

# CENTRAL APPLICATIONS OFFICE

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT 2013** 



## Description and 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 applications 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 2013 there were 45 participants.

## CAO 5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The CAO strategic plan covers a five year period from 2013 to 2017. The plan sets out an ambitious vision for the CAO, representing the needs of not just CAO member organisations, but also those of the wider stakeholder community.

The plan is the first formal strategy developed and approved by the CAO Board and represents a significant milestone in the 35-year history of the CAO.

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 Qualifications and Quality Ireland (HETAC).

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 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 37 seasons 1977 – 2013 is illustrated in Table One. Tables Two, Three, Four and Five illustrate some of the main parameters of the 2013 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 2013:

Auditors: Messrs Mazars Tierney, Galway.

Solicitors: Matheson, Dublin.

Bankers: Bank of Ireland, Eyre Sq., Galway



The CAO launched *The CAO: A Guide for Parents and Guardians.* The online guide is intended for parents and guardians who are assisting a student with their undergraduate application to Irish Higher Education Institutions

CAO launched a new and improved website on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

The site aims to be more userfriendly for applicants and includes a number of useful resources such as a demo application facility and a CAO presentation video.





#### TABLE ONE: THE GROWTH OF THE CAO SYSTEM 1977-2013

		Deg Net	Dip/Cert Net	Total Net		Level 8	Level 7/6
Year	Applicants	Acceptances	Acceptances	Acceptances	HEIs	Courses	Courses
1977	14845	(not avail)	-	(not avail)	5	69	-
1978	15401	(Hot avail)	_	"	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
2011	76749	32367	13399	45766	43	843	443
2012	76900	33217	13066	46283	43	877	448
2013	76949	33968	12201	46169	45	919	456

#### **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 2013

Subject Area	Α	В	С	D	Е	F
01 Arts/Social Science	110,713	17,106	14,905	10,557	71%	54%
02 Science/Applied Science	68,206	9,383	7,536	5,398	72%	51%
03 Agriculture/Horticulture	4,472	941	516	357	69%	53%
04 Education	19,282	4,635	2,394	1,976	83%	69%
05 Administration/Business	71,028	11,127	8,705	6,014	69%	58%
06 Engineering/Technology*	40,334	6,734	5,015	3,358	67%	70%
07 Architecture	2,635	557	498	322	65%	72%
08 Art And Design	9,312	2,409	1,678	1,191	71%	85%
09 Law	13,241	2,154	1,605	1,219	76%	55%
10 Human Medicine	11,761	3,105	917	745	81%	74%
11 Veterinary Medicine	909	614	113	95	84%	87%
12 Dentistry	1,010	320	110	74	67%	53%
13 Pharmacy	1,996	390	230	178	77%	46%
14 Physiotherapy	3,032	725	195	157	81%	50%
15 Nursing	41,426	5,828	2,219	1,662	75%	42%
16 Other Health Care	7,561	1,502	800	561	70%	53%
17 Built Environment*	1,195	199	222	104	47%	57%
Totals	408,113	67,729	47,658	33,968	71%	58%

#### NOTES:

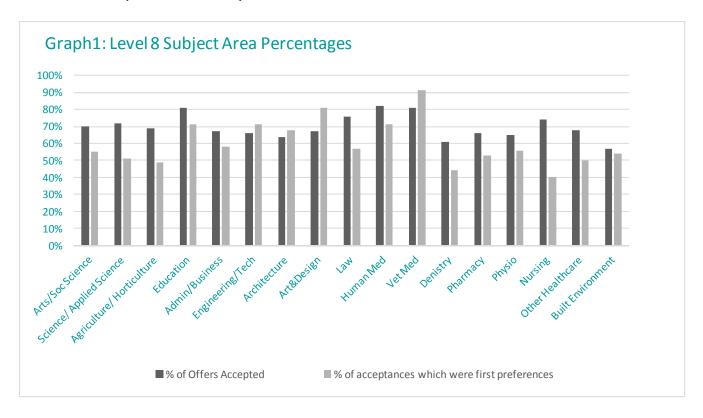
Col. A: Total course applications.

