

Leaving Certificate and Beyond

Information for Parents
22 September 2026

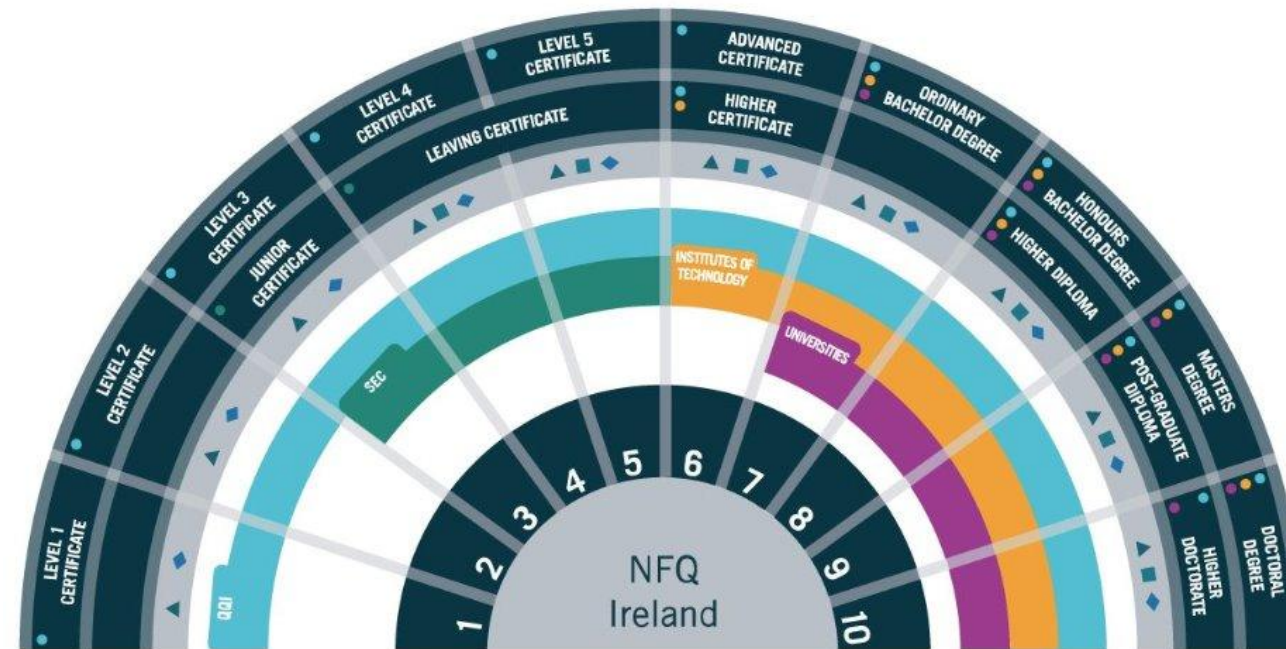


Discussion Points

- Qualifications- Leaving Certificate Points
- Third level options
- CAO- Dates
- Restricted Entry
- DARE and HEAR
- SUSI Grant
- Irish Exemptions
- UCAS
- FET/ PLC routes
- National Tertiary Office
- Apprenticeships
- Homework
- Quiz
- Questions!



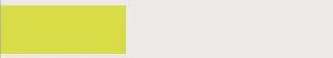
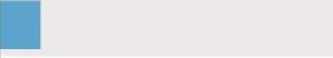
National Framework of Qualifications



LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATE	LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE	LEVEL 3 CERTIFICATE	LEVEL 4 CERTIFICATE	LEVEL 5 CERTIFICATE	ADVANCED CERTIFICATE	ORDINARY BACHELOR DEGREE	HONOURS BACHELOR DEGREE	MASTERS DEGREE	DOCTORAL DEGREE
		JUNIOR CERTIFICATE	LEAVING CERTIFICATE		HIGHER CERTIFICATE		HIGHER DIPLOMA	POST-GRADUATE DIPLOMA	HIGHER DOCTORATE
QUALITY AND QUALIFICATIONS IRELAND (QQI)		STATE EXAMINATIONS COMMISSION (SEC)		INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY		UNIVERSITIES			

Leaving Certificate Points

The advantage of sitting an honours exam paper is clear when you compare the allocated points in the table below. For example, an O1 (90% -100%) for an ordinary level paper is worth the same amount of CAO points as a H5 which is a grade falling between 50% - 59%.

