

AIMING HIGHER

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

TALKING ABOUT
3RD LEVEL CHOICES



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

HEA

AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS
HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY



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www.ul.ie/careers/aiminghigher

AIMING HIGHER

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FOREWORD

HIGHER EDUCATION IS A PATH TO PERSONAL FULFILMENT, A REWARDING CAREER, A HIGHER INCOME AND GREATER PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY.

With skills shortages already in many sectors, Ireland needs more higher-education graduates. These skills needs will be met mainly by graduates.

Entering higher education is a significant milestone in anyone's life. For young people thinking of going to college, it is important that they and their families are properly informed so that they can make the right choices. We know that almost half of students who do not complete third level say that the main reason they did not do so was because their chosen course was not what they expected it to be (ESRI, *Leaving School in Ireland: A Longitudinal Study of Post-School Transitions* (2014), page 146).

In a recent study, over 40% of parents felt they did not have enough knowledge to advise their children about higher-education choices and 93% said they would welcome more information and guidance (Amárach Research, *Going to College: Barriers and Perceptions* (2014)).

This guide will support students and their parents or guardians to make the right choices.

I commend the University of Limerick for producing this guide, which is designed to help parents and guardians to better understand the higher-education system. This, in turn, should help parents and guardians to support their children in navigating the entry process to higher education.

The very best of luck to all concerned.



Tom Boland
Chief Executive Officer
HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY

ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND

IRELAND HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGES IN THE WORLD OF YOUNG PEOPLE GOING ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION (ALSO KNOWN AS THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION).

Ireland now produces more graduates per 1,000 inhabitants than any other European country. Nationally, there are over 30 higher-education institutions, including universities, institutes of technology, colleges of education and private independent colleges. In recent years, there has been a huge expansion in the numbers of third-level courses on offer – second-level students can now choose from over 1,400 courses through the Central Applications Office (CAO) alone.

Third-level education gives your son or daughter a wonderful opportunity to study something they enjoy and are interested in. It will help them to gain independence and maturity and often represents the first step in their career journey. So, planning ahead and making choices is both exciting and challenging.

Research shows that parents have the most significant influence on their child's chosen career path. You are therefore a valuable source of guidance and support. The Leaving Certificate year, in particular, can be very hectic and is not an easy time for students.

Much of your role is about making the time and creating the opportunities to talk to your son or daughter about their options and listening properly to their responses. The aim of this guide is to help you to support your son or daughter to make informed decisions about third-level options based on their individual strengths, interests, expectations and values.

PLANNING AHEAD & MAKING CHOICES



JARGON-BUSTER

Third-level education has its own language. This new vocabulary is one of many changes your son or daughter will notice when they move from school to college.

The following are some commonly used terms that your son or daughter will come across when researching third-level courses and preparing to apply to the CAO.



BA: Bachelor of Arts.

This degree is traditionally awarded in arts, humanities and social sciences subjects, such as political science, international relations, English, art, history, sociology and languages.

**BBS/BComm: Bachelor of Business Studies/
Bachelor of Commerce.**

This degree is traditionally awarded in business subjects, such as accounting, economics, marketing and human resources.

BEd: Bachelor of Education.

This degree is an undergraduate professional degree that qualifies students to teach.

BEng: Bachelor of Engineering.

This degree is traditionally awarded in engineering subjects, such as mechanical, computer, electronic, chemical, process and environmental engineering.

BSc: Bachelor of Science.

This degree is traditionally awarded in science, applied science and life sciences subjects, such as biology, industrial chemistry, maths, information and communications technology, environmental studies and mathematical science.

BTech: Bachelor of Technology.

This degree is traditionally awarded in computer and technology subjects, such as management and information technology.

CAO (Central Applications Office):

The CAO processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish higher-education institutions.

CAO course code:

A unique code, made up of letters and numbers, that is given to each course available through the CAO.

Core module:

A compulsory part of a course (a part that must be completed).

Credit:

Credits are earned by successfully progressing through a programme. Credits are combined to give rise to the final award.

Elective module:

A part of a course that allows students to specialise by choosing a subject area that is most relevant to their career plan or personal interests.

Higher education:

Another term for third-level education.

Higher-education institution:

An institution that provides higher-education courses, such as a university, college or institute of technology. For a full list, see appendix 1.

Major:

A main area of study.

Mid-point (or 'median') CAO points:

The points score of the applicant midway between the highest and the lowest points needed for a specific programme.

Minimum entry/Matriculation requirements:

The minimum requirements for entry to a higher-education institution. Students must meet these minimum standards before they can be considered for a higher-education programme. The minimum requirements can change from institution to institution. You can find more information about this on the websites of the relevant higher- education institutions.

Minor:

A secondary area of study.

Module:

An independent unit of study that can be combined in a number of ways to form a course in a higher-education institution. Successfully passing a module earns credit towards a final award.

Programme structure/outline:

A detailed breakdown of the content of a programme from semester to semester, including core modules, electives, study periods abroad and work placement (if this applies).

Semester:

A university teaching term, usually 15 weeks long.

Study abroad:

An opportunity to study in a university abroad for a semester or a full year. For some courses, this is compulsory.

Undergraduate programme:

Undergraduate education is the post-second-level education offered by a higher-education institution. It includes all programmes of study up to and including a bachelor's degree.

Work placement/Cooperative Education placement/ Internship programme:

An opportunity to get experience in a work setting. For some courses, this is compulsory.



IDENTIFYING THEIR STRENGTHS

GUIDING DECISION-MAKING

A minority of students are certain about what course they would like to study. Others may already have identified a general area of interest to them. However, it is often the case that students are unclear about what course or future career they are interested in pursuing. This is not a cause for panic.

There is a lot you can do to support your son or daughter in finding the path to which they are best suited. Remember too that people will change jobs an average of 11 times during their careers. Your son or daughter should see this as a time to make decisions about the next few years rather than their entire working lives.