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 2013

Subject Area	А	В	С	D	Е	F
01 Arts/Social Science	28,150	8,164	6,290	1,309	21%	79%
02 Science/Applied Science	41,578	10,125	8,186	1,689	21%	75%
03 Agriculture/Horticulture	3,371	970	724	255	35%	84%
04 Education	347	82	20	7	35%	86%
05 Administration/Business	73,585	15,279	14,834	4,474	30%	76%
06 Engineering/Technology*	47,499	10,459	9,334	3,624	39%	79%
07 Architecture	743	173	174	41	24%	90%
08 Art And Design	4,149	1,358	1,122	319	28%	91%
09 Law	2,199	548	457	120	26%	83%
12 Dentistry	2,315	849	406	60	15%	90%
13 Pharmacy	1,453	353	233	71	30%	83%
16 Other Health Care	2,843	778	801	135	17%	86%
17 Built Environment*	1,296	232	259	97	37%	72%
Totals	209,528	49,370	42,840	12,201	28%	78%

#### **NOTES:**

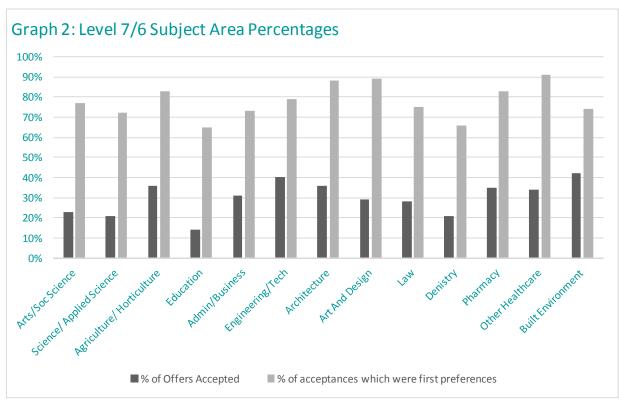
Col. A: Total course applications.

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 FOUR:

(CAO REF. AGEGEN ACCNET\_SPLIT)

#### NUMBER OF NETT ACCEPTANCES FOR 2013 ADMISSION BY AGE AT 1ST JANUARY 2013

Age at Jan	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
1st						
Level 8						
23 or more	1,981	12.4	1,938	10.7	3,919	11.5
22	186	1.2	170	0.9	356	1.0
21	291	1.8	250	1.4	541	1.6
20	426	2.7	411	2.3	837	2.5
19	1,192	7.5	1,285	7.1	2,477	7.3
18	5,740	36.1	6,499	36.0	12,239	36.0
17	5,401	33.9	6,627	36.7	12,028	35.4
16 or under	703	4.4	868	4.8	1,571	4.6
Total	15,920	100.0	18,048	100.0	33,968	100.0%
Level 7/6						
23 or more	1,497	19.5	846	18.6	2,343	19.2
22	186	2.4	71	1.6	257	2.1
21	266	3.5	131	2.9	397	3.3
20	351	4.6	252	5.6	603	4.9
19	766	10.0	410	9.0	1,176	9.6
18	2,016	26.3	1,215	26.8	3,231	26.5
17	2,121	27.7	1,335	29.4	3,456	28.3
16 or under	459	6.0	279	6.1	738	6.0
Total	7,662	100.0	4,539	100.0	12,201	100.0

#### TABLE FIVE: (CAO REF:NAT\_CT)

#### NETT ACCEPTANCES FOR 2013 ADMISSION BY STATED NATIONALITY

LEVEL 8:			
Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Ireland	14,851	16,505	31,356
UK	328	426	754
Rest of EU	469	750	1,219
Non-EU	272	367	639
ALL	15,920	18,048	33,968
LEVEL 7/6:			
LEVEL 7/6: Nationality	Male	Female	Total
	Male 6,872	Female 3,956	<b>Total</b> 10,828
Nationality			
Nationality Ireland	6,872	3,956	10,828
Nationality Ireland UK	6,872 150	3,956 111	10,828 261



