

CAO AND FURTHER EDUCATION

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OVERVIEW:

1. The application process to third level HEI – **CAO**
2. CAO Offer Process explained
3. **HEAR** and **DARE** schemes
4. **SUSI** – student grant
5. Colleges of Further Education (**PLC, FETAC**)
6. Traineeships and Apprenticeships (**SOLAS, FETCH**)
7. New Tertiary Degrees (introduced in 2023)



OPTIONS AFTER THE LEAVING CERT

- Third Level Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Ireland – **CAO**
- UK Colleges – **UCAS**
- Study abroad European Colleges – **EUNICAS**
- Post Leaving Certificate Courses - **FETAC**
- Training / Apprenticeships - **SOLAS**
- Direct to Employment
- New Tertiary Degrees
- Defence Forces – www.military.ie
- Gardaí – www.publicjobs.ie
- Gap year



CAO - Before making an application

- Examine the CAO handbook in detail - now available online. Digital CAO handbook is updated weekly
- Look at the various HEI prospectuses
- College websites
- Career websites – CareersPortal and Qualifax
- College open days
- Social media
- People



APPLICATION PROCESS

- Applicants are now required to apply online
- Interactive demo available on the CAO website
- Step by Step instructions
- Pay by credit / debit card / bank giro
- Receive CAO number and save your password