 Points	Higher	Your % marks	Ordinary	 Points
100		H1 90-100	01 	56
88		H2 80-89	02 	46
77		H3 70-79	03 	37
66		H4 60-69	04 	28
56		H5 50-59	05 	20
46		H6 40-49	06 	12
37		H7 30-39	07	0
0		H8 0-29	08	0

+25 Bonus points for H1-H6 maths

LCVP link modules

 Distinction 66

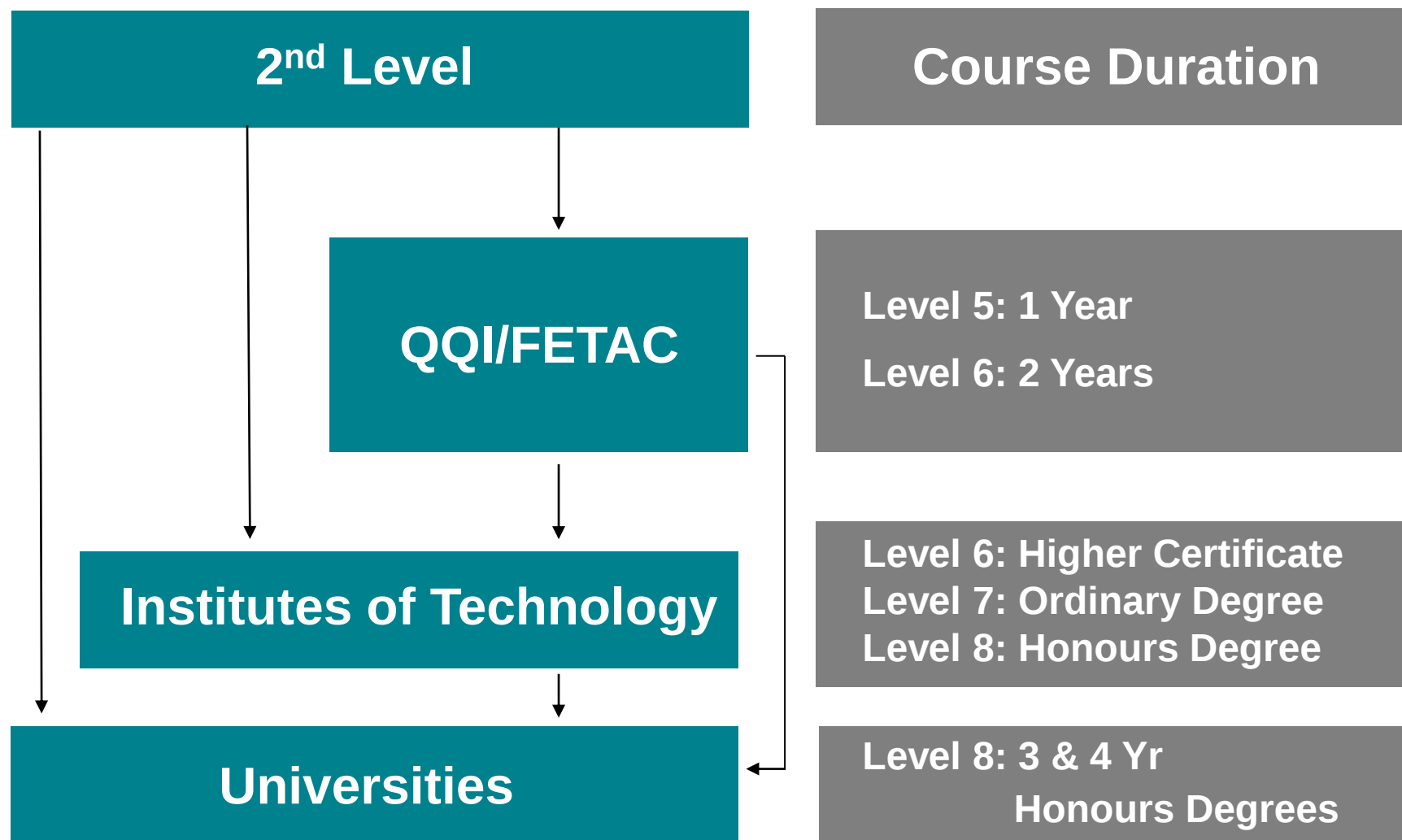
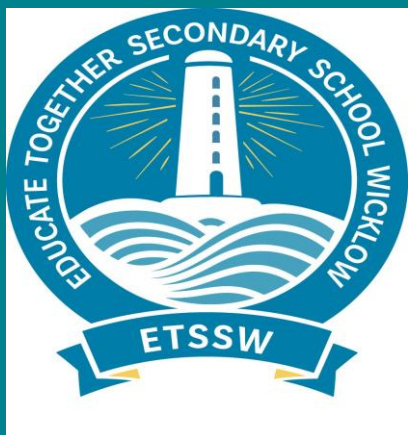
 Merit 46

