



Board of Directors

Report 2006



Description & Purpose of the Central Applications Office

The Central Applications Office (Universities and other Higher Education Institutions) is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. It was incorporated on 23 January 1976 and is commonly known under the short title 'CAO'. Its membership is representative of the higher education sector and it is governed by a board of directors drawn from the membership. The Office is financed entirely by application fees and does not enjoy any state support.

The CAO facilitates application for first-year admission to almost the full range of statutorily-recognised undergraduate higher education in the Republic of Ireland. It offers a high degree of convenience to applicants and their advisors. It also offers considerable economies and efficiencies to higher education institutions in filling their course places. Fairness and transparency are the foundations of the system as well as equality of treatment for both applicants and participating higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions participating in the CAO system retain full control over their admission policies and admission decisions. If they wish, they may delegate certain routine assessment functions to CAO under instruction. Over the years since CAO's establishment, a voluntary code of admission practice has grown up which has greatly enhanced the value and reputation of the entire system. Higher education institutions, without exception, publish their admission policies in advance and specify the means by which entrants will be chosen. It is also accepted that the position of a particular course in an applicant's order of preference should have no bearing on assessment for admission to that course. These practices have helped to earn a well-deserved reputation for fairness and transparency in the conduct of admission to Irish higher education.





Brief History of the Organisation

CAO owes its origins to the increased participation in higher education which resulted from the free secondary education policy of the 1960s together with the greater availability of student support grants. By 1970 significant difficulties were arising because of multiple application for admission and the introduction of numerus clausus in certain professional courses.

A meeting of university representatives was held in Trinity College, Dublin, in 1971 to explore 'the desirability of establishing an Irish Clearing House'. A report was forwarded to the heads of the (five) university colleges who accepted the principle of the establishment of a clearing house for the universities and were " ... prepared to envisage the extension of the system to cover admission to all third-level institutions". A working party was established which drew up proposals for a central applications service.

The project gained momentum in the summer of 1975 with a declaration of support by the Higher Education Authority. Final agreement to the establishment of a central applications service was reached in 1975 at a meeting between the university heads and the HEA. Representatives were appointed to finalise the Memorandum and Articles of Association which were signed on 19/12/1975.

The central applications service was first offered for the autumn 1977 intake. The Office was based in temporary premises at 7 Clare Street, Dublin 2, until the end of 1977 when it moved to Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway, where it has remained since. The service began with 5 participant higher education institutions – the five university colleges of that time. Major additions to CAO participation took place in 1991 (the Regional Technical Colleges – subsequently renamed Institutes of Technology), 1992 (the Colleges of Education), 1998-99 (NCEA-recognised courses in private colleges) and 2001 (nursing courses). By the year 2006 there were 42 participants.

The clearly-expressed intention of the university founders of the CAO was that it should expand in time to cover all institutions of higher education. In furtherance of this aim, the CAO Board of Directors has shown a consistently-welcoming attitude towards the participation of additional institutions in the central scheme. The only



stipulation which the Board makes is that courses for inclusion in the CAO Handbook should have statutory recognition in Ireland. In general, this has meant that terminal awards are made either by Irish Universities, Institutes of Technology or by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.

CAO has seized every opportunity to increase operational productivity in order to maintain a high standard of service while controlling costs to applicants. The growth in applicant numbers has helped by enabling economies of scale. There were also highly-significant operational developments – the computerisation of Leaving Certificate Examination procedures by the Dept of Education in 1989, the development of a computer network in 1995 connecting all CAO-participant institutions, the introduction of a comprehensive website facility in 2000 and the provision of full electronic document transfer capability in 2003. While affordable computer capacity used to be a constraint on productivity, this is no longer an issue due to developments over the past decade which saw ever-greater power available at a steadily-declining cost. In regard to staffing, the policy has been one of maintaining a small core of well-skilled permanent staff augmented as necessary by seasonal staff.

The growth of the CAO system over the 30 seasons 1977 – 2006 is illustrated in Table One overleaf. Tables Two, Three, Four and Five illustrate some of the main parameters of the 2006 season. Additional Tables at the end of the Report show comparisons over time. The term 'Degrees' implies direct entry to degree courses (NQAI Level 8 from 2005) 'Dip/Cert' refers to direct entry to diploma or certificate courses (NQAI Level 7/6 from 2005) many of the latter having subsequent transfer routes to Level 8 awards. 'Nett Acceptances' refers to final acceptances – relevant where applicants have two or more successive acceptances.

Professional services in 2006:

Auditors: Messrs Mazars Tierney, Galway.

