



Board of Directors

Report 2010



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 application service 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 a fundamental principle of the central application service 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, now HETAC, recognised courses in private colleges) and 2001 (nursing courses). By the year 2010 there were 44 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 Board

requires 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 34 seasons 1977 – 2010 is illustrated in Table One. Tables Two, Three, Four and Five illustrate some of the main parameters of the 2010 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 2010:

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 - 2010

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
2007	65883	27853	12062	39915	43	723/386
2008	68809	29704	12413	42117	44	778/407
2009	74621	31424	14162	45586	44	825/410
2010	78199	31732	13891	45623	44	851/428

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 2010

SUBJECT AREA:	A	B	C	D	E	F
01 Arts/Social Science	117983	18579	14523	10302	71%	52%
02 Science/Applied Science	61031	7543	6831	4848	71%	47%
03 Agriculture/Horticulture	3749	526	417	283	68%	44%
04 Education	21307	5525	2148	1745	81%	68%
05 Administration/Business	72342	10970	8835	5874	66%	55%
06 Engineering/Technology *	36408	6371	4380	2684	61%	68%
07 Architecture	3332	753	479	317	66%	66%
08 Art And Design	9605	2567	1444	1028	71%	78%
09 Law	13195	2297	1567	1126	72%	58%
10 Human Medicine	13198	3420	835	694	83%	70%
11 Veterinary Medicine	860	544	127	91	72%	78%
12 Dentistry	1272	365	83	67	81%	49%
13 Pharmacy	1886	293	253	168	66%	40%
14 Physiotherapy	3329	744	193	144	75%	48%
15 Nursing	40461	5640	2151	1637	76%	43%
16 Other Health Care	8602	1721	780	519	67%	51%
17 Built Environment *	1777	316	326	205	63%	53%
Total	410337	68174	45372	31732	70%	55%

- 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.

* Subject Area 17 Built Environment was introduced in 2007 – some courses which had previously been placed in Subject Area 06 Engineering/Technology were moved to Subject Area 17.

TABLE THREE Level 7/6 LIST 2010

SUBJECT AREA:	A	B	C	D	E	F
01 Arts/Social Science	36696	9536	7149	2139	30%	72%
02 Science/Applied Science	34180	8318	6912	1490	22%	70%
03 Agriculture/Horticulture	2531	612	577	200	35%	83%
04 Education	4473	1304	850	85	10%	80%
05 Administration/Business	74965	15686	15266	4635	30%	68%
06 Engineering/Technology*	53070	11478	10010	4155	42%	72%
07 Architecture	2438	565	555	159	29%	79%
08 Art And Design	4665	1533	1085	325	30%	86%
09 Law	2895	694	715	220	31%	66%
10 Human Medicine	-	-	-	-	-	-
11 Veterinary Medicine	-	-	-	-	-	-
12 Dentistry	2615	905	444	70	16%	76%
13 Pharmacy	1368	296	213	64	30%	77%
14 Physiotherapy	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 Nursing	-	-	-	-	-	-
16 Other Health Care	4211	1542	690	172	25%	95%
17 Built Environment*	2067	399	443	177	40%	67%
Total	226174	52868	44909	13891	31%	71%

- 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.

* Subject Area 17 Built Environment was introduced in 2007 – some courses which had previously been placed in Subject Area 06 Engineering/Technology were moved to Subject Area 17.

TABLE FOUR (CAO REF. AGEGEN ACCNET_SPLIT)

Number of nett acceptances for 2010 admission by age at 1st January 2010.

LEVEL 8:						
AGE AT 1st JAN:	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	TOTAL	%
23 or more	2131	14.5%	2108	12.3%	4239	13.4%
22	172	1.2%	140	0.8%	312	1.0%
21	223	1.5%	192	1.1%	415	1.3%
20	350	2.4%	397	2.3%	747	2.4%
19	972	6.6%	1095	6.4%	2067	6.5%
18	4831	33.0%	5778	33.8%	10609	33.4%
17	5156	35.2%	6368	37.3%	11524	36.3%
16	816	5.6%	999	5.8%	1815	5.7%
Total	14651	100.0%	17077	100.0%	31728	100.0%

Level 7/6:						
AGE AT 1st JAN:	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	TOTAL	%
23 or more	1877	21.7%	1015	19.3%	2892	20.8%
22	155	1.8%	69	1.3%	224	1.6%
21	230	2.7%	133	2.5%	363	2.6%
20	389	4.5%	207	3.9%	596	4.3%
19	837	9.7%	485	9.2%	1322	9.5%
18	2161	25.0%	1429	27.2%	3590	25.8%
17	2439	28.2%	1577	30.0%	4016	28.9%
16	549	6.4%	339	6.5%	888	6.4%
Total	8637	100.0%	5254	100.0%	13891	100.0%

TABLE FIVE (CAO REF. NAT_CT)

Nett acceptances for 2010 admission by stated nationality.

