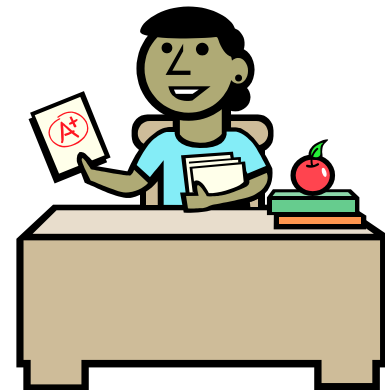
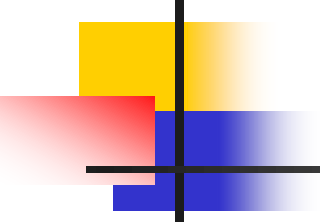


St Columba's College
**Careers Information
for
Leaving Certificate Parents
2026/2027**

Ms Eithne Sproule
Ms Catherine McNulty
Guidance Counsellors

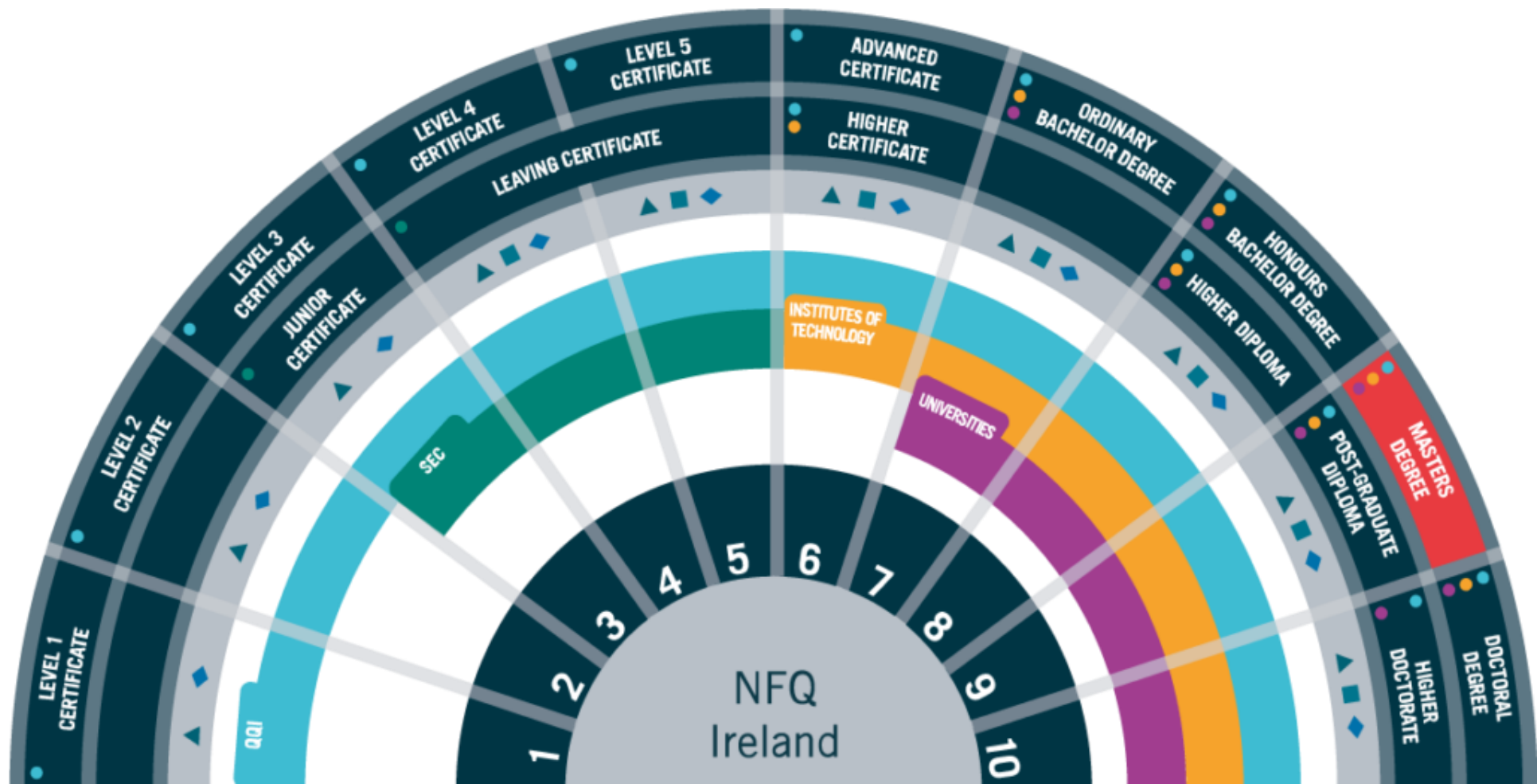


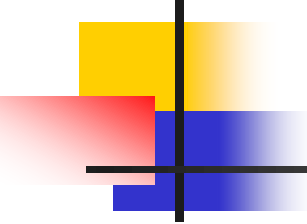


AGENDA

- SUSI Grant Process: Kathleen Browne
- RACE Overview: Ms. Holmes
- Options available after the Leaving Certificate
- The UCAS System
- The CAO system
- HEAR/DARE Access Programmes
- Scholarships

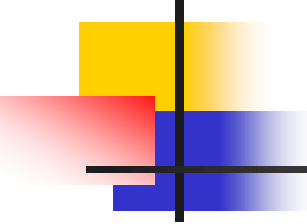
National Framework of Qualifications





Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Courses (FET)

- Short, practical courses designed to give you skills you'll need in the workplace.
- Also can be used to progress to 3rd Level Colleges
- Work placement included.
- Internationally recognised.
- Usually 1 year fulltime: QQI Level 5
- Second year: QQI Level 6
- A full QQI award is 8 modules and can be potentially worth 380/390 CAO points.
- Grant can be obtained.