Solicitors: Matheson Ormsby Prentice, Dublin.

Bankers: Bank of Ireland, Eyre Square, Galway.

TABLE ONE: THE GROWTH OF THE CAO SYSTEM 1977 - 2006

Year	Applicants	Deg.nett acceptances	Dip/Cert nett acceptances	Total nett acceptances	HEIs	Courses
1977	14845	(not avail).	-	(not avail)	5	69
1978	15401	"	-	"	7	82
1979	16955	6709	-	6709	7	75
1980	17165	7714	-	7714	7	71
1981	19130	7380	-	7380	8	76
1982	20339	8443	-	8443	9	95
1983	21799	9349	-	9349	9	97
1984	21949	9495	-	9495	9	99
1985	22851	9872	-	9872	9	102
1986	24421	9838	-	9838	9	104
1987	25229	9496	-	9496	9	104
1988	25464	10076	-	10076	9	107
1989	26806	10367	-	10367	10	109
1990	27259	11540	-	11540	10	117
1991	52212	12341	11594	23935	23	152/233
1992	54877	14488	12274	26762	31	176/244
1993	57465	14506	13061	27567	31	188/258
1994	60548	14900	13559	28459	31	203/270
1995	62913	15923	16268	32191	34	225/285
1996	59778	16667	17644	34311	34	246/297
1997	63677	17021	15655	32676	35	261/337
1998	66012	18872	16189	35061	38	325/338
1999	65253	20179	16663	36842	41	365/352
2000	63451	20786	16739	37525	44	387/374
2001	63810	20934	15691	36625	43	416/343
2002	63886	21101	15526	36627	44	458/328
2003	66222	23935	14398	38333	43	542/316
2004	63696	25275	12521	37796	43	583/312
2005	63716	24982	13193	38175	43	581/350
2006	63634	26489	12478	38967	42	664/378

NOTES:

- (i) HEIs = no. of higher education institutions participating.
- (ii) Courses = no. of course choices available; after 1990 = Degrees/Dip Certs.
- (iii) Figures for 1996 perturbed by introduction of L.C. transition year.

TABLE TWO LEVEL 8 LIST 2006

SUBJECT AREA:	A (no.)	B (no.)	C (no.)	D (no.)	E (%)	F (%)
01 Arts/Social Science	89815	14350	11869	8286	70	57
02 Science/Applied Science	43848	5400	5593	3675	66	52
03 Agric./Horticulture	2544	338	351	186	53	64
04 Education	16728	4212	2006	1604	80	66
05 Admin./Business	60299	9261	7725	4973	64	58
06 Engineering/Technology	43201	7406	4762	2910	61	62
07 Architecture	2453	946	196	166	85	76
08 Art & Design	4145	1323	568	374	66	78
09 Law	11337	2308	1403	1055	75	66
10 Human Medicine	8325	2394	564	415	74	77
11 Veterinary Medicine	638	398	99	76	77	91
12 Dentistry	863	232	100	66	66	65
13 Pharmacy	2340	547	214	177	83	68
14 Physiotherapy	4064	964	184	147	80	60
15 Nursing	38217	5345	2758	1987	72	45
16 Other Healthcare	6704	1289	579	392	68	54
TOTAL	335521	56713	38971	26489	68	58

- Col. A: Total course applications.
- Col. B: First preferences (= no. of applicants).
- Col. C: Total offers issued.
- Col. D: Nett acceptances.
- Col. E: % of offers finally accepted.
- Col. F: % of nett acceptances which were first preferences in the Level 8 List.

TABLE THREE Level 7/6 LIST 2006

SUBJECT AREA:	A (no.)	B (no.)	C (no.)	D (no.)	E (%)	F (%)
01 Arts/Social Science	26937	7898	5584	1145	21	79
02 Science/Applied Science	19666	4663	4488	1171	26	78
03 Agric./Horticulture	1621	432	414	168	41	90
04 Education	-	-	-	-	-	-
05 Admin./Business	77611	15999	15845	4544	29	73
06 Engineering/Technology	50370	9978	9641	3968	41	72
07 Architecture	5370	1342	1012	349	34	82
08 Art & Design	7200	2083	1624	706	43	85
09 Law	2248	585	640	196	31	81
10 Human Medicine	-	-	-	-	-	-
11 Veterinary Medicine	-	-	-	-	-	-
12 Dentistry	2303	722	414	65	16	72
13 Pharmacy	143	62	66	34	52	85
14 Physiotherapy	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 Nursing	-	-	-	-	-	-
16 Other Healthcare	2480	1402	894	132	15	99
TOTAL	195949	45166	40622	12478	31	75

- Col. A: Total course applications.
- Col. B: First preferences (= no. of applicants).
- Col. C: Total offers issued.
- Col. D: Nett acceptances.
- Col. E: % of offers finally accepted.
- Col. F: % of nett acceptances which were first preferences in the Level 7/6 List.