WHAT MOTIVATES THEM?

A good place to start is getting your son or daughter to focus on what they do well and, more importantly, why they like doing it. Helping them to identify their strengths will allow them to identify their natural talent in areas such as working with people, working with numbers, solving problems, communicating, researching, organising, being creative and being entrepreneurial.

It is also important to encourage your son or daughter to think about their learning at second level. Their favourite subjects in school are good clues. Remember that a 'favourite subject' is often based not only on the subject's content but also on the skills used while studying it. Instead of asking *'What did you get in the exam?'*, you could ask *'Why do you think you did so well in that exam?'*

Look back on a school project or event or an extra-curricular activity that challenged and motivated them in the past six months. Ask them what was involved, what their role was and what specifically stimulated their interest.

Simple, sometimes very obvious, questions can be very useful starting points to a conversation:

- What kind of activities do you enjoy in school and outside of school?
- What talent or achievement are you most proud of?
- What do you like most about your favourite subject?
- How do you like to learn?
- What's important to you?

There are a number of online tools that can help your son or daughter to gain a good understanding of their interests and aptitudes. The Careers Portal website www.careersportal.ie has an excellent interest inventory and personality profiler that allows students to assess their personality, career interests, career values and skills. It also suggests jobs that match their profile.

RESEARCHING COURSES

The decisions students make about third-level courses are influenced by a range of factors, such as family and peer expectations, CAO points, popularity of certain courses in a given year, graduate salary expectations and stereotyping of certain jobs. However, all the evidence shows that **third-level students perform best in courses to which they are most suited**. It is this, more than anything else, that should guide your son's or daughter's choices. There are many websites that are helpful in identifying courses. A good starting point is www.qualifax.ie, which is a 'one stop shop' for information on higher-education courses. Your son or daughter can search the www.cao.ie website using key words, such as 'engineering', 'maths', 'business', 'science', 'arts', 'languages', 'education', 'sport', 'medicine', 'art', 'music' and so on. This will produce a list of courses in their chosen category.

Each third-level institution publishes an undergraduate prospectus, which contains information about the institution itself and its courses. Also, each college's website has an 'Undergraduate courses' section, which you can access from the site's homepage.

Researching courses takes time and effort, and it is very important for your son or daughter to focus on the structure and content of courses. This will give them a good understanding of what is involved in a course and how it might 'fit' with their strengths and interests. The most frequent reasons third-level students give for leaving a course is that they either did not know enough about the course or had a poor understanding of what was involved in the course. Researching the course is just as important for students who have a very definite course in mind as it is for those who are still undecided. Encourage your son or daughter to look beyond the course titles, which can sometimes be misleading.

Using either the website or the prospectus, your son or daughter should follow the course structure (sometimes referred to as the programme structure) to get a clear idea of the course's specific subjects (modules). It is also important to follow the structure through to the second and third year because many courses now have broad-based subjects in the first year that offer the opportunity to specialise in the second or third year. Programme outlines will usually include direct phone or email contacts for course directors. If your son or daughter has a specific question relating to a course, suggest that they email the course director directly. Many institutions' websites provide student videos and blogs that give a good overview of courses and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is also a good idea for your son or daughter to talk to someone who is currently taking a course that they would like to take.

The following questions may prompt practical thinking:

- Do you think the course content reflects the course title?
- Does the course content interest you?
- What do you think of the modules?
- Does the course reflect your strengths?
- What type of study is involved? For example, will the course involve independent project or research work, laboratory work or group work? Will it involve a lot of reading or maths?





DO POINTS MATTER?

Your son's or daughter's points will be calculated on the basis of their six best grades in the Leaving Certificate examination. (Note that higher-level maths attracts an extra 25 bonus points for any grade from D3 upwards.) The number of points needed for any course is decided by supply and demand in any one year and is not a reflection of the quality of the course or an institution. The points needed for a course over the past three years can give a rough idea of what may be required this year, but be aware that points can fall or rise in any one year.

So, encourage your son or daughter to choose courses in order of preference rather than on point predictions. Students often feel they must apply for courses that attract high points rather than courses they will enjoy. They may even think that they are 'wasting' their points 'surplus' if they opt for a course that has a lower points requirement than what they expect to achieve. The best approach is for students to base their choices on their talents and interests and to apply for courses that challenge and excite them.

However, your son or daughter should not make the mistake of underestimating their Leaving Certificate points and neglect to put down their most preferred course on their list of CAO preferences. Also, encourage them to look at lower points courses in case, for whatever reason, they do not achieve the results they expected.

WHAT COURSES ARE AVAILABLE?

Ireland has a national framework of qualifications (NFQ). The NFQ system classifies qualifications from Level 1 to Level 10, with Level 10 being the highest. Third-level qualifications fall under Levels 6 to 10 on the framework. Your son or daughter can apply for three different qualification levels through the CAO. These are:

- **HONOURS BACHELOR'S DEGREE**
(Level 8);
- **ORDINARY BACHELOR'S DEGREE**
(Level 7); and
- **HIGHER CERTIFICATE**
(Level 6).

The CAO form gives two lists of courses. One is a list of honours bachelor's degree (Level 8) courses and the other list combines ordinary bachelor's degree (Level 7) courses and higher certificate (Level 6) courses. The number of points required for ordinary bachelor's degree and higher certificate courses is generally lower than is needed for honours bachelor's degree courses. If a student completes a Level 6 qualification, they can often progress to a Level 7 or Level 8 degree, either in their own institution or by transferring to another institution. And, if a student completes a Level 7 qualification, they can progress to a Level 8 degree. This is called a 'progression route'. A progression route is particularly relevant to students who do not get their preferred course in the CAO application process because it can provide an alternative route to this course.

WHAT JOB WILL THE COURSE LEAD TO?