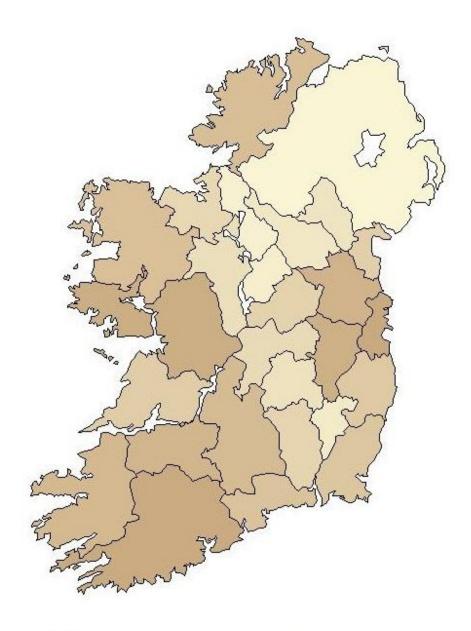
#### NET ACCEPTANCES BY SECTOR

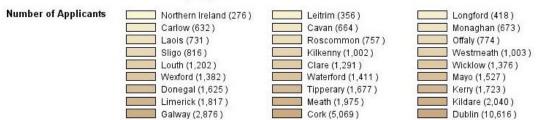
Type of institution:	20	2012		13
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Colleges of Education	1,714	3.7	1,892	4.1
Dublin Institute of Technology	3,972	8.6	3,900	8.4
Other Institutes of Technology	17,718	38.3	17,447	37.8
Universities (excl. Colleges of Education)	21,016	54.6	20,871	45.2
Other institutions (*)	1,863	4.0	2,059	4.5
TOTAL	46,283	100.0	46,169	100.0

(\*) COLLEGES OF PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY (ALL HALLOWS, CARLOW), INDEPENDENT COLLEGES (AMERICAN COLLEGE DUBLIN, DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL, GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN & CORK & LIMERICK, GRAFTON COLLEGE OF MGMT SCIENCES, INDEPENDENT COLLEGES DUBLIN, INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY, SWORDS), NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN, NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND, IRISH COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & APPLIED SCIENCES, PORTOBELLO INSTITUTE, ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND, SHANNON COLLEGE OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT, ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE THURLES.



# MAP 1 CAO Nett Acceptances by Address of Applicant by County and Northern Ireland







#### 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 2012, the CAO Board of Directors established fees for 2013 application at the rates of €25 for discounted-rate online application and €40 for normal-rate online and paper application.

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 12 and up to 35 seasonal staff are engaged 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 31/12/2013 is shown here in Tables Six and Seven as well as a comparison with the previous year.

#### DIRECTORS OF THE CENTRAL APPLICATIONS OFFICE

At 31 December 2013 the list of Directors was as follows:

Mr Tom Boland, Prof. Paul Giller (Chair), Mr Paul Hannigan, Prof. Linda Hogan, Prof. Paul McCutcheon, Prof. Nollaig Mac Congáil, Dr Mary Meaney, Prof. Aidan Mulkeen, Dr Michael Mulvey, Dr Anne O'Gara, Prof. Mark Rogers, Prof. Eithne Guilfoyle. 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.