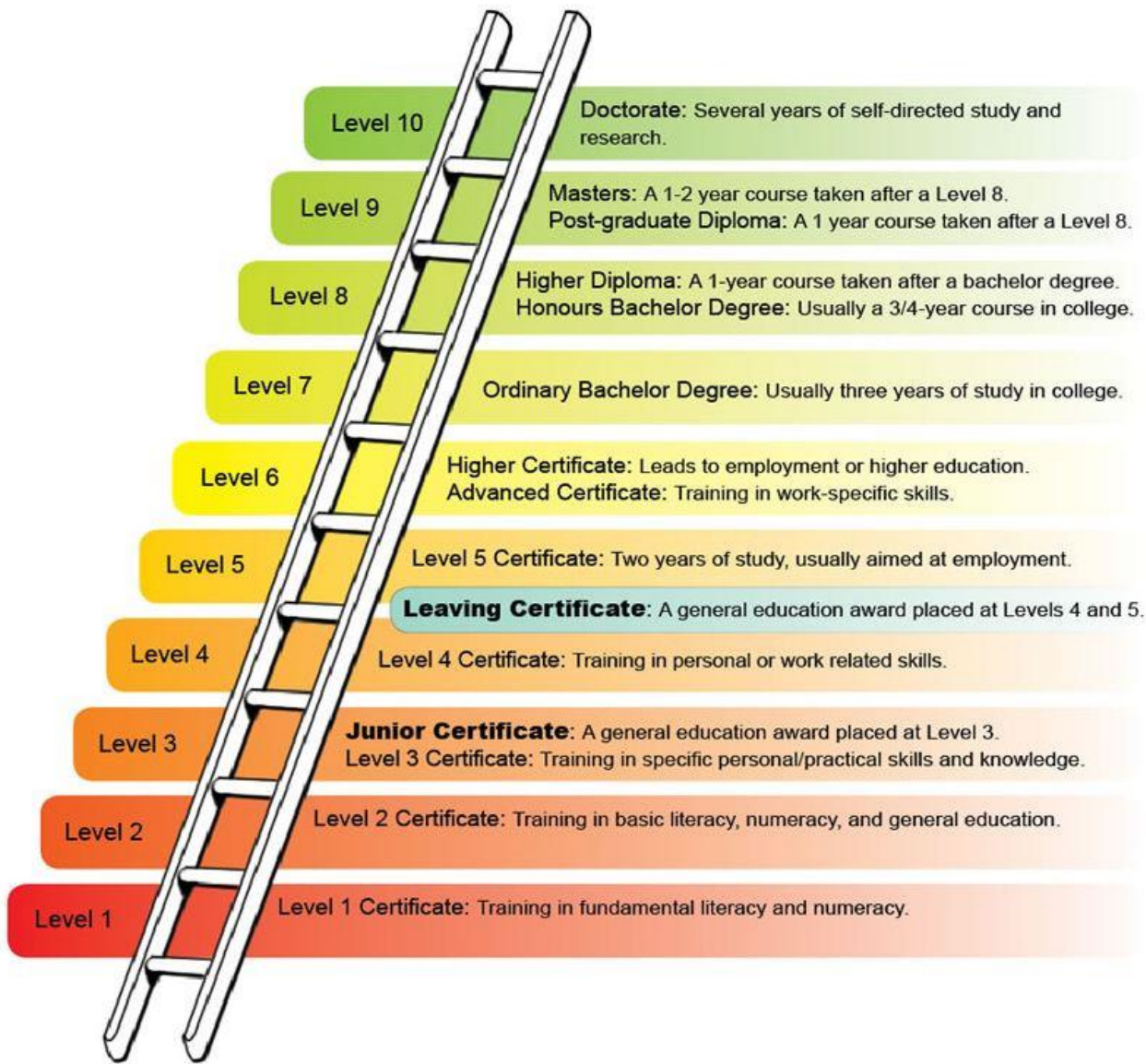
CAO FORM

- Personal Details
- Qualifications and Assessments
- HEAR
- DARE
- 3rd language / Irish exemption
- Maintenance grant - SUSI
- Course Preference List



CAO CHOICES

- Two lists
 - Level 8 courses
 - Level 6/7 courses
- Use online handbook for entering the course codes
- Can include up to 20 courses – fully researched



CAO CHOICES EXAMPLE

| Level 8 |
|---------|
| CK101 |
| DC201 |
| DN021 |
| TR064 |
| GY100 |
| DC115 |
| DT413 |
| DT366 |
| GY870 |
| GY900 |

| Level 7/6 |
|-----------|
| BN003 |
| TA102 |
| TA340 |
| NC101 |
| DT315 |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |



CHOICES

- Best practice - complete course lists in genuine order of preference
- You do not have to fill out all 20 choices
- You do not have to fill out both lists
- Each list is independent of the other. You can be offered choices from both lists but can **only choose one** when / if offered
- N.B. – Care must be taken with courses marked ‘**Restricted which cannot be applied for after February 1st**’ due to early assessments like H-Pat, auditions, interviews, portfolio – See CAO Online Handbook



COMPLETING GENUINE ORDER OF PREFERENCE

Sophie's Level 8 list

| | Level 8 | |
|-----|----------|--|
| 429 | 1. GY515 | General Nursing - University of Galway |
| 341 | 2. AU690 | General Nursing - ATU (Mayo) |
| 390 | 3. TR091 | General Nursing - Trinity |
| 273 | 4. AU691 | Psychiatric Nursing – ATU (Mayo) |
| 335 | 5. TR095 | Mental Health Nursing - Trinity |
| 400 | 6. GY301 | General Science - NUIG |
| | 7. | |
| | 8. | |
| | 9. | |
| | 10. | |

GENUINE ORDER OF PREFERENCE

- You must place courses in genuine order of preference
- Your first choice is the course you want to do most
- You should not list in order of last year's points
- You need to keep at least “one dead cert” in your choices





COMPLETING ORDER OF PREFERENCE

Sophie achieved 415 points in her LC

| Level 8 | | |
|---------|----------|--|
| 429 | 1. GY515 | General Nursing - University of Galway |
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| | 10. | |



THE CAO OFFER PROCESS

- Applicants must meet the **Minimum Entry Requirements** for the Level 6, 7 or 8 course
- Applicants must meet **the Specific Course Requirements** – subject and grade
- Applicants are ranked according to academic achievement for each course they applied for
- If it is a **restricted** course applicants must meet the requirements in the interview or portfolio or performance
- **Points** are allocated to the **6** best grades of an applicant in any one sitting