It is very useful for your son or daughter to research careers associated with a particular course. All universities have to publish information on employment outcomes for their graduates. These reports give a good overview of graduate employment patterns and typical graduate roles. You will find them in the careers section of many higher-education institutions' websites. On many of these websites, graduates share their experience of their careers. Remember that many graduate employers will consider applications from graduates with any subject. The 'Careers advice' section of www.gradireland.com has a very useful subsection called 'Jobs with your degree', which lists jobs relevant to an individual course.

**RESEARCH CAREERS
ASSOCIATED WITH A
PARTICULAR COURSE**

NARROWING THE SEARCH

At this point your son or daughter may have a clearer idea of what they want to do. Encourage them to draw up an initial list of the courses they are interested in. Having a conversation with them about specific aspects of a course is a good way of prompting practical thinking and developing realistic expectations.

The following is a suggested checklist of questions to ask them in relation to each course on the list, although you may well have others to add.

- Based on your research, what appeals to you most about the course?
- Have you checked the programme entry in the CAO handbook?
- Are there any restrictions, such as early application dates or requests for supporting information?
- What level is the course at – honours degree (Level 8), ordinary bachelor's degree (Level 7) or higher certificate (Level 6)?
- What are the minimum entry requirements? Can you meet these?
- Are there course-specific entry requirements and deadlines? Can you meet these?
- What were the most recent CAO entry and midway points? Can you meet these?
- How long is the course?
- Is this a broad choice-based course in year 1?
- Is there a work-placement part to the course? If so, is it optional or compulsory?
- Is there an opportunity to study abroad for one or two semesters? If so, is it optional or compulsory?
- Are there exemptions that count towards entry to certain professions (for example, law and accountancy)?
- Does the course offer the possibility of transferring or progressing to other courses?
- What are the typical career paths associated with the course?

MAKING THE MOST OF OPEN DAYS

You might want to encourage your son or daughter to visit universities and colleges. Most institutions run open days or careers days for prospective students. You can find dates and details of third-level open days on individual institutions' websites and in the 'Student Resources' section of www.cao.ie. Also, schools often arrange for class groups to visit different institutions, and parents are very welcome at these events.

Open days are an opportunity not just to ask questions about courses but also to get an impression of the look, feel and atmosphere of a particular institution and its campus.

Your son or daughter can make the most of these fact-finding opportunities by preparing for them beforehand. Encourage them to write down the questions they want to ask about the course or institution. They should also take the opportunity to talk to current students, who are usually present at open days, either working as guides or attending the stands. Talking to someone their own age can be very helpful to your son or daughter.

Students should keep in regular contact with their school guidance counsellor, who is a rich source of experience, expertise and impartial advice.

EXPECTATIONS

The experience of moving to higher education is not just about choosing a course and an institution. It is a chance for your son or daughter to learn in a different way, make new friends, develop new interests and become actively involved in student life. For many students, it will be their first real experience of living away from home, budgeting, cooking and managing their time.

The shift in scale from school to college is significant. Individuals respond differently to change. Some students may enjoy the experience of being part of a large student population while others may find it intimidating. Moving from a very structured school curriculum to an environment where they will have to direct and manage their own learning is a big change for most students. Using the following questions as a guide, have a chat with them about their expectations and possible concerns.

- How do you feel about living away from home?
- Would you like to live on or off campus?
- What do you think will be the biggest challenge if you decide to move away?
- What do you think will be the biggest difference between school and college?
- What would you expect the first three weeks to be like?



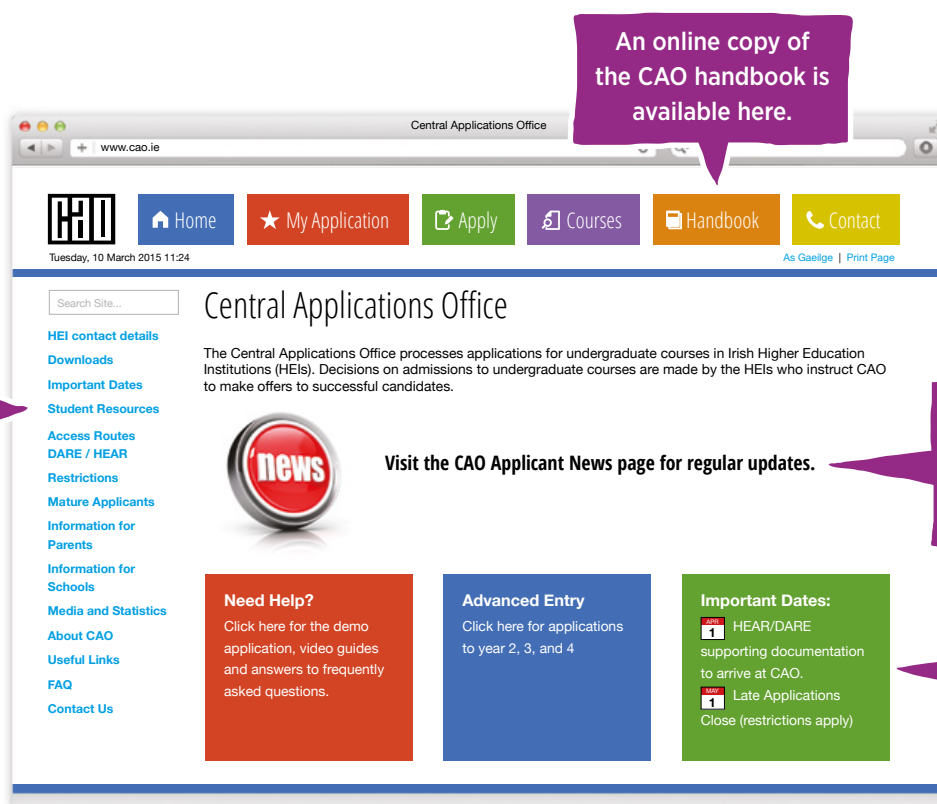
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

CAO

The Central Applications Office (CAO) is responsible for processing applications and recording acceptances for all publicly funded higher-education institutions and private colleges accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI, www.qqi.ie).

