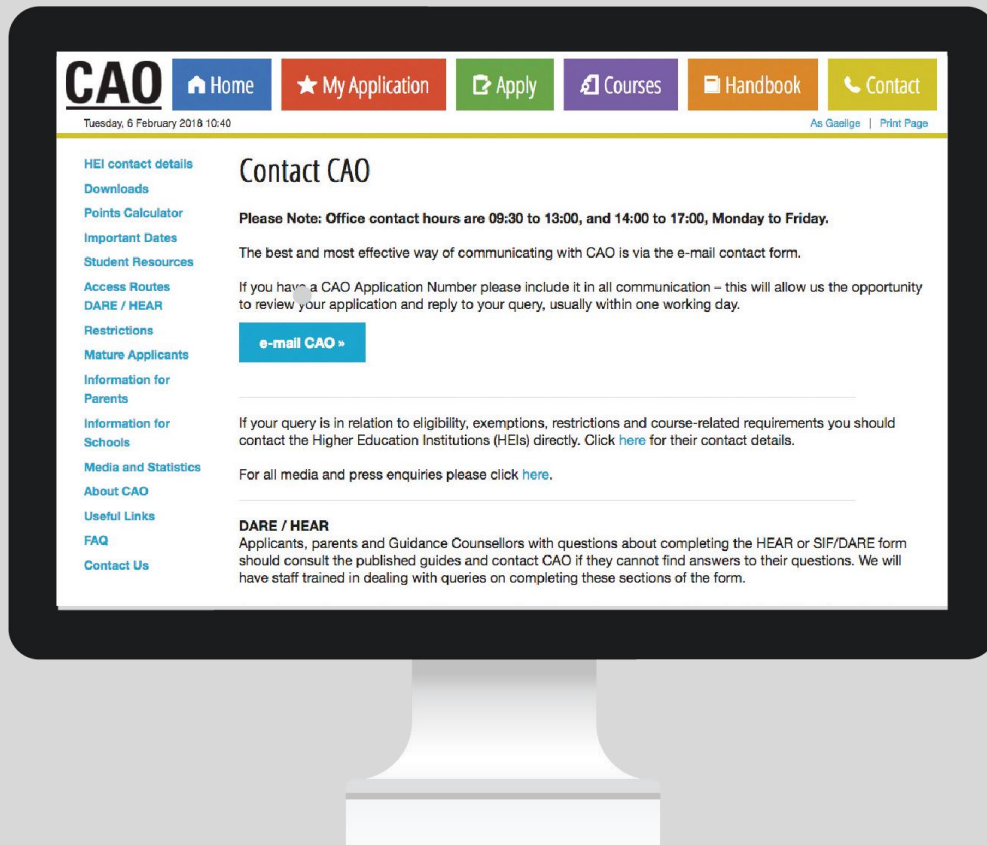
- In the third round of offers, two more offers are made on CK101 and our applicant, who was at the top of the queue, now receives an offer.
- She may do nothing and remain in DN201, or she may accept the offer.

Genuine Order of Preference



- You do not need to guess what the points are going to be for the courses you are interested in.
- Simply list your courses in genuine order of preference from the highest preference 1, to the lowest preference 10.
- If you are entitled to an offer, you will be offered the highest preference that you are entitled to.