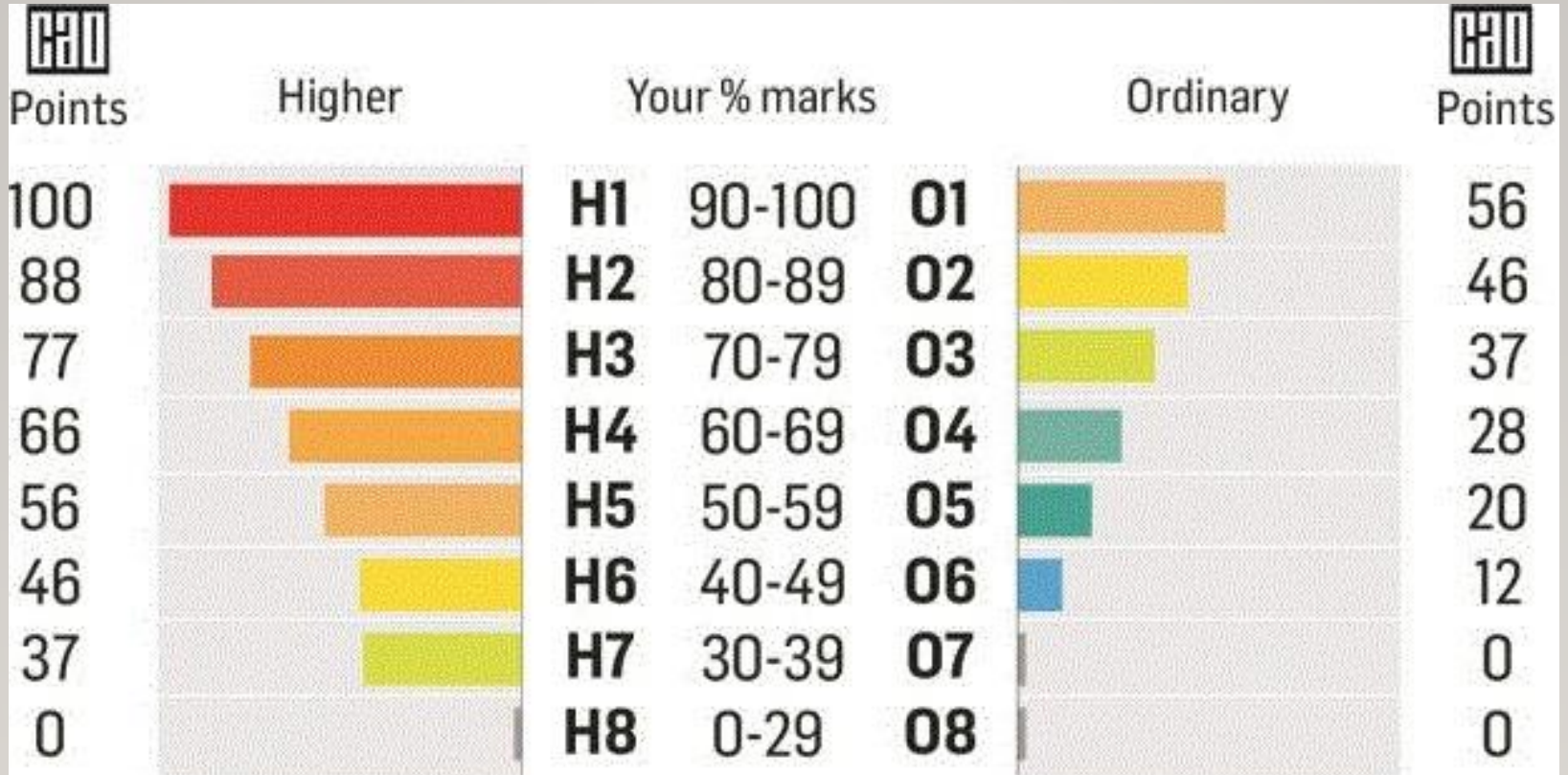
MINIMUM ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- Level 8 Courses = 2 H5 and 4 O6/H7 to include Maths, English/Irish and/or 3rd language
- Level 7 Courses = 5 O6/H7 to include Maths and English/Irish
- Different colleges have different entry requirements
- Language exemption