You can apply to the CAO either on paper or through the online application system at www.cao.ie. Because most applications are made online, this guide focuses on the online application process. (For information on paper applications, see the CAO website.)

The CAO handbook is distributed to schools in September and contains information on all of the courses, restrictions, deadlines, fees and application guidelines. The *General Information* section of the handbook is very detailed and informative. The CAO website contains excellent demonstration videos and guidelines. You can download a CAO app to smartphones, and the app is free on iTunes and Google Play Store. Your son or daughter should look at all these resources before filling in the online application. See below for a screenshot of the CAO homepage.



An online copy of the CAO handbook is available here.

Visit the 'Student Resources' section for video guides and useful resources, including the 'Demo Application' facility.

Check out the CAO 'Applicant News' page for regular updates.

Watch this space for important dates.

CAO Website

CAO TIMELINE

The following diagram gives an overview of the CAO timeline and application process. This is based on a standard online application.

- 1 5 November to 1 February**
Complete CAO application form online

Restricted courses must be included at this stage

Online applicants receive initial acknowledgement email

- 2 5 February to 1 March**
Confirmation of application record

1 MARCH
Late Application Form Opens

- 3 1 March**
Online closing date
DARE/HEAR application

1 April
Latest date for CAO to receive
supporting documents for
DARE/HEAR application

1 FEBRUARY
Online Application Closes

5 NOVEMBER
Online Application Opens

- 4 End of May**
All applicants
receive statement
of application

1 MAY
Closing Date for
Late Applications

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS

5

5 May to 1 July

Online change of mind facility opens

Add, remove or amend order of CAO course choices

Cannot add restricted courses

1 JULY

Online Change of Mind Closes

Online applicants receive acknowledgement email confirming amended course choice list

Round 1 offers issued mid-August

Round 2 offers issued late August, early September

Later offers issued October

Offer Notice

No offer and second statement of application received

Accept

Defer

Available and vacant places facility opens mid-August

Online applicants receive email of acknowledgement

CAO APPLICATION FORM

The Leaving Certificate year is a busy and demanding time for students so it is very important that your son or daughter plans their application well before the **CAO closing date of 1 February**. You can support them by occasionally checking that their application is on schedule.

Before they fill in the CAO application, encourage your son or daughter to:

- **REVIEW** course entries in the CAO handbook; consult the CAO website;
- **CONFIRM** and check all personal information;
- **NOTE** any restrictions that may apply, such as early application dates and supporting information they may need to submit, or further assessment requirements, such as interview, audition or portfolio;
- **CHECK** the CAO handbook for submission dates and all supporting information needed for DARE/HEAR access routes (if this applies) – see the additional access routes section for details;
- **TAKE NOTE** of specific course requirements and make sure they meet them; and
- **PRINT OUT** the applicant checklist and use it as they fill in their application.

Between the Level 8 (honours bachelor's degree) and Level 7/6 (ordinary bachelor's degree and higher certificate) categories, your son or daughter can enter a total of 20 courses (10 in each category) on the CAO application form. It is very important that your son or daughter completes both lists in order of preference.

Every year there are students who fill in only a small number of options or leave the Level 7/6 list entirely blank. Bearing in mind that Level 7/6 courses can lead to Level 8 courses, it is important that your son or daughter fills in all 20 options to increase their chances of an offer in their preferred area of study. For example, if your son or daughter is interested in Level 8 business courses, they should also put down business-related courses in the Level 7/6 list.

In summary, when filling in the CAO application form, encourage your son or daughter to:

- **LIST** all courses in genuine order of preference; *and*
- **MAKE** an entry under **ALL** course choice options to give themselves the widest possible set of options and to cover all eventualities.

Once they have filled in the CAO application form, encourage your son or daughter to:

- **MAKE A NOTE** of their CAO application number, which appears when the application has been submitted (they will need this number to log into their online application account using the 'My Application' facility and must quote it in all their communications with the CAO);
- **KEEP TRACK** of all relevant deadlines and important CAO correspondence;
- **CREATE** a CAO file and store all information safely;
- **CHECK** all letters and emails from the CAO and tell the CAO about any errors or omissions using the 'Contact Us' form on the website;
- **RETURN** acceptance notices on time; and
- **CONSULT** the CAO handbook or contact the CAO direct at **www.cao.ie** or on 091 509800 if they are in doubt at any stage of the process.

PRIVATE COLLEGES

Your son or daughter should also consider the wide range of third-level courses on offer from private colleges. You can apply through the CAO for most courses offered by private colleges but direct entry to some courses is also possible. Advise your son or daughter to contact the relevant college for information about the application process. They should do this well in advance of the CAO deadline.

Most colleges offer courses ranging from higher certificate to honours degree level and leading to awards from QQI. The Higher Education Colleges Association website www.heca.ie is a good source of information on most independent colleges in Ireland.

STUDYING ABROAD

Your son or daughter may want to study abroad. The main information source for third-level courses in the UK is www.ucas.com, while www.eunicas.ie and www.studyoverseas.com give an overview of international study opportunities and application processes.

POST-LEAVING CERTIFICATE (PLC) COURSES

There are other ways of gaining entry to higher education. Colleges of further education throughout Ireland offer Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. Students on PLC courses normally study eight modules over one year. Most PLC courses lead to a Level 5 certificate or a Level 6 higher certificate.

Many higher-education institutions have established links with colleges of further education, and there are opportunities for students to use a PLC to gain entry to third-level courses in many areas of study. Students who complete a PLC can apply through the CAO the following year and can ask that their PLC results be considered as well as their Leaving Certificate results.