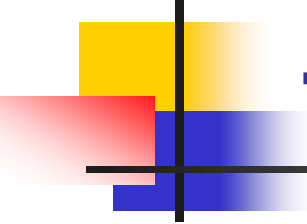


Local PLC providers

- Finn Valley College (3)
- Errigal College (3)
- Donegal College, Letterkenny
- Sligo College of Further Education (28)
- Cavan Institute (60)
- Monaghan Institute (50+)

Reasons for choosing to do a PLC.....some

- Age.....not ready to leave home
- Unsure about future career area
- To improve points total
- To try out a particular subject area before committing to college
- To gain access to college.....alternative pathway
- To gain valuable transferable skills
- To gain employment

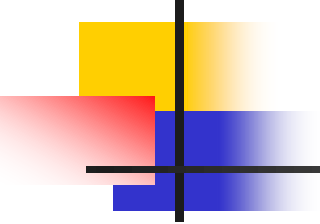


Traineeships (Donegal College)

- A programme of structured training which combines learning in the workplace and in an education/training setting.
- Up to 2 years in duration.
- Usually free except where participants have to buy their own equipment eg Beauty Therapy
- May receive a training allowance, travel allowance or accommodation allowance
- Start at various times of the year

Benefits:

- Develop cutting edge skills in the workplace
- Improve employability and career options
- May be a chance to try an industry and then continue training/education in that field



Apprenticeships (ETBs + Technological Universities)

- A full time training programme combining learning in the workplace and in an education/training facility
- Duration 2-4 years depending on trade/occupation
- Earn while you learn model- 7 phases on/off the job
- Phases 1,3,5 and 7 with Employer
- Phases 2,4 and 6 in Training Centre/Technological University
- Pro-rata fees must be paid if off-the-job training takes place in a Higher Education Institute eg ATU Donegal for Electrical
- Location of the training provider depends on trade/occupation
- No official application deadline or start dates

Benefits

- Gain skills, practical work experience and qualification while earning a wage.
- Valuable industry links/contacts.
- Internationally recognised

TOP TIP

Start looking for an employer now

Ask for Work Shadowing opportunities

ETB/SOLAS

Traineeships (Currently in Donegal College)

- Marine Engineering
- Beauty Therapist
- Hairdressing
- Business & Professional Admin.
- Public Works Operations & Maintenance (Donegal Co.Co.)
- Engineering (Welding & Fabrication)
- Healthcare Support
- Intellectual Disability Practice
- Outdoor Activity Instructor
- Horticulture
- Donegal Weaving
- Communication Systems Installation
- Medical/Legal Administration

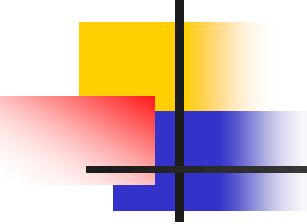
(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

To apply:

- www.fetchcourses.ie

Apprenticeships

- 80+ in the following fields:
- Construction
- Electrical
- Engineering
- Motor
- Finance
- Accounting
- Hospitality
- Healthcare
- ICT
- Insurance
- Logistics
- Biopharma
- Property Services
- www.cao.ie (link)
- www.apprenticeship.ie



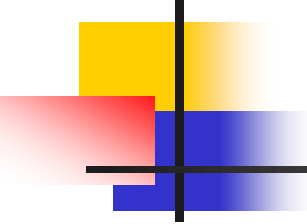
Tertiary Degrees (New)

- Alternative access to college places
- No points required
- Interview based selection process
- SUSI Grant available
- Start with a PLC course (Free)
- Then progress to University
- Donegal College and ATU offer:

--Level 5 Access Route into BSc Nursing (Year 1)