TABLE FOUR (CAO REF. AGEGEN)

Number of nett acceptances for 2006 admission by age at 1st January 2006.
(Figures in brackets are percentages)

LEVEL 8:			
AGE AT 1st JAN:	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
23 or more	1100 (10)	1476 (9)	2576 (10)
22	75 (1)	94 (1)	169 (1)
21	122 (1)	142 (1)	264 (1)
20	234 (2)	299 (2)	533 (2)
19	725 (7)	977 (6)	1702 (6)
18	3501 (32)	4880 (32)	8381 (32)
17	4336 (40)	6258 (41)	10594 (40)
16	789 (7)	1245 (8)	2034 (8)
TOTAL	10882 (100)	15371 (100)	26253 (100)

Level 7/6:

AGE AT 1st JAN:	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
23 or more	634 (9)	577 (11)	1211 (10)
22	68 (1)	49 (1)	117 (1)
21	126 (2)	94 (2)	220 (2)
20	241 (4)	183 (4)	424 (4)
19	603 (9)	469 (9)	1072 (9)
18	2050 (30)	1491 (28)	3541 (29)
17	2506 (37)	1897 (36)	4403 (36)
16	571 (8)	480 (9)	1051 (9)
TOTAL	6799 (100)	5240 (100)	12039 (100)

TABLE FIVE (CAO REF. NAT_CT)

Nett acceptances for 2006 admission by stated nationality.

LEVEL 8:			
NATIONALITY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Ireland	10411	14536	24947
UK	243	358	601
Rest of EU	127	312	439
Non-EU	198	304	502
ALL	10979	15510	26489

Level 7/6:

NATIONALITY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Ireland	6646	5030	11676
UK	139	132	271
Rest of EU	54	92	146
Non-EU	226	159	385
ALL	7065	5412	12478

NETT ACCEPTANCES 2006 BY SECTOR (2005 figures in brackets)

Type of institution:	Total	%
Colleges of Education	1459 (1548)	3.7 (4.1)
Dublin Institute of Technology	3000 (3024)	7.7 (7.9)
Other Institutes of Technology	14302 (14438)	36.7 (37.8)
Universities (excl. Colleges of Education)	18312 (17658)	47.0 (46.3)
Other institutions (*)	1894 (1507)	4.9 (3.9)
TOTAL	38967 (38175)	100.0 (100.0)

(*) Colleges of Philosophy & Theology (All Hallows, Carlow, Milltown), independent colleges (American College Dublin, Dublin Business School, Griffith College Dublin & Cork, Portobello College), National College of Art & Design, National College of Ireland, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Shannon College of Hotel Management, St Patrick's College Thurles, Tipperary Institute.

NETT ACCEPTANCES BY TYPE OF QUALIFICATION 2006

(2005 figures in brackets):	%
Level 8	68 (65.4)
Level 7/6	32 (34.6)
TOTAL	100.0 (100.0)

STAFFING AND FINANCES

CAO derives its income from application fees and, since its inception, has maintained a policy of keeping fees at the lowest level consistent with an appropriate standard of service. This policy has led to a steady reduction in the real value of fees over the years as the Office availed of every opportunity to increase its productivity. At their meeting of June 2005, the CAO Board of Directors maintained fees for 2006 application at the rates of €30 for website application and €40 for paper application. These rates represent approximately 66% and 88%, respectively, of the 1982 basic application fee in real terms. (From 1977 through 1981, CAO received a small annual start-up grant from the Higher Education Authority).

Under its constitution, the company may not remunerate its Directors nor distribute any surplus to its Members. Any operating surpluses go towards a contingency reserve and a provision for equipment replacement.

The CAO has a permanent staff of 10, a number which has remained constant since 1981. Up to 25 seasonal staff are engaged for about 3 months of each year to deal with peaks in clerical work.

The audited Financial Statements of the company are published separately. A summary of provisional results for the year ended 31/12/2006 is shown here in Tables Six and Seven as well as a comparison with the previous year. The 2006 results have yet to be approved by the CAO Board and Annual General Meeting.