 Pass 28

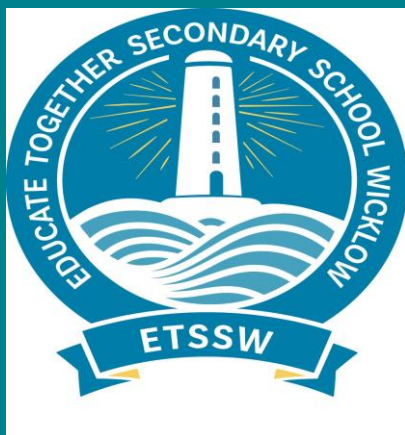
The CAO System

- **CAO = Central Applications Office**
- **Deals with applications to undergraduate courses in
Higher Education Institutions (HEI's)**
- **Deals with Offers and Acceptances**
- **Does not make decisions on places**
- **CAO WEBSITE: [PARENTS SECTION](#)**

Third Level Education In Ireland



Applying to the CAO



CAO

[Home](#)[My Application](#)[Apply](#)[Courses](#)[Handbook](#)[Contact](#)

Applicant's Personal Details

Surname

Other names

Title

(Mr, Ms, Mrs, etc.)

Date of Birth

dd	mm	yyyy
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Sex

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ I'd prefer not to say

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

As stated in the CAO Handbook, an applicant may only present one application in any one year (either online or paper). There will be no refunds given to applicants who make more than one application.

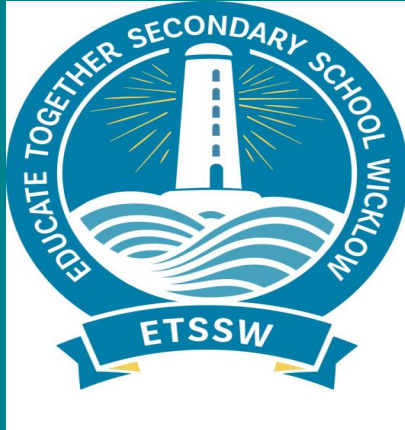
Home address

☒ Rep. of Ireland

☐ Other Country

Address Line 1

Applying to the CAO



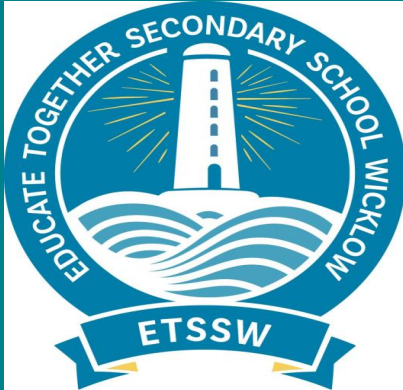
Qualifications & Assessment Summary :

Please tick the qualification/assessment section(s) that are relevant to you.

1. ☐ Irish Leaving Certificate Exams (1985-2023)
2. ☐ 2002-2023 QQI FET/FETAC Level 5/6 Exams
3. ☐ 2001 or earlier FETAC Level 5/6 (NCVA Level 2/3) Exams [Help?](#)
4. ☐ 2006-2023 GCE A/AS Levels/GCSE [Help?](#)
(England, Wales, Northern Ireland Exams, and International GCE/GCSE Exams under CAIE, PEARSON, AQA, OCR Boards)
5. ☐ Other School Leaving Exams [Help?](#)
(e.g. School Leaving Exams outside of UK & Ireland, Baccalaureate, Scottish Exams, pre-1985 Irish & UK exams, Leaving Cert Applied, Level 3 BTEC, GNVQs, VCEs, Irish Matric Exams, GCE/GCSE pre-2006, etc. - see help? link for further information)
6. ☐ Further Education [Help?](#)
(Any other Further Education courses that you have undertaken that do not fall into one of the other sections on this application form, e.g. City & Guild awards, FYS awards, BTEC level 4 or higher, Post-Leaving Certificate Courses (Republic of Ireland) etc.)
7. ☐ Third-Level Higher Education [Help?](#)
(required regardless of whether you passed, failed, or did not take examinations)
8. ☐ Mature Applicants [Help?](#)
(those 23 years of age on or before the 1st of January 2023)

Please note: You will be required to supply additional information about your upcoming examinations or existing qualifications when you log in to your CAO Account. In May, you will be instructed by e-mail to verify that all of your examination and account information is correct. Ignoring this e-mail could have very serious consequences for your application.