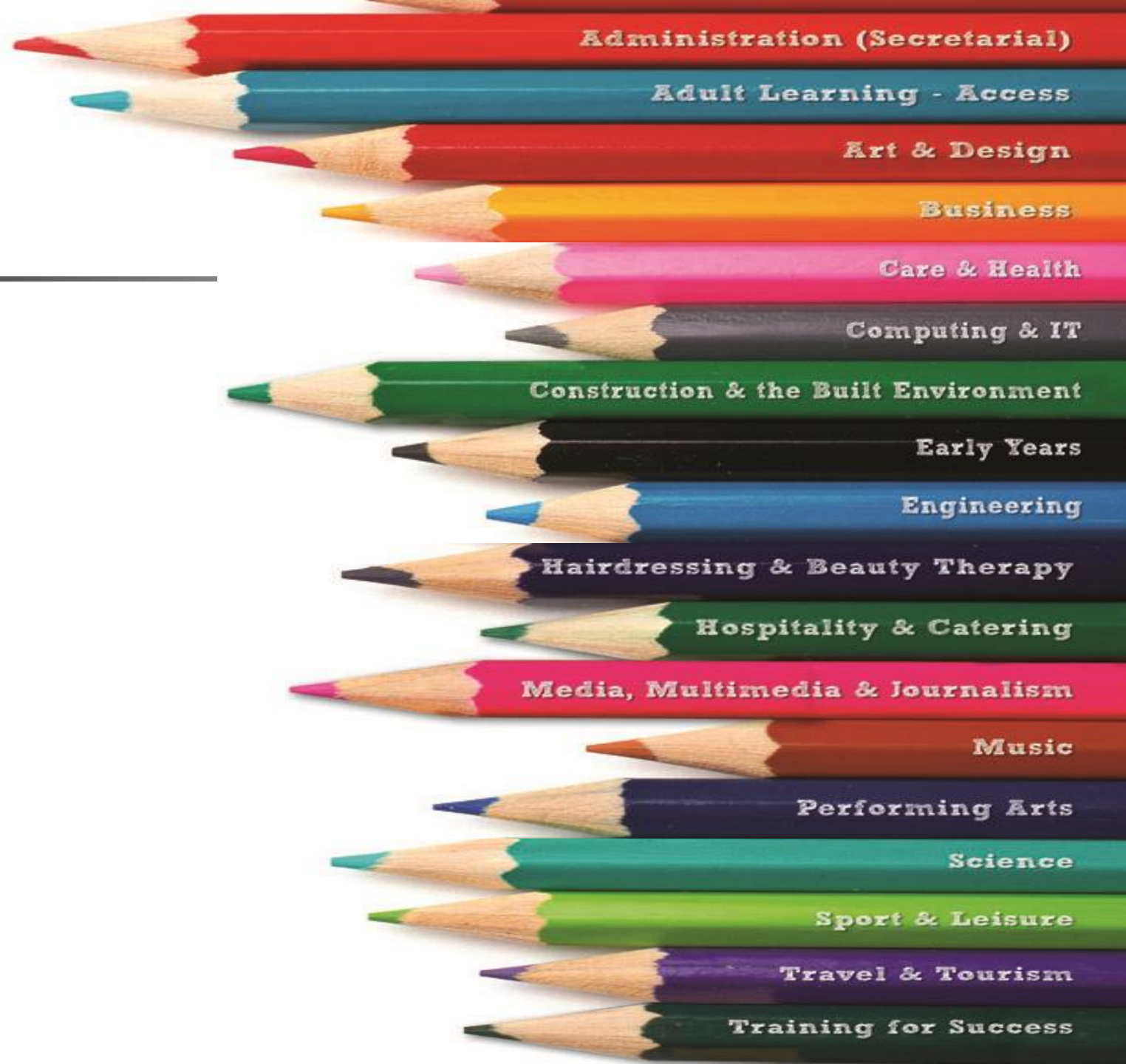
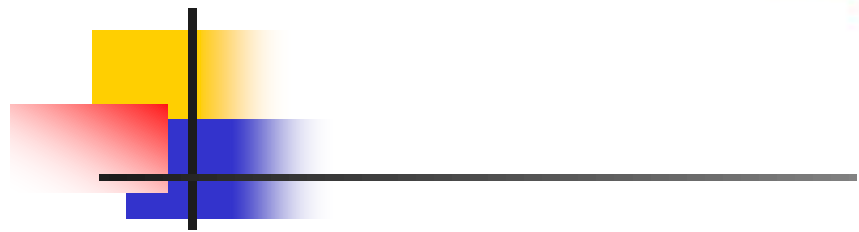
APPLY VIA www.nto.ie/courses

Other opportunities include OT (UCC and Cork/Kerry ETB), Primary Education (Mary I and Tipperary/Limerick/Clare ETB), Social Care Practice (ATU Sligo and Cavan/Monaghan ETB), Agricultural Science (UCD and Louth/Meath ETB) and many more.



North West Regional College (Derry, Limavady, Strabane)

- Online Direct Application to college itself (Small number of courses apply through UCAS)
- 18 different subject areas
- Level 1, 2, Level 3, Level 4, Level 5 Higher National Diploma/Foundation Degrees (Add 2 for equivalent NFQ level)
- Work placement and continuous assessment
- No fees for Level 2,3.....but therefore no grant
- Level 4,5 HND/Foundation Degree £2,500....SUSI Maintenance grant available. Deposit £200.
- Can be a route to Employment / University
- Very useful as an alternative entry route for some high demand/points courses eg Physio, OT, Nursing, PE teaching.....
- Art & Design(one year) very popular as pathway to studying Art at University
- Traineeships and Apprenticeships NI (Employer must be in N.I.)
- Entry Requirements for Level 3: 4 Ordinary level 05s or above
Level 4,5: UCAS Tariff Points



Administration (Secretarial)