It is important that your son or daughter applies for PLC courses at the same time that they fill in their CAO application as places on the most popular courses tend to fill up quickly. They must apply direct to the relevant college of further education. It is free to apply and the process is much simpler than the CAO application process.

OTHER WAYS OF GAINING ENTRY TO HIGHER EDUCATION



OTHER ACCESS ROUTES

ACCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If your son or daughter has a disability or specific learning difficulty, there is a scheme in place to help them to overcome any potential disadvantage. The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme offers places at reduced points to school leavers who have a disability or an illness and who have completed the Leaving Certificate. If your son or daughter wants to apply for the DARE scheme, they must apply to the CAO by 1 February but they can update their application with DARE details by 1 March.

The application process takes time, and they will have to provide documents to support their application. Most higher-education institutions offer advice to potential applicants. For more information on the scheme, go to www.accesscollege.ie. The DARE scheme is separate to the disability support services that will be available to your son or daughter at their college.

ACCESS FOR STUDENTS FROM SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS

Students whose families' economic circumstances (such as low income) make it difficult for the student to attend college can use the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme.

The HEAR scheme offers places on reduced points and provides extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who have completed the Leaving Certificate. If your son or daughter wants to apply for the HEAR scheme, they must apply to the CAO by 1 February but they can update their application with HEAR details by 1 March. The application process takes time, and your son or daughter will have to provide documents to support their application.

Most higher- education institutions offer advice to potential applicants. For more information on the scheme, go to www.accesscollege.ie.

Bear in mind that the purpose of HEAR is to support students who are at a long-term educational disadvantage. Short-term financial issues can be dealt with by applying to the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grants awarding authority. The HEAR scheme is separate to the access support services that will be available to your son or daughter at their college.

WHAT IF THEY DON'T GET THE COURSE THEY WANT?

APPLYING FOR AVAILABLE OR VACANT PLACES

Sometimes there are available or vacant places on courses after all offers have been made through the CAO. The institutions will advertise these places on the CAO website from mid-August. The 'Available/Vacant Places' facility is open to new applicants, existing applicants and applicants who have already received an offer. Applicants can ignore the points that were published in earlier offer rounds but must check that they meet the normal minimum entry requirements.

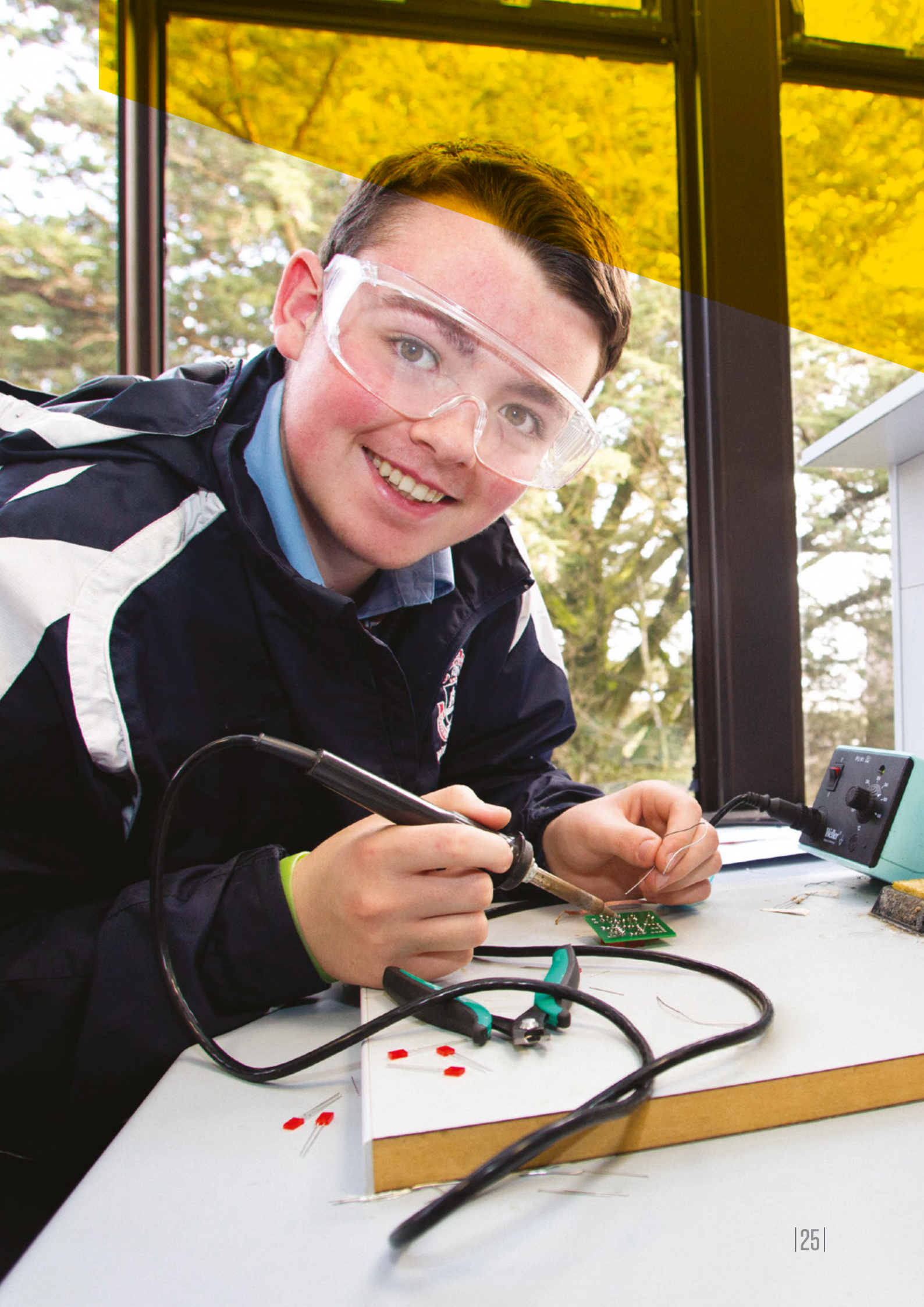
If your son or daughter has not received an offer or has received an offer they are not happy with, they can apply for a course through the 'Available/Vacant Places' facility. If they haven't already received an offer, they should place their chosen available or vacant course (or courses) in their genuine order of preference. If they have already received an offer but want to apply for one of the available or vacant courses, they must rank the new course higher in their order of preference than the course they have already been offered.