Applying to the CAO



Payment Options :

☐ Credit or Debit Card



☐ Fee Payment Form



(Republic of Ireland applicants only)

Terms & Conditions :

Create Account Password :

Account Password

Confirm Password

Your Account Password must be at least eight characters long.

Choose Courses in Genuine Order of Preference.

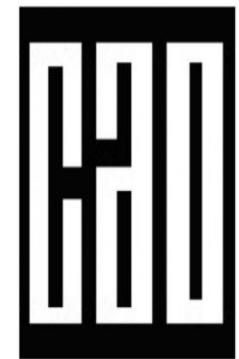
Level 8	Level 6/7
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
10	10

KEY DATES CAO

Please refer to the CAO website in case of any changes.

Application Facility Opens: November 5th, 2026 (at 12:00).

- **Application Closing Date:** February 1st, This is the standard closing date for n applicants and also the deadline to apply for the HEAR and DARE schemes.
- **HEAR/DARE Documentation Deadline:** MUST ARRIVE at CAO by 10th March 2027 (Have everything ready to go by mid FEBRUARY)
- **Late Application Facility Opens:** March 5th, 2027 (at 12:00).
- **Late Application Closing Date:** May 1st, 2027 (at 5:00 PM).
- **Change of Mind Facility Opens:** May 5th, 2027 (at 12:00).
- **Change of Mind Closes:** July 1st, 2027 (at 5:00 PM).



Restricted Entry

A course described as **Restricted Entry** means that as well as meeting the minimum entry requirements, and the required points, students also need to complete an additional form of assessment ranging from:

- Submitting a portfolio
- Participating in an audition
- Taking an exam
- Taking part in a health screening
- An interview

If you are applying for a Restricted Entry course with an additional entry component you need to look into what is required for the additional entry component and start to prepare for it.

For example- Students who wish to apply to Study Medicine after school need to start preparing to sit the HPAT exam. You will apply for the HPAT from November 2026. Entry will close in late January 2027 and you will sit the exam in February 2027

CAO Application Summary



Strict order of preference



Know what courses have Restricted Application (music, art)



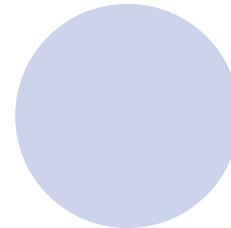
Study ALL preferences carefully



Check eligibility for all courses



Application deadlines and Change of mind



Check which are private fee paying colleges

DARE

**DISABILITY
ACCESS
ROUTE TO
EDUCATION**

DARE

(Disability Access Route to Education)

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

HEAR

**HIGHER
EDUCATION
ACCESS
ROUTE**

HEAR (Higher Education Access Route)

A third level admissions scheme for school leavers from long-term socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds

- **DARE isn't open yet, but if you might qualify, start checking it out now — it'll save you hassle later.**
- DARE provides **reduced-points places and supports** for school leavers whose disability has created additional challenges in second-level education. To be considered, students must **apply through the CAO by 1 February** and **declare DARE** on their form. They must also complete **Section A of the SIF by 1st March 2027**
- Eligible students typically receive a **10–15% points reduction**, though this varies by college. For example, TU Dublin applies an approximate **12.5% reduction**—a 320-point course may accept applicants with **280 points** under DARE. Colleges also reserve a **quota of places** each year.
- For details on available places, students should contact the **disability office** in individual colleges. Information on the DARE scheme is available here: [Access College](#)
- [DARE Disability Access Route to Education](#)
- NB DOWNLOAD HANDBOOK

- **The HEAR Scheme –** The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a higher education admissions scheme for Leaving Certificate students (under 23) whose economic or social backgrounds are under-represented in higher education. You must apply for HEAR on your CAO form by February 1st if you are eligible and complete the online HEAR application form by March 1st. You must submit supporting documents by post to the **CAO before March 10th**. More information on HEAR is available here
- [HEAR Higher Education Access Route](#)

Student Grant



SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) is Ireland's national awarding authority for all higher and further education grants.

SUSI offers funding to **eligible** students in approved full-time third-level education in Ireland and also, in some cases, funding for students studying outside the State

www.susi.ie

Application starts at the beginning of April

Important Information/ EXEMPTIONS

If a student has exemption from Irish and/or third language they must complete an **NUI Exemption Form** to ensure you meet the entry requirements of UCD, UCC, NUI Maynooth and Galway and other NUI Colleges.