Adult Learning - Access

Art & Design

Business

Care & Health

Computing & IT

Construction & the Built Environment

Early Years

Engineering

Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy

Hospitality & Catering

Media, Multimedia & Journalism

Music

Performing Arts

Science

Sport & Leisure

Travel & Tourism

Training for Success

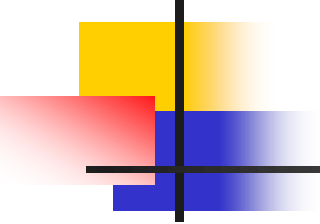
Teagasc Courses

- Equine
- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Pig Production
- Poultry Production
- Horticulture
- Food
- Machinery



Courses available from Level 5-Level 8 in partnership with Technological Universities

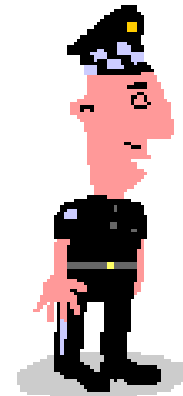
Some courses are offered through CAO and some are applied for direct to the Agricultural College. Eg Ballyhaise



GARDA

Entry requirements

- Must be 18-50 years of age
- 5 O6s in Leaving Certificate or a Merit/Distinction in Leaving Certificate Applied
- Hold an NFQ minimum Level 5 qualification
- Be proficient in English *OR* Irish *OR* Both
- www.garda.ie
- www.publicjobs.ie



Defence Forces

Careers in the Defence Forces include-

- Cadetship in: Army, Navy & Air Corps

Min Entry Req: Age 18-26

3 H5s and

3 O6/H6

(incl. Maths, Irish, English, 3rd language)

- Apprenticeships:

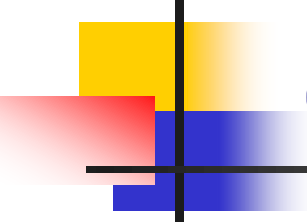
Aircraft Mechanic

Fitter/Armourer

Heavy Vehicle Mechanic

- Recruits (age 18-29)





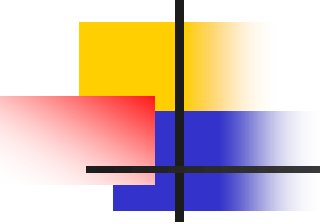
Options after LCA (Leaving Cert Applied)

LCA students are eligible to apply for all of the previously mentioned options:

- PLC courses (Tertiary Degrees)
- Traineeships
- Apprenticeships
- NWRC Level 1,2 and 3 courses
- Garda
- Defence forces (Recruits/Apprenticeships)
- Teagasc L5 courses

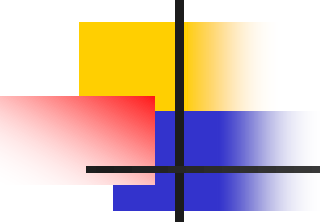
In order to progress to a Higher Education Institute, they must first successfully complete a PLC (QQI Level 5) course

ATU Letterkenny also offer an Access Course suitable for LCA students



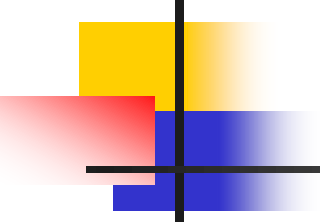
UCAS

- Application System for all Universities in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland & Wales
- Queens University Belfast.
- Ulster University (Magee Derry, Coleraine, Belfast)
- DOES NOT INCLUDE
North West Regional College
St. Mary's, Belfast
(Direct Application)



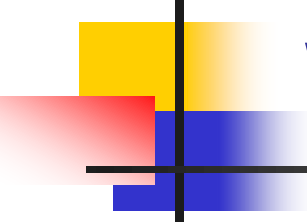
UCAS Application On-line

- Personal details
- Up to 5 choices (in no particular order of preference)
- Employment details– paid only
- Educational details – J.C. results, L. C. subjects and levels.
- Important to check Entry Requirements (JC and LC)
- Personal statement (Very important)
- Predicted grades from teachers and entered by GC
- Reference done by Guidance Counsellor
- Cost of application £34.50



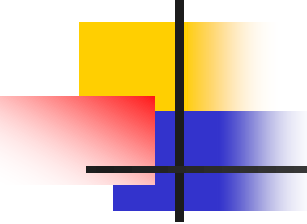
Important dates for UCAS

- **13th January 2027**- Closing date for UCAS applications. (15th Oct 2026 for Medicine, Veterinary, Dentistry, Oxford, Cambridge)
- However we endeavour to have all applications completed by December and will give students a deadline for their first draft of Personal Statement (Oct Mid-term)
- After application has been submitted, Universities and Colleges begin sending decisions to applicants.



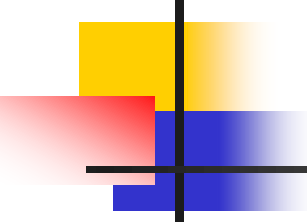
What happens your application?

