

**Central Applications Office (Universities and other Higher Education Institutions).** Tower House, Eglinton St, Galway. Company Reg. No. 53983.  
(The above-named company is mentioned below as 'CAO').

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**Memorandum of understanding concerning the principles and procedures incumbent upon third-level educational institutions which participate in the central applications system. Approved by CAO Board on 30/5/1997.**

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1. Third-level institutions participating in the central applications system retain full control over their own admissions policies.
2. Places offered through the CAO system should be dispensed in accordance with formally-adopted and pre-published procedures.
3. Admission to the initial year of each and every undergraduate course must be effected through the CAO system and all places must be filled through the system save for categories of applicants and/or certain courses which are specifically excepted. All such exceptions must be notified to CAO for publication in the CAO Handbook.
4. All participating institutions are consulted annually about the contents of the application Handbook and may seek to have those contents amended. However, once published, the Handbook has the force of a legal contract with the public and all parties to it must observe its terms strictly. The procedures drawn up by CAO to implement the regulations set out in the Handbook must also be considered as binding. Any question or difficulty arising out of the application of the Handbook regulations must be referred for adjudication to the independent CAO Appeals Commission.
5. The possession of a particular level of attainment shall not of itself confer entitlement to admission to any course in the central applications system; compliance with the procedures laid down in the application Handbook is an essential prerequisite for admission.
6. Participant third-level institutions are required to ensure that all of their officers are made aware of the procedures governing admission as well as the identities of those officers charged with implementing the procedures. They are also required to ensure that institution literature does not contradict the application Handbook.
7. Particular care must be taken in the matter of requests for admission or for transfer of course after the central applications cycle has ended and the Handbook regulations no longer apply. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that no impression is given that there is an alternative method of admission which by-passes and undermines the central system.
8. Within three months of the end of each application cycle, a responsible officer of each participant third-level institution shall, if requested, certify to CAO or to its auditors whether the institution has complied in all cases with the procedures set out in the application Handbook. In any and every case of non-compliance the Application Number of the case shall be given together with the reasons for non-compliance.
9. All of the information in CAO files is made available to participant institutions solely for *bona fide* purposes concerned with the admission of students. No institution may publish in any form data obtained from the CAO files which identifies another institution, directly or indirectly, without the prior permission of that other institution. The CAO Board reserves the absolute right to withdraw service from any institution which uses CAO data for soliciting.