APPLYING FOR A GRADE RECHECK

If your son or daughter didn't do as well as expected in a particular subject, they can contact the school to see the exam script. It can be helpful if someone such as their subject teacher accompanies them to the school when they go to view the script. If they decide to get the script rechecked, they can apply online at www.examinations.ie. There is a charge for this.

The results of the rechecks are not normally available until mid-October. Note that many institutions begin their academic year at the start of September. If a recheck is successful and your son or daughter becomes eligible to be considered for an offer, it may not be practical for them to start the course at that stage. In these circumstances, the institution will allow them to postpone starting the course until the following year.

There is a very useful video guide to the CAO 'Available/Vacant Places' facility at www.cao.ie, which your son or daughter should watch before making any decisions on their application or on an existing CAO offer.





www.studentfinance.ie
GIVES AN EXCELLENT OVERVIEW OF
CRITERIA AND ELIGIBLE COURSES

FINANCING THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION

FEES AND CHARGES

FEES:

Most undergraduate students attending publicly funded third-level institutions do not have to pay tuition fees. To be eligible for free fees, they will have to meet certain criteria on course requirements, nationality, immigration status and residence. The www.studentfinance.ie website gives an excellent overview of the criteria and the eligible courses (including relevant PLC courses). Note that the 'free fees initiative' does not apply to courses in private colleges (even if they are listed on the CAO website).

STUDENT CONTRIBUTION CHARGE OR REGISTRATION FEE:

Most colleges charge an annual fee known as the 'student contribution charge' or 'registration fee'. The payment covers professional administrative and support services, including student registration, performance reports, examinations and results. All students who benefit from free fees will need to pay this charge unless they qualify for a grant. The charge varies from one institution to another. At the time of writing, the maximum student contribution charge was €2,750. However, this figure can change from year to year. In most cases, the contribution is paid in two instalments – the first is due before registration is complete and the second is usually due at the end of January.

Note that if you are paying the contribution charge for one child, you cannot claim tax back on it. However, if you are paying fees for more than one child in any one academic year, you are entitled to full tax relief (at 20%) on the contribution charge for each extra child.



STUDENT LEVY:

The 'student levy' is used to help develop and support clubs and societies and sport and recreational facilities on each campus. All undergraduate students must pay the levy, whether or not they receive a grant. The levy can vary from €0 to €230 (at the time of writing) depending on the institution, and in most cases you pay in full in one instalment. Students usually pay the levy as part of the registration process.

GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

STUDENT GRANT:

The state provides financial support to about 40% of third-level students. The main source of financial assistance is the student grant. There are two grants, the fees grant and the maintenance (living costs) grant. The level of grant awarded depends on a range of factors, including family and personal income and the distance between home and college.

Student grant applications are awarded by SUSI, the state's grant awarding authority. All applications for grants must be made through the SUSI website, www.susi.ie. Applicants must provide supporting documents with their application. The website has a very useful grant eligibility reckoner, which will give you some idea of whether your son or daughter is eligible for a grant.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING:

Many third-level institutions offer a range of scholarships to support students in their studies. Many of these scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic performance in the Leaving Certificate (normally 500+ points). Institutions also offer scholarships to attract elite sporting or artistic talent. The scholarships often include both financial funding and free access to specialist services and facilities. For elite athletes, for example, this could mean coaching, nutrition or physio services and access to state-of-the-art sports facilities.

Many companies and individuals award scholarships or cash prizes based on academic performance in a particular year or in a particular subject.

Some scholarships fund all four years of a student's course. Students from DEIS schools are eligible for bursaries on the basis of their Leaving Certificate results, and the Department of Education and Skills offers scholarships to students who complete their Leaving Certificate in Irish. These scholarships are awarded on the basis of Leaving Certificate results. The JP McManus Scholarship Scheme funds 100 scholarships each year to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, again based on Leaving Certificate results.

While there is no central source of information on scholarships and bursaries in Ireland, www.studentfinance.ie is a good source of information. Also, each institution's website includes a section that gives details on scholarships and prizes specific to that college.

The www.european-funding-guide.eu site is a useful database which you can search for third-level funding opportunities.

Further funding opportunities are available to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities and students from minority ethnic groups. See www.studentfinance.ie for details.

**“SOME SCHOLARSHIPS
FUND ALL FOUR YEARS OF A
STUDENT'S COURSE.”**



ERASMUS+ FUNDING

Under the Erasmus+ Student Mobility programme, your son or daughter can study in a university within the European Union (and also in Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey) for a period of 3 to 12 months as part of their degree course. (This may be compulsory or optional depending on the course.) They can also do a work placement for 2 to 12 months as part of their course.

The Erasmus+ programme provides a grant to help with the costs of this period abroad. The grant is intended to be a contribution to the cost of living abroad and should not be seen as something that will cover the full costs. The Erasmus+ grant does not affect any other grant funding that your son or daughter may have. Students with disabilities can apply for a specific further grant under Erasmus+.

WORK PLACEMENT

Some higher-education institutions include a work-placement programme as a formal part of the course. In many instances (although not all), students are paid for their placement.