- All colleges you have applied to will receive a copy of your application (same personal statement).
- Students are able to check on their application through their Hub on the UCAS website.
- Students may be called for interviews/asked to write essays etc. (Important to check e-mails regularly)
- Medicine/Dentistry: In person interview if selected
- Nursing in UU: Applicants will sit an Assessment Test (MSAT) New
- Nursing in QUB: In person Interview
- Allied Healthcare (UU): Applicants will sit an Assessment Test (MSAT)
- Paramedics and Social Work in UU: in person interview
- Dietetics in UU: Interview
- Competency based Pharmacy interviews for Ulster and QUB in person
- Some other courses: Interview eg Biomedical Science in UU this year



Offers and Acceptances

- A response will be received from each college applied to, saying whether the applicant has been successful or not – the date of replies will vary.
- Offers are **conditional** (there will be certain grades/UCAS tariff points required)
- Only when you have received all replies back, do you have to decide which course you will keep as your Firm choice (no. 1) and which one as your Insurance choice (back-up). Any other offers you are holding must be declined.
- If the applicant obtains the Conditions (required grades/tariff points) in the Leaving Cert, they will be awarded their place
- This is very motivational for students before they sit their exams



Fees for ROI Students

Northern Ireland: £4,985

England: £9,790

Wales: £9,790

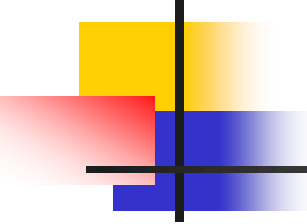
Scotland: £9,790

No fees: Nursing, Paramedic Science & Allied Healthcare courses in Northern Ireland (NHS funded)

****Student Loan option****

International Students/Rest of EU: £16,000

NB: Reminder that the SUSI grant does NOT cover UK fees. Maintenance only.



CAO Agenda

- General points regarding the CAO.
- Entry Requirements and the Points System.
- Making an application.
- How places are allocated by CAO
- After submitting the application.

CAO – General Info.

- Centralised application system for 41 Irish 3rd level institutions, including some **fee-paying** colleges.
- CAO handbook is online at www.cao.ie
- Every 6th year will be given the opportunity to register in class in November (Choices not essential at this stage)
- **HIGHLY ADVISE THAT THEY TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO AVOID COSTLY MISTAKES**
- **Early discounted price €35 (before JAN 20th)**

Online Application	Fee	Payment Method
Normal (Feb 1 st)	€50	Credit/Laser Card
Late(May 1 st)	€65	Credit/Laser Card
Change of Mind	No Fee	---

CAO – General Info.

- There are now 3 types of courses students can apply for under the National Framework of Qualifications.
- These are applied for on 2 separate lists:

Level 6 & 7 Courses

Ordinary Degrees (7) Higher Certificates (6)
Up to 10 Course Choices

Level 8 Courses

Honours Degrees (8)
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 must be applied for before February 1st due to extra assessments required eg Portfolio/Audition
- Eg. Music (Audition), Art (Portfolio).

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

These must be satisfied before “points” are considered.

Minimum Entry Requirements

E.g. University of Galway
Bachelor of Arts

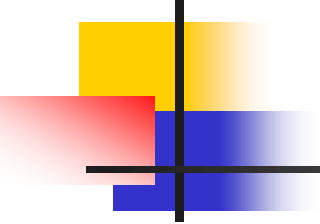
- Present 6 subjects
- At least 2 H5s and 4 O6/H7
- Pass in:
 - ✓ Irish
 - ✓ English
 - ✓ A third Language
 - ✓ 3 other subjects

Specific Subject Requirements

Eg.

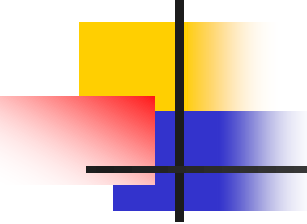
- Engineering(UCD)
Minimum H4 Maths and H6 in a Lab. Science
- Veterinary Medicine(UCD)
H5 Chemistry
- Global Business -French (DCU)
H4 French

If all Entry Requirements are met → applicant is deemed 'Qualified' to apply.



NUI Language Exemption

- Any student born outside of the Republic of Ireland can apply for an exemption from presenting Irish as a requirement to NUI colleges (UG, UCD, RCSI, Maynooth, UCC)
- Therefore, any of these students who do study Irish at St. Columba's, can then use Irish to meet the 3rd language requirement for certain courses
- Students with dyslexia and other Specific Learning Disabilities can also apply for Irish and 3rd language exemptions
- Simple online application

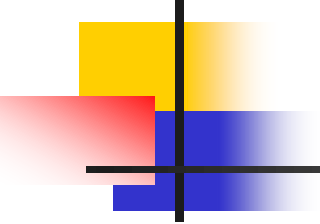


Points System

Generally in the CAO system there are more qualified applicants than there are course places, therefore a selection system is needed.

Selection system used in Irish 3rd Level Colleges is the POINTS SYSTEM

- Points are calculated from **ONE** sitting of the Leaving Certificate only.
- Points total is calculated from **SIX** best subjects (any six incl. LCVP))
- Entry Requirements can be satisfied over more than one sitting of the Leaving Certificate. Eg. Repeat a single subject and combine it with previous years points in order to be eligible to apply
- NOTE: If applying for Medicine, both points and requirements must be from same year



POINTS ALLOCATION

<u>Marks</u>		<u>H</u>		<u>O</u>
90-100	H1	100	O1	56
80-89	H2	88	O2	46
70-79	H3	77	O3	37
60-69	H4	66	O4	28
50-59	H5	56	O5	20
40-49	H6	46	O6	12
30-39	H7	37	O7	0
0-29	H8	0	O8	0