LEVEL 8:			
NATIONALITY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Ireland	13752	15825	29577
UK	257	338	595
Rest of EU	333	555	888
Non-EU	311	361	672
ALL	14653	17079	31732

Level 7/6:			
NATIONALITY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Ireland	7848	4629	12477
UK	177	163	340
Rest of EU	240	213	453
Non-EU	372	249	621
ALL	8637	5254	13891

NETT ACCEPTANCES 2010 BY SECTOR (2009 figures in brackets)

Type of institution:	Total	%
Colleges of Education	1639 (1652)	3.6 (3.6)
Dublin Institute of Technology	3188 (3581)	7.0 (7.9)
Other Institutes of Technology	18005 (17611)	39.5 (38.6)
Universities (excl. Colleges of Education)	20306 (20364)	44.5 (44.7)
Other institutions (*)	2485 (2378)	5.4 (5.2)
TOTAL	45623 (45586)	100.0 (100.0)

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

NETT ACCEPTANCES BY TYPE OF QUALIFICATION 2010

(2009 figures in brackets):		%
Level 8	31732 (31424)	69.5 (69)
Level 7/6	13891 (14162)	30.5 (31)
TOTAL	45623 (45586)	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 2009, the CAO Board of Directors established fees for 2010 application at the rates of €35 for discounted-rate online application and €45 for normal-rate online and paper application. (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 31/12/2010 is shown here in Tables Six and Seven as well as a comparison with the previous year. The 2010 results have yet to be approved by the CAO Board and Annual General Meeting.

DIRECTORS OF THE CENTRAL APPLICATIONS OFFICE

At 31 December 2010 the list of Directors was as follows:

Mr Tom Boland, Prof. Paul Giller, Mr Paul Hannigan, Prof. Paul McCutcheon (Chair), Dr Mary Meaney, Dr Michael Mulvey, Dr Philip Nolan, Dr Anne O’Gara, Dr David Redmond, Prof. Anne Scott, Prof. James Ward. 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 2010	
	2009 (€)	2010 (€)
Current Assets		
Cash on Hand/at Bank	2,251,207	3,617,781
Debtors	182,361	185,306
Subtotal	2,433,568	3,803,087
Current Liabilities		
Creditors	-103,417	-352,175
Nett Current Assets	2,330,151	3,450,912
Tangible Assets	443,203	503,540
Less Deferred Tax provision	0	-6,454
Total	2,773,354	3,947,998
FRS 17 Pension liability	538,125	1,647,625
Accumulated nett assets	3,311,479	5,595,623

TABLE SEVEN

CAO	Income & Expenditure Accounts	
YEAR	2009 (€)	2010 (€)
Income	3,726,778	3,730,971
Less Expenditure:		
Human Resource costs	2,357,427	1,507,160
Consumables	176,954	189,122
Facilities and services	572,154	517,810
Depreciation	103,578	130,195
Projects	-	-
Surplus(deficit(-)) before taxation	516,665	1,386,684
Taxation Charge	-75,255	-199,133
Operating Surplus/Deficit	441,410	1,187,551
FRS 17 Adjustment	1,071,000	185,000
Nett Surplus/Deficit	1,512,410	1,372,551

Additional Statistical Tables

OFFER/ACCEPTANCE figures	(CAO REF. TOTOFF,TOTOF1,TOTOF2)				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
ENTIRE SYSTEM (Levels 8 & 7/6):					
Applicants accepting one or more offers	38967	39915	42117	45586	45623
Applicants offered but not accepting	12724	12741	12336	11777	13312
Applicants eligible but receiving no offer	5069	5349	5352	7884	8768
Ineligible applicants	6874	7392	8043	9374	10494
Total Applicants	63634	65883	68809	74621	78199
LEVEL 8 LIST:	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Applicants accepting one or more offers	26489	27853	29704	31424	31732
Applicants offered but not accepting	10363	10401	10496	10057	10937
Applicants eligible but receiving no offer	5695	5454	5275	7455	7808
Ineligible applicants	14166	14706	15281	16149	17697
Total Applicants	56713	58414	60738	65085	68174
LEVEL 7/6 LIST:	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Applicants accepting one or more offers	12478	12062	12413	14162	13891
Applicants offered but not accepting	25201	24693	24297	24898	27256
Applicants eligible but receiving no offer	3177	3233	3447	5276	6184
Ineligible applicants	4310	4767	5013	5357	5537
Total Applicants	45166	44755	45170	49693	52868