EXAMPLES OF **SPECIFIC** COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Primary Teaching → **H4 Irish**
- Engineering → **H4 Maths**
 - **Special Maths exam**
- Veterinary Medicine → **H5 Chemistry plus at least 60 hours practical experience relevant to animal handling**
- Nursing → **a Laboratory Science Subject**
- Dentistry Trinity → **H3 and a H4 in two: Physics, Chemistry, Biology or Physics/Chemistry**




+25 Bonus points for H1-H6 maths

LCVP link modules

 Distinction 66

 Merit 46

 Pass 28



POINTS

The points for any given course will depend on:

- the **volume** of applications for that year
- the **number of places** the college can accommodate
- the **examination performance of the applicants** in that year



REMEMBER

Genuine Order of Preference

[Order of Preference Info sheet](#)



GUIDELINES TO COURSE SELECTION

- If unsure:
 - Consider a general course
 - Do a Higher Certificate (L6) and progress through QQI ladder system (L7-L8)
 - Look carefully at specific entry requirements as they often reflect course content and carefully examine the module information
 - Make a CAO application, but consider a deferral
 - Do a PLC course
 - Take time out and gain work experience



CHANGE OF MIND FACILITY

- Statement of record goes out the end of May - respond to all correspondence from the CAO
- Change of Mind facility opens the 5th of May and closes the 1st of July 2025
- Applicants may add, remove or change the order of courses
- Restricted courses cannot be introduced at this stage*



COMMON ERRORS

- Not enough research into courses
- Listing courses in order of points instead of genuine preference
- Underestimating / overestimating Leaving Certificate results
- Targeting low point courses in hope of getting a college place
- Targeting Level 8 courses only and ignoring Level 7 & 6 courses thereby Ladder of Opportunity
- Not considering courses outside certain geographic areas



KEY DATES

- **20th Jan 2025** Early application €30
- **1st Feb 2025** Normal application €45
- **1st March 2025** Complete HEAR / DARE forms
- **15th March 2025** Supporting documentation
- **March / April** – interviews / portfolios
- **End of May** – Statement of application record
- **Early May to July 1st** Change of mind facility (FREE)



ACCESS ROUTES TO EDUCATION

HEAR (Higher Education Access Route)

- A college and university scheme which offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are resident in the Republic of Ireland

DARE (Disability Access Route to Education)

- A third level alternative admissions scheme for school-leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education.

Application Information and Support

accesscollege.ie



HEAR | HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS ROUTE

- Colleges offer a variety of personal, social and academic support
- Places offered on reduced points - compete with other DARE/HEAR eligible applicants
- Check [accesscollege.ie](https://www.accesscollege.ie) for eligibility indicators and information on the application process – must meet 3
- Complete all elements of the **HEAR** Application form on [cao.ie](https://www.cao.ie) by March 1st
- Submit copies of supporting documents to CAO office by March 15th



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- DARE is a third level alternative admissions scheme for school leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education
 - Check [accesscollege.ie](https://www.accesscollege.ie) for eligibility indicators and information on the application process
 - Fill in the Supplementary Information Form (SIF) at www.cao.ie by March 1st
 - Complete your Educational Impact Statement with your school
 - Gather your Evidence of Disability documentation and submit by March 15th



3rd language exemption

- It is the applicant's responsibility to inform the colleges they are applying to that they have a language exemption
- If applying for NUI courses the student must complete the exemption form **online** shortly after creating a CAO account. Must complete the application in one sitting, so be prepared and have required documents ready to upload
- NUI, Trinity and UL all have their own application processes



STUDENT MAINTENANCE GRANTS

- Student Universal Support Ireland (**SUSI**)
- Use the Eligibility Reckoner to determine if you should apply
- Apply online when the system opens for 2025
- More information - studentfinance.ie