LCVP Points

Distinction 66

Merit 46

Pass 28

25 Bonus Points for Higher Maths if Grade is H6 or higher

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

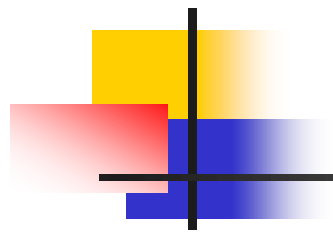
Science – Maynooth
100 places to be offered

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

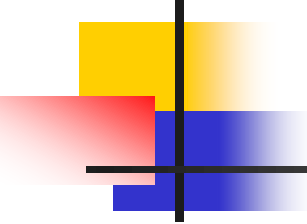
← Random
Selection to
be used

Course Cut Off Points = 335*

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



1 Dream
2
3
4
5 Realistic
6
7
8
9 Bankers
10



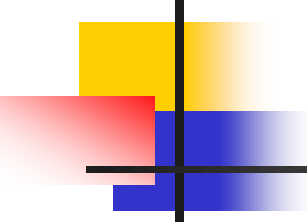
Order of Preference

- **NB**

- Applicants must place their course choices in genuine order of preference.
- Number 1 must be the course they want most
- Number 2 should be the course they would do if they did not get their first choice.
- And so on down the list.

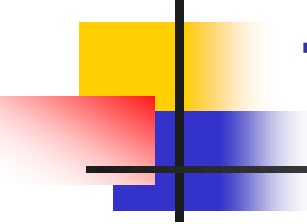
- On Offers Day, the applicant will be get the course highest on their list, that they have enough points for.
- All choices below the one offered will then be deleted.

- **NB**



After making Application

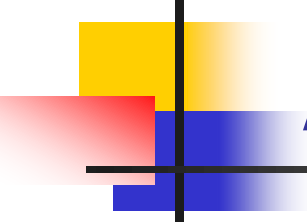
- Some students may have extra assessments eg Portfolio, Assessment Test, Audition, Interview, HPAT etc
- May:Receive Statement of Application Record – check details carefully online...**TICK BOX TO INDICATE YOU HAVE DONE SO**
- Change of Mind facility becomes available(Early May)
- Final closing date for entering choices **JULY 1st**
- Leaving Certificate Results are sent to CAO (August)
- Places are allocated and offered online.
- Students accept, reject or defer offered places.
- Further rounds of offers are made until all course places are filled.



Timeline for August (Approx)

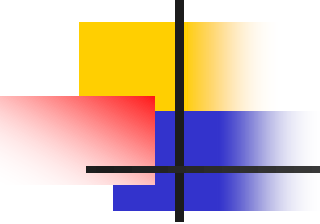
- Mid-Late August: Results issued by SEC
- 4-5 days later: Offers from CAO & UCAS

Between Registration, Accommodation, Induction, Subsequent CAO offers.....this is a very busy time!



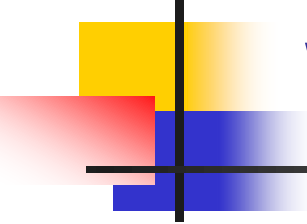
Access Routes to Higher Education

- HEAR
- DARE
- DCU Access Programme



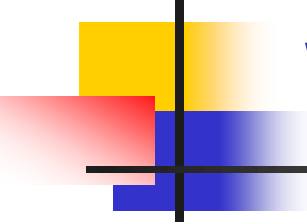
HEAR

- Higher Education Access Route
- A 3rd level admissions scheme for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who have completed the leaving certificate



What colleges participate?

- DCU
- TU Dublin
- University of Galway
- Maynooth University
- TCD
- UCC
- UCD
- UL
- RCSI
- Marino Institute of Education
- Mary I. College, Limerick
- ATU (All campuses)
- TUS
- Dundalk I.T.
- MTU
- TUS
- NCAD
- National College of Ireland
- IADT, Dun Laoghaire
- SETU

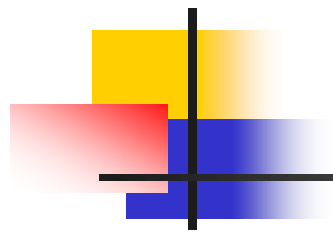


What are the benefits of applying?

- Students who apply for the HEAR programme compete for a number of **reduced-point places** in each of the participating colleges.

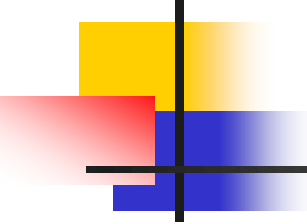
Other benefits include Post-Entry support such as:

- Personal support: Student advisor, mentoring, social gatherings
- Academic support: Extra tuition, study skills, exams preparation
- Orientation Programme to introduce you to the college
- Financial: Bursary when available, advice regarding grants/scholarships



N.B.

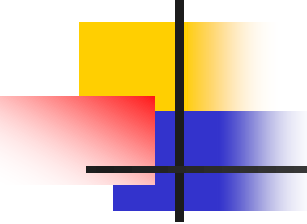
You must still meet the minimum course entry requirements to be considered for one of the reduced point places



HEAR indicators: Should I apply?