#### ADDITIONAL STATISTICAL TABLES

#### TABLE SIX

#### CAO BALANCE SHEET

31 December 2013

YEAR	2012 (€)	2013 (€)
Current Assets		
Cash on Hand/at Bank	4,826,151	5,290,754
Debtors	390,045	347,161
Sub Total Current Assets	5,216,196	5,637,915
Fixed Assets		
Office Furniture and Computer Equipment	347,380	298,021
Total Assets	5,653,576	5,935,936
Current Liabilities		
Creditors	(78,095)	(92,132)
Total	5,485,481	5,843,804
FRS 17 Pension Liability	(277,250)	1,374,345
Accumulated Net Assets	5,208,231	7,218,149



#### TABLE SEVEN

#### CAO INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS

YEAR	2012 (€)	2013 (€)
Income	3,185,954	2,814,999
Less expenditure:		
Human Resource Costs	1,513,533	1,628,373
Consumables	107.450	100 706
Facilities and Services	127,458	123,786
	655,779	525,617
Depreciation	125.004	101.076
Projects	125,084	101,076
Surplus (deficit (-)) before Taxation		
	764,100	436,147
Taxation Charge	(115,074)	(77,824)
Operating Surplus/Deficit		
	649,026	358,323
FRS 17 Adjustment	101.000	05 505
Net Surplus/Deficit	191,000	95,595
	840,026	453,918



#### Additional Statistical Tables

### Offer/Acceptance Figures

ENTIRE SYSTEM (Levels 8 & 7/6)	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Applicants accepting one or more					
offers	45,586	45,625	45,766	46,283	46,169
Applicants offered but not accepting	11,777	13,312	13,275	13,429	13,557
Applicants eligible but receiving no					
offer	7,884	8,768	9,137	8,648	7,762
Ineligible applicants	9,374	10,494	8,571	8,540	9,474
Total Applicants	74,621	78,199	76,749	76,900	76,949
LEVEL ALIOT	0000	0040	0044	0040	2010
LEVEL 8 LIST	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Applicants accepting one or more offers	31,424	31,732	32,367	33,217	33,968
ollers	31,424	31,732	32,307	33,217	33,900
Applicants offered but not accepting	10,057	10,937	11,273	11,370	11,363
	10,007	10,007	11,210	11,070	11,000
Applicants eligible but receiving no offer	7,455	7,808	8,598	7,983	7,244
Ineligible applicants	16,149	17,697	15,122	15,114	15,150
Total Applicants	65,085	68,174	67,360	67,684	67,729
LEVEL 7/6 LIST	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Applicants accepting one or more					
offers	14,162	13,891	13,399	13,066	12,201
Applicants offered but not accepting	24,898	27,256	28,072	28,045	28,365
Applicants eligible but receiving no					
offer	5,276	6,184	5,827	5,297	4,653
Ineligible applicants	5,357	5,537	4,481	4,027	4,118
Total Applicants	49,693	52,868	51,779	50,428	49,370



#### Additional Statistical Tables

#### FIRST PREFERENCE APPLICATIONS BY SUBJECT AREA Level 8 List

SUBJECT AREA	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
01 Arts/Social Science	17,527	18,579	18,190	17,190	17,106
02 Science/Applied Science	7,008	7,543	8,061	9,420	9,383
03 Agric./Horticulture	539	526	666	700	941
04 Education	5,632	5,525	5,217	5,101	4,635
05 Admin./Business	10,409	10,970	10,633	10,819	11,127
06 Engineering/Technology	6,080	6,371	6,315	6,374	6,734
07 Architecture	732	753	659	530	557
08 Art & Design	2,623	2,567	2,626	2,469	2,409
09 Law	2,400	2,297	2,181	2,179	2,154
10 Human Medicine	3,094	3,420	3,233	3,073	3,105
11 Veterinary Medicine	537	544	563	650	614
12 Dentistry	322	365	303	342	320
13 Pharmacy	377	293	369	464	390
14 Physiotherapy	617	744	759	754	725
15 Nursing	5,416	5,640	5,746	5,961	5,828
16 Other Healthcare	1,366	1,721	1,596	1,442	1,502
17 Built Environment	406	316	243	216	199
All Courses	65,085	68,174	67,360	67,684	67,729