DIRECTORS OF THE CENTRAL APPLICATIONS OFFICE

At 31 December 2006 the list of Directors was as follows:

Prof. Don Barry, Mr Tom Boland, Prof. James Browne, Prof. Paul Giller,
Mr Paul Hannigan, Prof Colm Kearney, Dr Frank McMahon, Dr Mary Meaney,
Dr Philip Nolan, Dr David Redmond (Chair), Prof. Maria Slowey,
Dr Pauric Travers. Company Secretary: Mr Ivor Gleeson.

NOTE OF THANKS

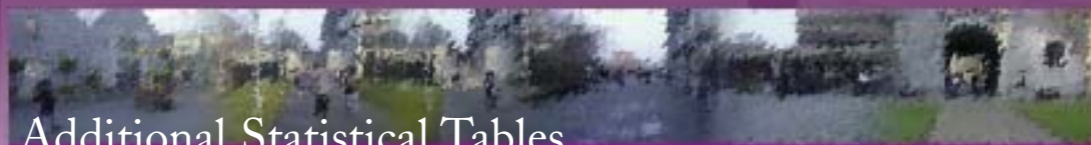
The CAO Board wishes to express its deep appreciation to the staff for their work throughout the year and for their unstinting dedication which has earned the office such a high reputation among the public.

TABLE SIX

BALANCE SHEET	31 December 2006	
	2006 (€)	2005 (€)
Current Assets		
Cash on Hand/at Bank	1,116,897	987,918
Debtors	158,244	92,671
Subtotal	1,275,141	1,080,589
Current Liabilities		
Creditors	-122,389	-269,262
Nett Current Assets	1,152,752	811,327
Tangible Assets	394,828	442,912
Less Deferred Tax provision	-6,269	-1,969
Total	1,541,311	1,252,270
FRS 17 Pension liability	-369,000	-1,523,000
Accumulated net assets	1,172,311	-270,730

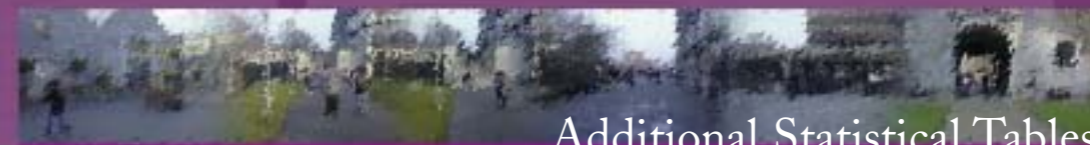
TABLE SEVEN

CAO	Income & Expenditure Accounts (€)	
YEAR	2006	2005
Income	2,736,730	2,713,376
Less Expenditure:		
Human Resource costs	1,553,364	1,775,007
Consumables	178,511	202,609
Facilities and services	590,515	620,064
Depreciation	77,681	77,052
Projects	-	-
Surplus(deficit(-)) before taxation	336,659	38,644
Taxation Charge	-47,618	1,547
Operating Surplus/Deficit	289,041	40,191
FRS 17 Adjustment	280,000	135,000
Nett Surplus/Deficit	569,041	175,191



Additional Statistical Tables

OFFER/ACCEPTANCE figures	(CAO REF. TOTOFF,TOTOF1,TOTOF2)				
ENTIRE SYSTEM (Levels 8 & 7/6):	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Applicants accepting one or more offers	36627	38333	37796	38175	38967
Applicants offered but not accepting	15520	15107	14182	13555	12724
Applicants eligible but receiving no offer	6517	6051	4949	5060	5069
Ineligible applicants	5222	6731	6769	6926	6874
Total Applicants	63886	66222	63696	63716	63634
LEVEL 8 LIST:	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Applicants accepting one or more offers	21101	23935	25275	24982	26489
Applicants offered but not accepting	11108	11478	11312	11059	10363
Applicants eligible but receiving no offer	7547	8188	7578	6093	5695
Ineligible or unassessed applicants	14030	14369	12889	14479	14166
Total Applicants	53786	57970	57054	56613	56713
LEVEL 7/6 LIST:	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Applicants accepting one or more offers	15526	14398	12521	13193	12478
Applicants offered but not accepting	27349	27803	26971	25654	25201
Applicants eligible but receiving no offer	4032	4548	3188	3391	3177
Ineligible or unassessed applicants	5322	4320	4279	4665	4310
Total Applicants	52229	51069	46959	46903	45166