Visit www.accesscollege.ie for further information

OR nuiexemptions.ie

*Applying to Trinity College please review the following information

[Application for Language Exemption - Study - Trinity College Dublin](#)

FET/ PLC Route

- FET/ PLC courses are a flexible option
 - Prepare students for the world of work
 - Stepping stone to transfer to 3rd level
 - Excellent route of accessing HEI's
- www.plccourses.ie
- [FET | Further Education and Training](#)
- **Apply directly to the college itself**

FET/ PLC Route

- Generally interview based (may have additional requirements / specific subjects)
- Interviews can begin as early as Feb – can still apply in Summer 2026
- Late applications after LC results
- [Gorey Institute of Further Education](#)



**FURTHER EDUCATION &
TRAINING COURSE HUB**

UCAS- Applying to University in the United Kingdom

- 5 choices only unlike CAO-different system- different process
- May –2026- Open for applications
- September 2026- Completed applications can be submitted
- 15th October 2026- is the **equal-consideration date** for Oxford, Cambridge, and most **medicine, dentistry, and veterinary** courses.
- 13th January- 2027- Equal consideration date for most courses
- Health care courses in Northern Ireland
- [Dates and deadlines for uni applications | UCAS](#)



National Tertiary Office (NTO)

- **NTO is The National Tertiary Office and it creates an alternative pathway from FE to Higher Education.**
- **Students start locally in FE college.**
- **They progress automatically to a partner university to finish a Level 7 or Level**

- **NO CAO Points** are required- Entry is based on meeting course specific requirements.
- Lower costs- Not tuition or student contribution fees while studying in FE
- Students get dual access to both campuses (libraries, supports, clubs)
- Programmes are co-designed by FE and HE to ensure smooth progression and full accreditation
- Website: Nto.ie

Apprenticeships

www.apprenticeship.ie

Check apprenticeship website for listings and application procedures.

- ✓ Construction
- ✓ Electrical
- ✓ Motor
- ✓ Engineering
- ✓ Finance
- ✓ Auctioneering
- ✓ Pharmaceuticals
- ✓ Hospitality

Many apprenticeships require a good standard of maths, though specific requirements vary by trade. **Some apprenticeships, particularly in construction, will list a minimum grade in Leaving Certificate Maths as an entry requirement.** For example, an Electrical apprenticeship often requires a pass in Leaving Certificate Maths, while plumbing and carpentry might expect a specific grade in Ordinary Level Maths.

HOMework FOR PARENTS

- Begin the research courses now- Look for apprenticeships
- CAO Opens first week in November – register and begin process. NB. Get your son/ daughter to use personal email not school email. Download the parents guide on CAO website.
- [Central Applications Office](#)
- Rank in order of **preference (include a range of points)**
- Are you eligible for HEAR / DARE? REFER TO HANDBOOKS and start gathering relevant documentation.
- Be aware of closing dates and deadlines REFER TO WEBSITES do not rely solely on these slides.
- Attend college open days
- PLC's: apply directly to the college from January

Important Dates

- CAO – Opens in November - apply by 1st Feb
- Hear / Dare : Indicate on CAO form **by** 1st Feb – complete online element by 1st March - all documentation by 10th March but ideally earlier
- PLC: Apply from January onwards
- Apprenticeships: Now!

Useful Websites

www.cao.ie – download the handbook

www.accesscollege.ie

www.plccourses.ie

www.susi.ie

www.careersportal.ie

www.qualifax.ie

www.apprenticeship.ie

[Information for school leavers 2025 small en \(1\) \(2\).pdf](#)

Quiz



Thank you for listening!

Any questions!

Email: Rachel.byrne@etsswicklow.ie

Additional Information

- Scholarships
- Studying in Europe

Scholarships

Scholarship schemes are available in most colleges for students of high academic or sporting abilities, etc. There are many different types of scholarships.

- A listing can be found here – <https://careersportal.ie/scholarships/index.php> or by putting the name of your preferred college and the word 'scholarship' into your browser.
- Different Scholarships will have varying deadlines and requirements so it is important to make yourself aware of these through the link above.

Study in Europe

- **Research by country:** Investigate the specific application process, deadlines, and entry requirements for your desired country and institution, as there is no single European application system.
- **Choose a course:** Select a program of study that aligns with your academic and career goals.
- **Check entry requirements:** Confirm you meet the academic prerequisites for the program.
- Links below will help you find out more information about this route
- https://careersportal.ie/ed_training/study_abroad_europe.php
- [https://eunicas.ie/#:~:text=Important%20Dates,for%20a%20handful%20of%20programmes\)](https://eunicas.ie/#:~:text=Important%20Dates,for%20a%20handful%20of%20programmes)