CALCULATING THE COST OF LIVING

GENERAL COSTS:

Apart from the costs of the student contribution and student levy, you will have to consider and budget for a range of cost-of-living expenses. This is the case even when your son or daughter plans to live at home. Lifestyle, budget and spending habits will influence the overall cost of an individual student's education experience. However, most students will run up costs for travel, textbooks, computers, equipment, printing, food, clothes, phone, health insurance, medical and dental services and socialising.

ACCOMMODATION:

If your son or daughter will be living away from home, the cost of accommodation will be a significant part of their budget. The cost of accommodation depends on a number of factors. Generally speaking, it is cheaper to live off campus in a house or apartment shared with other students than it is to live in on-campus accommodation. However, many first-year students prefer to live on campus because they are closer to lecture theatres, labs, the library, sports facilities and social events. Also, living on or close to campus can help students to settle in to college life sooner than if they were living further from the campus. (Note that booking for on-campus accommodation usually opens in February or March of the Leaving Certificate year, and there are waiting lists by April or May.)

The cost of sharing a house or apartment with other students will depend on factors such as distance from the institution, whether a room is en suite, and the availability of parking. For all forms of accommodation, read the terms of the lease closely. In particular, check the length of the lease and whether utility bills (electricity, gas, water charges and so on), TV and internet costs and parking costs are included in the rent. Location is a huge factor: Dublin tends to be the most expensive location for accommodation.

SAMPLE BUDGET:

Every year the Irish League of Credit Unions publishes estimates of student costs for one academic year (nine months) in Ireland. The Citizens Information Board (www.citizensinformation.ie) provides information on the costs and charges for third-level education, while the Irish Council for International Students (www.icosirl.ie) provides 'cost of living guides' for students in Cork, Dublin, Galway and Limerick.

The following is a guide to the cost of living for a student in Ireland in 2014/2015. However, expenses vary and depend on factors such as the location and type of accommodation, eligibility for grant or scholarship funding and individual student spending.

**“LIVING ON OR CLOSE TO CAMPUS
CAN HELP STUDENTS TO SETTLE IN TO
COLLEGE LIFE SOONER”**

| YEARLY EXPENSES | COSTS |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. Student contribution charge (see A below) | €3,000 |
| 2. Student levy (see B below) | €0 – €230 |
| 3. Security deposit for accommodation | €250 – €500 |
| 4. Textbooks and class materials (see C below) | €100 – €500 |
| 5. Laptop | €400 – €600 |
| 6. Bed linen and other items for accommodation | €100 – €500 |
| Yearly expenses (not including cost-of-living expenses): | €3,850 – €5,330 |

| MONTHLY EXPENSES (SEE D BELOW) | AVERAGE STUDENT SPEND |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Rent (if it applies) (see E below) | €250 – €450 |
| 2. Bills | €30 |
| 3. Food | €172 |
| 4. Travel | €60 |
| 5. Social life and general expenses | €120 |
| 6. Clothing | €40 |
| 7. Phone | €30 |
| Monthly cost-of-living expenses: | €702 – €902 |
| Approximate overall annual costs: | €10,000 – €13,000 |

NOTES

- A.** If you receive a grant, the student contribution charge is paid by SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland). (The figure of €3,000 given above is the charge for the 2015/2016 academic year.)
- B.** The student levy varies from one institution to another.
- C.** Class materials and equipment costs can vary greatly, particularly for students in the arts, sciences and catering. For more details, contact your course director.
- D.** Cost-of-living expenses are taken from the Credit Union 2014 Third Level Education Costs Survey and What's Left Tracker and from the Student Cost of Living Guide, DIT Campus Life 2014.
- E.** Rents and many other costs are cheaper for those living outside Dublin.
Source: www.daft.ie and Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB), www.prtb.ie.



RESOURCES

www.accesscollege.ie

This website provides details on the HEAR and DARE access routes to higher education.

www.campus.ie

This website provides information on college news and events and gives advice on student accommodation, study and money management.

www.cao.ie

The CAO website provides information on everything related to the CAO application process, including an online version of the handbook and video guides.

www.careersportal.ie

This website brings together a wide range of career-related information aimed at students, parents, guardians and guidance professionals.

www.cimaglobal.com

www.cpaireland.ie

www.accaglobal.com

www.charteredaccountants.ie

www.iti.ie

These websites provide information on how to become an accountant or tax adviser.

www.citizensinformation.ie

The Citizens Information Board website provides information on public services and entitlements in Ireland.

www.consumerhelp.ie

This website has an online budget planner, which you can use to work out what you are spending your money on and to compare that spending with your income.

www.creditunion.ie

The Credit Union of Ireland publishes the Third Level Education Costs Survey and What's Left Tracker, which gives details of household expenses and the cost of third-level education.

www.daft.ie

This property website lists rental property by area, property type, room, rent charges and availability dates.

www.dit.ie/campuslife/studentssupport/costoflivingguide

The DIT website has a student cost-of-living guide, which is an excellent resource on the cost of living for a student in Ireland.

www.eunicas.ie

EUNiCAS is an Independent European University application support service.

www.european-funding-guide.eu

This website is a useful database which you can search for third-level funding opportunities.

www.examinations.ie

The State Examinations Commission is responsible for developing and assessing the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations.

www.failteireland.ie

This is the official tourism trade website for Ireland. It provides up-to-date information on the Irish tourism sector.

www.garda.ie

This website provides information on how to become a garda.

www.gotocollege.ie

This website has a database of courses and provides information on career paths and preparing for college.

www.gradireland.ie

This website offers career advice and information on graduate jobs.

www.heca.ie

The Higher Education Colleges Association website is a good source of information on most independent colleges in Ireland.

www.icosirl.ie

This website provides information and advice on studying in Ireland and has an excellent resource on the cost of living in Ireland. It has information on how to make your budget stretch further when shopping and how to get discounts.

www.igc.ie

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors is the professional body representing over 1200 practitioners in second level schools, third level colleges, adult guidance services, private practice and in other settings. The IGC website contains useful guidance information for both parents and students.