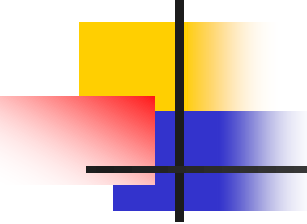
1. Income **2025** (€58,470 €64,080 €69,465) Add €4785 for each sibling/parent doing a full-time course
2. Medical Card/ G.P. Visit Card (Valid to Dec 2026)
3. Means Tested Social Welfare Payment (2025 min 26 weeks)
4. Area profile-concentrated disadvantage (High unemployment & poverty, only a small proportion of adults attained 3rd level education)
5. DEIS school (**Not Applicable to St. Columba's**)
6. HEAR Priority Group (Care-Experienced, Member of Traveller Community, Member of the Roma Community, Young Parent, HEAR & DARE Eligible Applicant)

Applicants must meet No.1 plus a minimum score of 2.5 to be eligible for HEAR



Scoring System

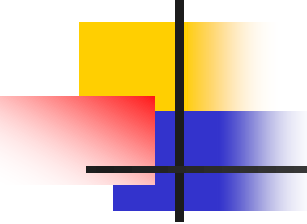
- Medical Card
 - Yes=1 No=0
- Means tested Social Welfare
 - Yes=2 No=0
- Area
 - Extremely/very disadvantaged=2.5
 - Disadvantaged =1.5
 - Marginally below average or higher=0
 - Experienced homelessness=2.5
- Maximum Achievable Points (for St. Columba's)
 - 5.5



Priority Applicants

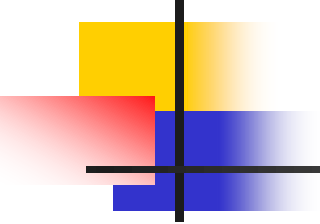
<u>Priority Group</u>	<u>Score</u>
Care Experienced	7
Traveller Community	7
Roma Community	7
Young Parent	7

These applicants are automatically deemed eligible and will compete for reduced point places through CAO.



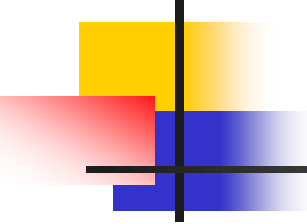
Eligibility Scores for HEAR

SCORE	ELIGIBILITY	
5.5 - 7	HEAR Priority (Applicant competes for reduced points offer via CAO and is prioritised for offers)	
2.5 - 5	HEAR Eligible but not HEAR priority status	
2 or lower CAO offers	Not eligible for HEAR, but still considered	for



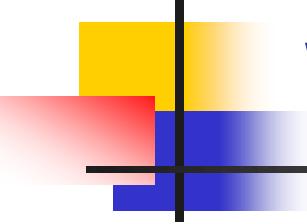
HEAR Timeline

- FEB 1st 2027: Apply to CAO
- MAR 1st 2027: Complete HEAR application
- March 10th 2027: Submission of additional documents eg. Social Welfare document/P21
- **VERY STRICT DEADLINES**



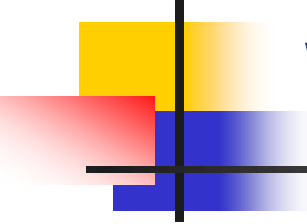
DARE

- Disability Access Route to Education
- DARE is a college admissions scheme which offers college places on reduced points to school leavers whose disability has negatively impacted their learning & educational experience during secondary school.



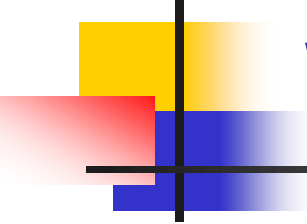
What colleges participate?

- ATU (All campuses)
- TUS
- MTU
- SETU
- TU Dublin
- University of Galway
- Maynooth University
- Pontifical University,
Maynooth
- Marino Institute of Ed.
- DCU
- Nat. College of Ireland
- R.C.S.I.
- TCD
- UCC
- UCD
- University of Limerick
- Mary Imm.
- Dundalk I.T.
- I.A.D.T.
- NCAD



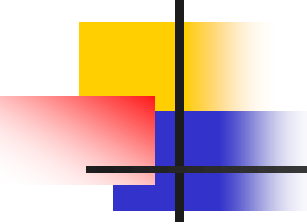
Who should apply?

- School leavers who have the ability to benefit from and succeed in higher education but who may not be able to get the points for their preferred course due to the impact of a disability/illness/challenge.



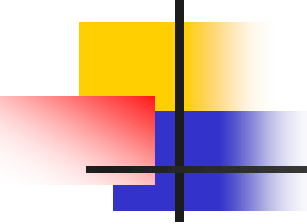
What disabilities are eligible?

- ASD including Asperger's Syndrome)
- ADD/ADHD
- Blind/Vision impaired
- Deaf/Hearing impaired
- Developmental Communication Disorder(DCD)-Dyspraxia
- Dyslexia/Significant Literacy Difficulties
- Dyscalculia/Significant Numeracy Difficulties
- Significant Ongoing Illness (such as Cystic Fibrosis, Diabetes)
- Mental Health Conditions(such as depression, severe anxiety and schizophrenia)
- Neurological Conditions(incl. Epilepsy & brain injury)
- Speech & Language Communication Disorder
- Physical Disability(significant mobility difficulties)



Priority Applicants

- Research has identified that students with **physical** and **sensory** (Blind/vision impaired or Deaf/Hard of Hearing) disabilities are particularly under-represented in higher education in Ireland relative to all students with disabilities
- Therefore, the colleges have agreed to prioritise these two groups when allocating reduced point places.