H-PAT Information

- HPAT-Ireland 2025 - designed to assess logical reasoning and problem solving skills as well as non-verbal reasoning and the ability to understand the thoughts, behaviour and/or intentions of people
- Registration is open now and will close on **17 January 2025 at 5pm**
- The test will be conducted online via remote proctoring and test takers will select a time and day that suits them to sit the test (Friday 14 February – Saturday 23 February 2025)
HPAT-Ireland is only conducted **once a year**, so this will be the only time you will be able to sit in 2025.



PLC COURSES – (CAO QQI LINK)

- Business
- Art / Design / Multimedia
- Beauty Therapy
- Insurance/Banking
- Travel / Tourism
- Social Care
- Science
- Law
- Nursing
- Computers



POST LEAVING CERT (PLC) COURSES

- Usually 5 O5 in the Leaving Cert and an interview
- PLC colleges in Galway: GTI, GCC
- Big variety of PLC/CFE Courses Post Leaving Certificate Courses on offer
- Recognised qualification
- Also may allow students to go onto Degree courses in colleges based on their performance (QQI link)
- Applications can be made directly to the PLC college



Tertiary Degrees

A new way to obtain an undergraduate degree at Level 7 or Level 8 - partnership between ETBs and HEIs

No tuition or student contribution fees

These new tertiary degrees are designed around gaps in the Irish job market

How to apply: nto.ie

Diverse Pathways:

- New tertiary programmes offer a new range of degree pathways for students.
- Catering to students' varying interests, aptitudes, and career aspirations.

Industry Alignment

- Aligning educational offerings with the needs of industries and the job market, to equip students with relevant skills, knowledge, and competencies that are in demand.

Flexibility and Lifelong Learning

- Tertiary programmes emphasise flexibility, recognizing that learning is a lifelong process.
- Lifelong learning opportunities enable individuals to upskill and reskill throughout their careers, adapting to changing industry demands.

Inclusive Education

- Tertiary programmes promote inclusivity by removing barriers to higher education, including financial assistance and support services for underrepresented and disadvantaged students. These initiatives help address educational inequalities and promote equal access to quality tertiary education.

Congratulations Graduate - A new route to a Degree outside the CAO system



No CAO points required
Open to all

1

Apply on NTO.ie

- 1 Find a course that interests you on NTO.ie
- 2 Check the requirements for the course
- 3 Hit the **Apply** Button

Easy Steps

2



- > Applications assessed
- > Eligible applicants interviewed
- > Places offered

3



Tertiary degree students are registered in their ETB and University for the duration of their course

4

- 1 Smaller class sizes in ETB
- 2 Use of university facilities
- 3 Access to clubs and societies
- 4 Step Back awards
- 5 ERASMUS and work placement options