Additional Statistical Tables

FIRST PREFERENCE APPLICATIONS BY SUBJECT AREA	Level 8 List				
SUBJECT AREA	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
01 Arts/Social Science	15949	15055	14396	14490	14350
02 Science/Applied Science	5263	4849	4828	5047	5400
03 Agric./Horticulture	399	266	272	268	338
04 Education	4427	4734	4325	4365	4212
05 Admin./Business	11509	10612	10151	9359	9261
06 Engineering/Technology	7815	8375	8142	8041	7406
07 Architecture	796	748	774	844	946
08 Art & Design	335	782	962	1026	1323
09 Law	2753	2722	2615	2257	2308
10 Human Medicine	1602	1936	2247	2249	2394
11 Veterinary Medicine	500	480	499	435	398
12 Dentistry	186	241	229	247	232
13 Pharmacy	521	497	539	576	547
14 Physiotherapy	1021	1000	1061	1049	964
15 Nursing				4998	5345
16 Other Healthcare (<i>incl. Nursing to 2004</i>)	710	5673	6014	1362	1289
All Courses	53786	57970	57054	56613	56713

FIRST PREFERENCE APPLICATIONS BY SUBJECT AREA	Level 7/6 List				
SUBJECT AREA	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
01 Arts/Social Science	6711	6999	6545	7609	7898
02 Science/Applied Science	4313	4598	4258	3943	4663
03 Agric./Horticulture	696	663	553	430	432
05 Admin./Business	19956	19248	18058	17306	15999
06 Engineering/Technology	12116	10977	10105	10320	9978
07 Architecture	1149	1298	972	1250	1342
08 Art & Design	4121	4080	2429	2399	2083
09 Law	957	973	972	671	585
12 Dentistry	-	495	717	654	722
13 Pharmacy	-	-	-	-	62
16 Other Healthcare	2210	1738	2350	2321	1402
All Courses	52229	51069	46959	46903	45166

NETT ACCEPTANCES BY SUBJECT AREA					Level 8 List
SUBJECT AREA	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
01 Arts/Social Science	6911	7309	7817	7669	8286
02 Science/Applied Science	3412	3486	3666	3730	3675
03 Agric./Horticulture	151	139	127	149	186
04 Education	1642	1686	1618	1705	1604
05 Admin./Business	4632	4523	4737	4654	4973
06 Engineering/Technology	2521	2853	3257	2913	2910
07 Architecture	105	107	156	144	166
08 Art & Design	58	109	216	226	374
09 Law	767	787	787	849	1055
10 Human Medicine	324	328	308	308	415
11 Veterinary Medicine	83	76	74	77	76
12 Dentistry	63	64	68	63	66
13 Pharmacy	118	147	152	165	177
14 Physiotherapy	128	138	148	142	147
15 Nursing				1821	1987
16 Other Healthcare (<i>incl. Nursing to 2004</i>)	186	2183	2144	365	392
All Courses	21101	23935	25275	24980	26489

NETT ACCEPTANCES BY SUBJECT AREA					Level 7/6 List
SUBJECT AREA	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
01 Arts/Social Science	927	1003	938	1262	1145
02 Science/Applied Science	1424	1279	1170	1207	1171
03 Agric./Horticulture	260	260	189	180	168
05 Admin./Business	5921	5520	4895	4837	4544
06 Engineering/Technology	5217	4560	3922	4111	3968
07 Architecture	284	305	227	327	349
08 Art & Design	992	945	715	785	706
09 Law	322	375	251	255	196
12 Dentistry	-	29	35	32	65
13 Pharmacy	-	-	-	-	34
16 Other Healthcare	179	122	179	197	132
All Courses	15526	14398	12521	13193	12478

LOCATION	INSTITUTION
Athlone	Athlone Institute of Technology
Carlow	Carlow College Institute of Technology, Carlow
Cork	Cork Institute of Technology University College Cork (NUI) Griffith College Cork
Dublin	All Hallows College American College Dublin Church of Ireland College of Education Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Dublin Business School Dublin City University Dublin Institute of Technology Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology Froebel College of Education Griffith College Dublin Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown Institute of Technology, Tallaght Mater Dei Institute of Education Milltown Institute of Theology & Philosophy National College of Art and Design National College of Ireland (NCI) Portobello College Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland St. Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra Trinity College Dublin University College Dublin (NUI)
Dundalk	Dundalk Institute of Technology
Galway	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology National University of Ireland, Galway
Letterkenny	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
Limerick	Limerick Institute of Technology Mary Immaculate College, Limerick University of Limerick
Maynooth	National University of Ireland, Maynooth Pontifical University, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth
Shannon	Shannon College of Hotel Management
Sligo	Institute of Technology, Sligo St. Angela's College of Education
Tipperary	Tipperary Institute St Patrick's College, Thurles
Tralee	Institute of Technology, Tralee
Waterford	Waterford Institute of Technology



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