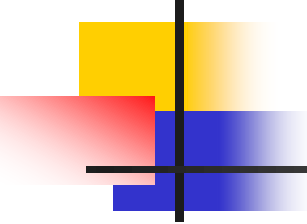


Meeting DARE's Educational Impact criteria

- Has your disability/condition impacted you in a combination of the following indicators:
 1. Have you received intervention /supports in school?
 2. Has your attendance/completion of full days been impacted?
 3. Has it affected your school experience and wellbeing?
 4. Has it impacted on your learning or exam results?
 5. Has it caused any other educational impact?
 6. For applicants with Dyslexia or Dyscalculia: is it severely impacting on your literacy or numeracy scores (at/below 10th percentile)?(Scores must be from after Feb 1st 2025)

Applicants with Dyslexia/Significant Literacy Difficulties or Dyscalculia/Significant Numeracy Difficulties must meet **Indicator 6 plus one other**.

All other applicants must meet **any combination of 2 indicators from 1-5**.

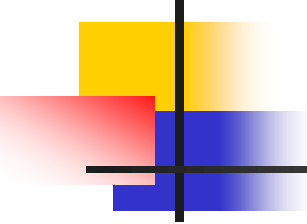


How to apply?

Feb 1st: Apply for CAO

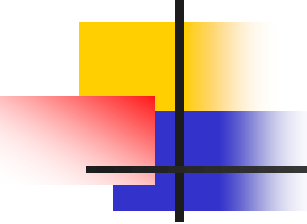
Mar 1st: Complete online Supplementary Information Form.
Indicate that you wish to be considered for DARE.

March 10th: Return completed Educational Impact Statement
and completed Evidence of Disability Form



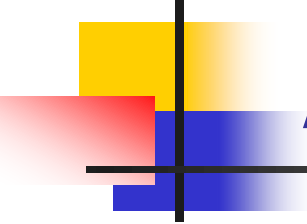
CAO Timetable 2027 Entry

- **1st February, 2027**
 - Closing date for receipt of normal applications
- **1st May, 2027**
 - Closing date for receipt of late applications
- **Before/By 31st May, 2027**
 - Receive Statement of Application Record **CHECK**
- **5th May, 2027**
 - Online change of mind facility becomes available.
- **1st July, 2027**
 - Latest date for receipt of change of mind form in CAO.
- **Late August, 2027**
 - Expected date of first round offers.



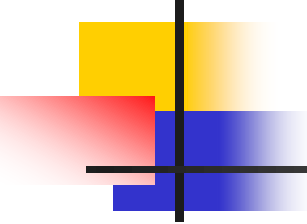
Scholarships

- Huge range of scholarships available eg. Sport, Performing Arts, Socio-Economic Background, Academic (usually not applied for)
- Important to check individual colleges
- Effort required from students
- Some to note locally:
 - Optum
 - 1916 Bursary
 - ATU Sports
 - SVP Education & Training Bursary Fund
- <https://careersportal.ie/scholarships>



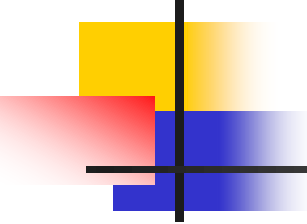
Accommodation

- Challenge
- Cause of concern/stress
- Students must take responsibility and register for lotteries/book rooms
- Some require deposits
- Do not need to wait for offer of place
- Keep checking college websites



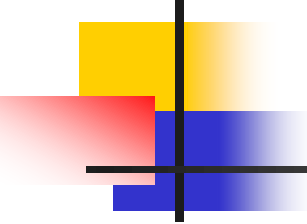
Guidance Appointments

- All 6th years are seen one-to-one
- Number of appointments vary
- Patience is required
- Anyone who requests an appointment is accommodated ASAP
- Many queries are addressed during class time
- Responsibility (Google Classroom)
- Communication (E-mails)



Keep Options Open

- Plan A, B, C.....
- Plan for all eventualities
- Research is key
- No rush
- Plenty of time to decide
- Be strategic....eg. use CAO and UCAS for different subject areas



Study & Motivation Workshop

When: Wednesday 7th OCTOBER (AM)

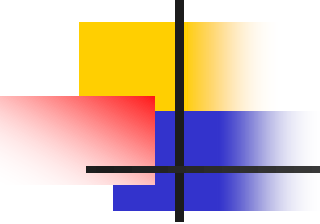
Inspire Education

- **Self Belief & Success Visualisation**
- **Revision Strategies relevant to student learning preferences**
- **Exam Techniques**
- **Planning and Time Management**
- **Physiological and Psychological preparation in the run up to exams and coping with anxiety/stress**

The price includes:

- **Study Skills Workbook – used for activities on the day and as a future reference guide**
- **A2 Revision Planner – to aid with the exam planning**
- **Access to a pre-recorded Parent Study Skills Support Webinar**

Cost: €10



William Glasser

- Educationalist
- Psychologist

**“Education
begins at birth
and continues
all our lives”**