Additional Statistical Tables

FIRST PREFERENCE APPLICATIONS BY SUBJECT AREA	Level 8 List				
SUBJECT AREA	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
01 Arts/Social Science	14350	14715	16067	17527	18579
02 Science/Applied Science	5400	5066	5506	7008	7543
03 Agric./Horticulture	338	297	379	539	526
04 Education	4212	5030	5444	5632	5525
05 Admin./Business	9261	9979	10215	10409	10970
06 Engineering/Technology	7406	5860	6161	6080	6371
07 Architecture	946	1043	850	732	753
08 Art & Design	1323	2127	2361	2623	2567
09 Law	2308	2538	2498	2400	2297
10 Human Medicine	2394	2686	2810	3094	3420
11 Veterinary Medicine	398	433	482	537	544
12 Dentistry	232	248	276	322	365
13 Pharmacy	547	474	505	377	293
14 Physiotherapy	964	640	540	617	744
15 Nursing	5345	5104	4795	5416	5640
16 Other Healthcare	1289	1348	1286	1366	1721
17 Built Environment		826	563	406	316
All Courses	56713	58414	60738	65085	68174

FIRST PREFERENCE APPLICATIONS BY SUBJECT AREA	Level 7/6 List				
SUBJECT AREA	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
01 Arts/Social Science	7898	8020	8197	9814	9536
02 Science/Applied Science	4663	5479	5759	7437	8318
03 Agric./Horticulture	432	413	489	612	612
04 Education		85	363	469	1304
05 Admin./Business	15999	14330	14657	15187	15686
06 Engineering/Technology	9978	9783	10049	11035	11478
07 Architecture	1342	1388	1294	910	565
08 Art & Design	2083	1921	1629	1575	1533
09 Law	585	593	606	631	694
12 Dentistry	722	775	724	823	905
13 Pharmacy	62	267	261	252	296
16 Other Healthcare	1402	419	406	488	1542
17 Built Environment		1282	736	460	399
All Courses	45166	44755	45170	49693	52868

NETT ACCEPTANCES BY SUBJECT AREA			Level 8 List		
SUBJECT AREA	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
01 Arts/Social Science	8286	8714	9613	10181	10302
02 Science/Applied Science	3675	3670	3925	4755	4848
03 Agric./Horticulture	186	211	219	290	283
04 Education	1604	1639	1667	1645	1745
05 Admin./Business	4973	5474	5576	5888	5874
06 Engineering/Technology	2910	2323	2512	2667	2684
07 Architecture	166	244	246	214	317
08 Art & Design	374	842	1055	1154	1028
09 Law	1055	1078	1141	1145	1126
10 Human Medicine	415	502	620	628	694
11 Veterinary Medicine	76	77	83	97	91
12 Dentistry	66	63	69	68	67
13 Pharmacy	177	169	165	175	168
14 Physiotherapy	147	136	144	153	144
15 Nursing	1987	2065	1959	1635	1637
16 Other Healthcare	392	386	470	491	519
17 Built Environment		260	240	238	205
All Courses	26489	27853	29704	31424	31732

NETT ACCEPTANCES BY SUBJECT AREA			Level 7/6 List		
SUBJECT AREA	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
01 Arts/Social Science	1145	1299	1534	1680	2139
02 Science/Applied Science	1171	1145	1195	1595	1490
03 Agric./Horticulture	168	158	219	205	200
04 Education		20	30	44	85
05 Admin./Business	4544	4282	4230	4825	4635
06 Engineering/Technology	3968	3595	3903	4589	4155
07 Architecture	349	341	327	251	159
08 Art & Design	706	495	400	399	325
09 Law	196	149	150	158	220
12 Dentistry	65	66	78	84	70
13 Pharmacy	34	52	76	98	64
16 Other Healthcare	132	35	27	47	172
17 Built Environment		425	244	187	177
All Courses	12478	12062	12413	14162	13891

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 Grafton College of Management Sciences Independent Colleges Dublin Institute of Business & Technology, Swords Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown Institute of Technology, Tallaght Mater Dei Institute of Education National College of Art and Design National College of Ireland (NCI) 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 National Counselling Institute of Ireland, 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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