www.kingsinns.ie

This website provides information on training for entry to the Irish Bar.

www.lawsociety.ie

The Law Society is the educational, representative and regulatory body for solicitors in Ireland.

www.military.ie

This website provides information on careers in the army, air corps and naval service.

www.nursingboard.ie

This website provides information on careers in nursing and midwifery.

www.onetonline.org

This website provides detailed descriptions of the world of work to help students when considering careers.

www.prtb.ie

This is the website of the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB).

www.qqi.ie

The Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) website provides information on programmes, awards, providers and foreign qualification recognition.

www.qualifax.ie

This website lists all courses on offer in Ireland.

www.science.ie

This website is for people of all ages who are interested in science. It brings together information on many areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in Ireland for students, parents and teachers.

www.steps.ie

This website provides information on the world of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and associated careers.

www.studentfinance.ie

This website has information on financial assistance schemes and maintenance grants available in Ireland, the Back to Education Allowance, the Millennium Partnership Fund and many other schemes.

www.studyoverseas.com

This website gives an overview of international study opportunities and application processes.

www.susi.ie

The SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) website is a comprehensive source of information on the student grant scheme and provides a handy step-by-step guide to eligibility and the grants process.

www.teachingcouncil.ie

The Teaching Council is the professional standards body for teaching. It promotes and regulates the profession of teaching in Ireland.

www.teagasc.ie

Teagasc is the agriculture and food development authority in Ireland. This website provides up-to-date information on the sector.

www.ucas.ie

This website helps students find out about and apply to higher-education institutions in the UK.

www.usi.ie

The Union of Students in Ireland website has a good section on accommodation and includes helpful checklists that you can print out and use. There is a range of documents on advice, landlords' rights and tenants' obligations, which you can download.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF HIGHER-EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN IRELAND

The following higher-education institutions offer courses that can be applied for through the CAO.

American College Dublin

www.amcd.ie

Athlone Institute of Technology

www.ait.ie

Carlow College

www.carlowcollege.ie

Church of Ireland College of Education (Dublin)

www.cice.ie

College of Computer Training (Dublin)

www.cct.ie

Cork Institute of Technology

www.cit.ie

Dorset College (Dublin)

www.dorset-college.ie

Dublin Business School

www.dbs.ie

Dublin City University

www.dcu.ie

Dublin Institute of Technology

www.dit.ie

Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology

www.iadt.ie

Dundalk Institute of Technology

www.dkit.ie

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

www.gmit.ie

Grafton College of Management Sciences (Dublin)

www.graftoncollege.ie

Griffith College Cork

www.griffith.ie

Griffith College Dublin

www.griffith.ie

Griffith College Limerick

www.griffith.ie

IBAT College Dublin

www.ibat.ie

ICD Business School (Dublin)

www.icd.ie

Independent Colleges Dublin

www.independentcolleges.ie

Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown

www.itb.ie

Institute of Technology, Carlow

www.itcarlow.ie

Institute of Technology, Sligo

www.itsligo.ie

Institute of Technology, Tallaght

www.ittallaght.ie

LIST OF HIGHER-EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN IRELAND

Institute of Technology, Tralee

www.ittralee.ie

Irish College of Humanities and Applied
Sciences (Limerick)

www.ichas.ie

Letterkenny Institute of Technology

www.lyit.ie

Limerick Institute of Technology

www.lit.ie

Limerick Institute of Technology
(Tipperary campus)

www.lit.ie/tipperary

Marion Institute of Education (Dublin)

www.mie.ie

Mary Immaculate College (Limerick)

www.micul.ie

Mater Dei Institute of Education (Dublin)

www.materdei.ie

Maynooth University

www.maynoothuniversity.ie

National College of Art and Design (Dublin)

www.ncad.ie

National College of Ireland (Dublin)

www.ncirl.ie

National University of Ireland, Galway

www.nuigalway.ie

Pontifical University (Maynooth)

www.maynoothcollege.ie

Portobello Institute (Dublin)

www.portobelloinstitute.ie

Respond! College (Dublin)

www.respond.ie

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (Dublin)

www.rcsi.ie

Shannon College of Hotel Management

www.shannoncollege.com

St Nicholas Montessori College Ireland (Dublin)

www.snmci.ie

St Patrick's College (Dublin)

www.spd.dcu.ie

Trinity College Dublin

www.tcd.ie

University College Cork

www.ucc.ie

University College Dublin

www.ucd.ie

University of Limerick

www.ul.ie

Waterford Institute of Technology

www.wit.ie



AIMING
HIGHER

APPENDIX 2: CAO TIMETABLE OF ACTIVITIES

The CAO has a full timeline on all activities at www.cao.ie.

| Date | Deadline |
|---------------------|---|
| 5 November: 12 noon | Online application facility opens |
| 20 January: 5.15 pm | Deadline for discounted online application fee |
| 31 January: 5.15 pm | 'Change of course choices' closes |
| 1 February: 5.15 pm | Closing date for online and paper applications |
| 5 February: 12 noon | Online facility to amend course choices opens |
| 15 February | 'Statement of course choices' sent to paper applicants only |
| 1 March: 5.15 pm | Closing date for amending course choices |
| 1 March: 5.15 pm | Closing date for filling in DARE/HEAR forms |
| 1 April: 5.15 pm | Latest date for DARE/HEAR documents to be received by CAO |
| 1 May: 5.15 pm | Closing date for late applications |
| 5 May: 12 noon | Online 'change of mind' facility becomes available |
| 15 May | 'Statement of course choices' sent to late paper applicants |
| End of May | 'Statement of application record' sent to all applicants |
| 1 July: 5.15 pm | 'Change of mind' facility closes |

Source:

Based on The CAO: A guide for parents and guardians
(<http://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/CAOparentsguide.pdf>)