#### Additional Statistical Tables

#### FIRST PREFERENCE APPLICATIONS BY SUBJECT AREA Level 7/6 List

SUBJECT AREA	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
01 Arts/Social Science	9,814	9,536	10,335	9,571	8,164
02 Science/Applied Science	7,437	8,318	8,928	9,303	10,125
03 Agric./Horticulture	612	612	902	1,019	970
04 Education	469	1,304	1,002	230	82
05 Admin./Business	15,187	15,686	14,179	15,481	15,279
06 Engineering/Technology	11,035	11,478	10,944	10,830	10,459
07 Architecture	910	565	435	237	173
08 Art & Design	1,575	1,533	1,489	1,373	1,358
09 Law	631	694	693	592	548
12 Dentistry	823	905	788	823	849
13 Pharmacy	252	296	307	317	353
16 Other Healthcare	488	1,542	1,431	406	778
17 Built Environment	460	399	346	246	232
All Courses	49,693	52,868	51,779	50,428	49,370



#### Net Acceptances by Subject Area: Level 8 List

SUBJECT AREA	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
01 Arts/Social Science	10,181	10,302	10,530	10,355	10,557
02 Science/Applied Science	4,755	4,848	5,020	5,445	5,398
03 Agric./Horticulture	290	283	258	305	357
04 Education	1,645	1,745	1,760	1,945	1,976
05 Admin./Business	5,888	5,874	5,823	5,925	6,014
06 Engineering/Technology	2,667	2,684	2,895	3,078	3,358
07 Architecture	214	317	346	294	322
08 Art & Design	1,154	1,028	1,083	1,129	1,191
09 Law	1,145	1,126	1,118	1,175	1,219
10 Human Medicine	628	694	731	744	745
11 Veterinary Medicine	97	91	87	100	95
12 Dentistry	68	67	69	68	74
13 Pharmacy	175	168	171	184	178
14 Physiotherapy	153	144	151	155	157
15 Nursing	1,635	1,637	1,673	1,660	1,662
16 Other Healthcare	491	519	494	518	561
17 Built Environment	238	205	158	137	104
All Courses	31,424	31,732	32,367	33,217	33,968

#### Net Acceptances by Subject Area: Level 7/6 List

SUBJECT AREA	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
01 Arts/Social Science	1,680	2,139	2,182	1657	1,309
02 Science/Applied Science	1,595	1,490	1,540	1523	1,689
03 Agric./Horticulture	205	200	244	280	255
04 Education	44	85	72	31	7
05 Admin./Business	4,825	4,635	4,307	4,689	4,474
06 Engineering/Technology	4,589	4,155	3,911	3,932	3,624
07 Architecture	251	159	119	86	41
08 Art & Design	399	325	365	304	319
09 Law	158	220	186	178	120
12 Dentistry	84	70	80	79	60
13 Pharmacy	98	64	77	77	71
16 Other Healthcare	47	172	178	114	135
17 Built Environment	187	177	138	116	97
All Courses	14,162	13,891	13,399	13,066	12,201



#### Institutions Participating in the CAO System in 2013

Athlone Athlone Institute of Technology

Carlow College

Institute of Technology, Carlow

**Cork** Cork Institute of Technology

University College Cork (NUI)

**Dublin** All Hallows College

American College Dublin
College of Computer Training

Church of Ireland College of Education

Dublin Business School
Dublin City University

Dublin Institute of Technology

Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology

Grafton College of Management Sciences

Griffith College Dublin

Independent Colleges Dublin
Institute of Business & Technology

**ICD Business School** 

Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown

Institute of Technology, Tallaght
Marino Institute of Education
Mater Dei Institute of Education
National College of Art and Design
National College of Ireland (NCI)

Portobello Institute

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

Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences

University of Limerick

Maynooth National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Pontifical University, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth

Shannon College of Hotel Management

**Sligo** Institute of Technology, Sligo

St. Angela's College of Education

Tralee St. Patrick's College, Thurles
Institute of Technology, Tralee
Waterford Waterford Institute of Technology



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