Enjoy the benefits of being a student in both campuses

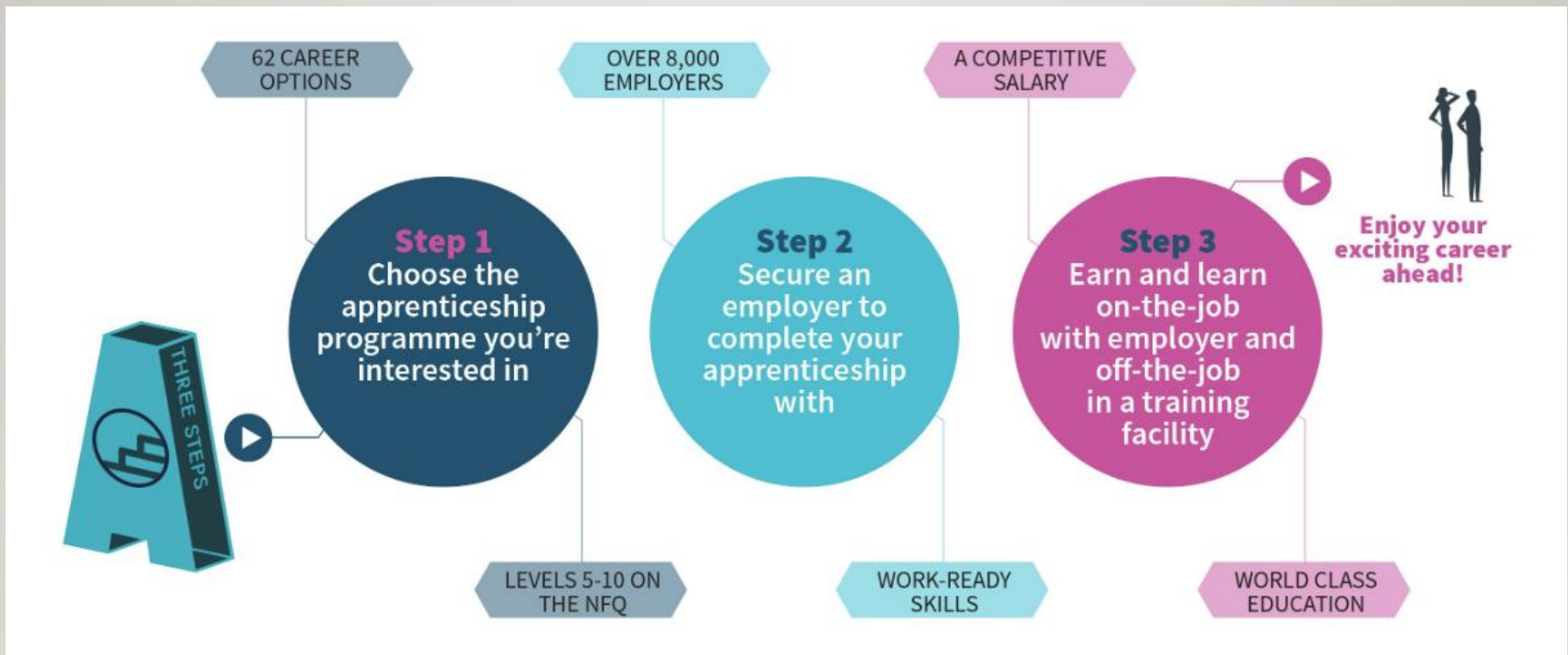
5



Graduate with a degree awarded by the university

6

APPRENTICESHIPS





Parental Support

- Looking at themselves: interests, skills, natural aptitudes, likes, dislikes, what motivates them, favourite subjects
- How do they like to learn
- Essential to look at detail of the course – modules, specific subject requirements, work placement, study abroad options, graduates, career path - resource on Google Classroom: Course Comparison template
- [CAO Guide for parents](#)

[Contact a HEI](#)[Downloads](#)[Mature Applicants](#)[QQI FET Applicants](#)[Advanced Entry](#)[Entry to Medicine](#)[Restrictions](#)[Media and Statistics](#)

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.



Supporting Documents

Instructions and answers to FAQs

[Applicants](#)[Parents / Guardians](#)[Guidance / Schools](#)[Access Routes
DARE / HEAR](#)[Further Education and
Training
& Apprenticeship](#)[Open Days](#)[Have a question?](#)[Important Dates](#)

Your role as a parent/guardian



Help your child to research their courses



Encourage your child to apply early



Make sure your child lists their courses in genuine order of preference



Watch out for important deadlines



Remind your child to review all CAO correspondence carefully



Accept offer online by the reply date

RESOURCES

- College websites
- Qualifax (Irish courses)
- UCAS (UK and Northern Ireland)
- Careers Portal
- CAO.ie
- [CAO Information sheets](#)
- Careersnews.ie
- HEAR and DARE – accesscollege.ie
- Student grant – susi.ie
- Solas.ie
- Fetch
- Podcasts
- Synergy careers
- Leaving Cert Guidance
- nto.ie

Enjoy the journey and do what's
right for you