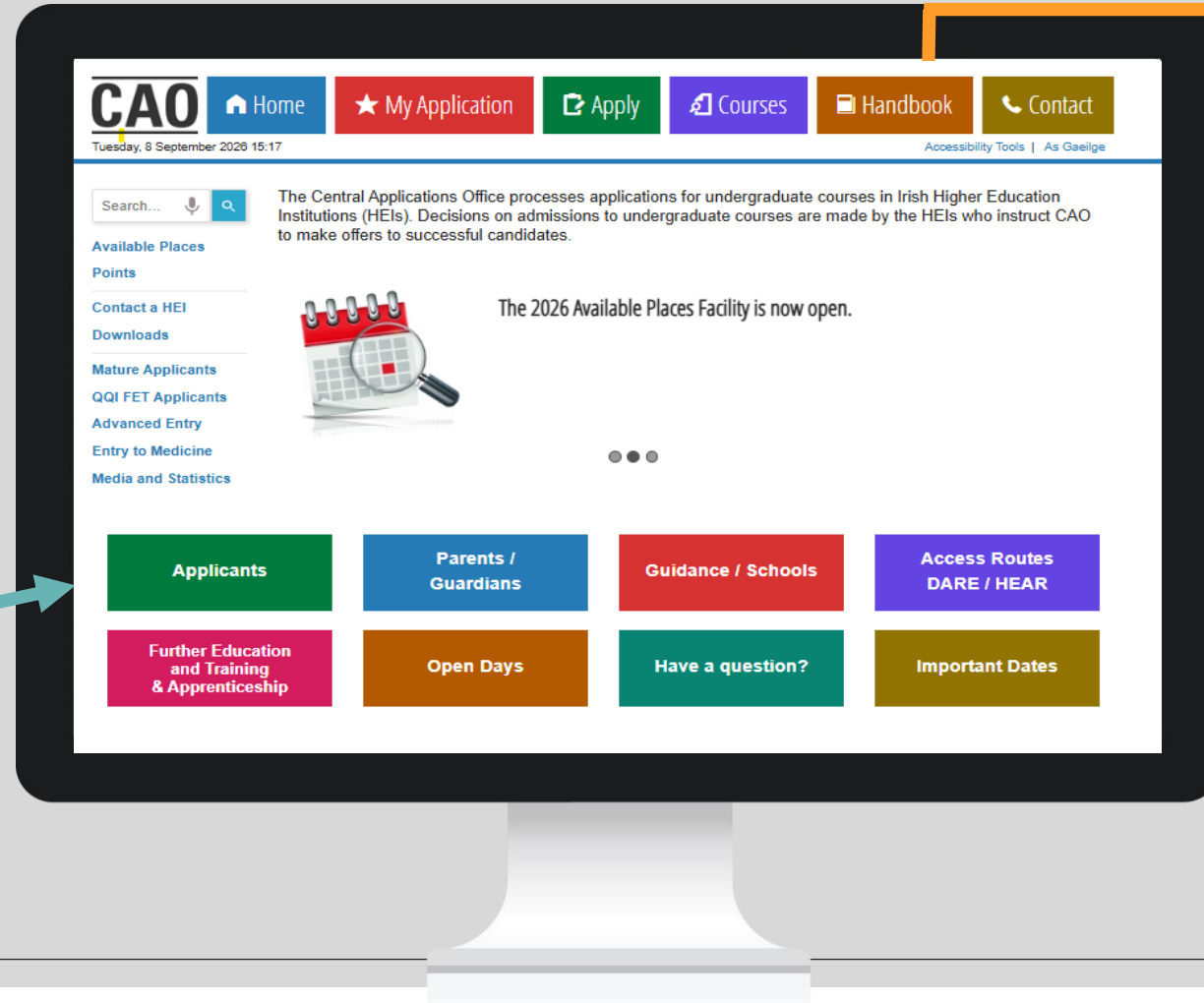
Have a question?



- Please check the 'Have a question' page before submitting an email to CAO.
- If your question is not answered in the Have a Question page, the easiest and most efficient way to communicate with CAO is by using the Correspondence Section of your CAO Account.
- If you post something to CAO always obtain a certificate of posting at the post office. This is a free service, and it offers you peace of mind.

Useful Resources

Visit the 'Applicants' section accessible here for Video Guides and useful resources including the 'Demo Application' facility.



The personalised CAO Handbook is available here

Watch this space for 'Important Dates'.

Finally...



Remember to carefully read all of the documents and instructions from CAO.

Most applicants follow the simple instructions from CAO and get along just fine.



**If you are unclear on any matter concerning the application process, please contact us at:
www.cao.ie/contact**

CAO 2026.27 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 2026
 - Oxford, Cambridge, most medicine, veterinary medicine/science & dentistry
- 14th January 2027 – 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