Applying to CAO
Applicants presenting GCE A/AS Level and GCSE qualifications
Purpose of the CAO

- CAO processes applications to undergraduate courses in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

- Offers are issued and acceptances are recorded by CAO.

- Assessment of applications and decisions on admissions are made by HEI Admissions Officers.
Application Process

www.cao.ie/handbook

www.cao.ie/apply
Timely Action

DO NOT LEAVE EVERYTHING TO THE LAST MINUTE!

In order to be fair to all applicants, closing dates are strict and therefore action should be taken in good time.
Making an Application

Applicants apply online at www.cao.ie/apply

Carefully enter details such as your name, address, date of birth, schools attended, examination information, etc.

Make sure you inform CAO about all relevant qualifications and exemptions – select the relevant categories on the application form.
When you apply online your application number will appear on screen. You will also receive an email containing your CAO application number and an email verification code.

Your application number is private and it will be used in every correspondence between you and the CAO for the rest of the year.

You will require your CAO application number, date of birth and password when you log in to your account via the ‘My Application’ facility to update your application.
Qualifications & Assessment

• You must complete the Qualifications and Assessments categories that are relevant to you.

Applicants presenting GCE A/AS Levels and GCSE examinations must provide additional information to support their application. Evidence of all examinations mentioned must be supplied by post.
Informing CAO of all GCSE, AS & A Levels

- GCE A/AS Level and GCSE applicants must enter the year, sitting, level, subject and grade for all GCSE, AS and A level examinations previously taken. **Note: GCSE results are required to meet minimum entry requirements, but are not used for points computation purposes.**

- Applicants **MUST** also provide certified photocopies of certificates/statements of results produced by an examining board to support their application. If supporting documents are not supplied the qualifications mentioned will not be considered for assessment purposes.

Certified photocopies of certificates/statements of results produced by an Examining Board must be supplied to CAO a minimum of 12 working days in advance of Round One offers. A **certified photocopy** means that you **photocopy** the documents and then bring both the originals and the **photocopies** to an acceptable person or body (School, University, Police Station, Admissions Office, Notary) where they will stamp the **photocopy** as being a true **copy** of the original.
Qualifications & Assessment

• Applicants completing A/AS Level examinations in summer will be asked to insert their 5-digit centre number and 4-digit candidate number for each examination.

• You must inform CAO if you are taking your summer examinations with CCEA and/or with British/Welsh examining boards. If we do not have this information, CAO will be unable to obtain your results electronically. This information must be supplied when you are making your CAO application and must be fully and completely correct no later than June 30.

• Detailed instructions for the completion of this part of the application form may be found in the Qualifications and Assessments section of the CAO Handbook.
Matching Prior Year Exam Data to Supporting Documentation

• When supporting documents are received by CAO they will be reviewed to ensure they meet the criteria set out in the previous slide.

• Where correct documents are supplied for all results the exam data in your online application will be matched.

• Results will not be matched where documents do not meet the criteria or where documents are not supplied for prior year exam data included in your online application. Such results will appear in red in your CAO application and will not be considered by the HEIs you have applied to until correct supporting documentation is supplied.

The screenshot above shows a combination of matched results (in grey) and unmatched results which are highlighted in red.
AS Level Results

- CAO advises GCE applicants to discuss the AS Level certification process with their school.
- AS Level results are frequently cashed in along with A2 Level results in the final year. As a result, candidates often will not have evidence of their AS Level results until the release of their A2 Level results in August.
- In this instance, CAO will expect to receive electronic notification of the AS Level results provided that the applicant has supplied their correct Board, Centre Number and Candidate Number for all subjects that will be cashed in in August.
- If your school cashes in AS Level results in the same year as A2 Level results, you must enter the remaining AS Level subject which you are not taking at A2 Level on your CAO application – you must use the space provided for ‘Examinations to be taken’ in the Qualifications & Assessments section.
- CAO must be informed if the candidate sat any AS or A2 Level examinations at a different school.
Common Errors

• Not supplying supporting documentation
• Not supplying Centre Number and Candidate Number for current year examinations
• No school stamp on supporting documentation
• Providing documents produced by a school as opposed to an examining board
• Not informing CAO of GCSE examination results
• Not informing CAO of previously taken AS & A Levels
• Current year Pre-U examinations should be entered under the GCE A/AS level and GCSE section of the application and the correct Centre Number and Candidate Number supplied in the table. Evidence of these results MUST also be supplied by post. Pre-U examinations taken in a prior year must be included under Other School Leaving Examinations
• BTEC qualifications should be listed under Other School Leaving qualifications
Choosing Courses

- Consult your Careers Teacher/Adviser.
- Discuss your options with family and friends.
- Details about courses may be found in HEI prospectuses and by consulting HEI websites.
- A course search facility is available at www.cao.ie/courses
Level 8 and Level 7/6 Courses

• The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is a system of 10 levels which allows the different standards and levels of qualifications to be compared in the Republic of Ireland.

• CAO process applications for Levels 6-8 in the Framework:
  Level 6 courses result in the awarding of a Higher Certificate
  Level 7 courses result in the awarding of an Ordinary Degree
  Level 8 courses result in the awarding of an Honours Degree

• A diagram of the NFQ is on the website of the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) www.qqi.ie.

• For more information see the CAO Handbook.
2 Applications in 1

• There are two course choice lists (Level 8 and Level 7/6) and applicants may make up to 10 course choices on each list.

• Your choices on one list do not in any way affect your choices on the other list. They may be considered two separate applications on one form.

• It is possible to receive an offer on both lists. You may then decide to accept either your Level 7/6 or your Level 8 offer.

• Alternatively, you might not wish to accept either offer.
Order of Preference

- If you learn nothing else from this presentation let it be this...

PLACE YOUR COURSES IN GENUINE ORDER OF PREFERENCE!

1

To do otherwise is a grave mistake.
Order of Preference

• It is most important that applicants state their course choices in order of genuine preference and/or career plans.

• It is a mistake to base course choices only on your present expectations of examination performance or the points level of previous years.

• If you are not successful in your first choice this will have no effect on your chances of obtaining a place in one of your lower preferences.

• Having received an offer in any round, you may get a higher preference offer in a later round. You will never be offered a lower preference in a later round.
Certain courses are ‘Restricted Courses’. They have early assessment procedures which may start as early as February.

This includes courses such as Music, Art and Drama which may require interviews, assessments or presentation of a portfolio as part of the application process.

Restricted courses are clearly marked in the relevant prospectus and also on the CAO Handbook (by the words 'Restricted').

An application for a Restricted Course will not be considered unless:

- a) it has been included among original course choices by 1 February
- b) it has been added to an existing application not later than the final date for correction of errors or omissions (1 March).

Please see the ‘Restrictions’ section of the CAO Handbook for further information.
Change of Mind Facility

You may use this facility to change the order of your course choices and/or to introduce new courses, subject to the restrictions detailed in the handbook.

The Change of Mind opens in early May and closes on 1 July at 5pm.
Before the end of May you will be sent a Statement of Application Record email to enable you to verify that all information has been recorded completely and correctly. Check the following carefully, and if there is any error or omission amend the Statement and return it to CAO.

- Are all the courses shown and in the correct order?
- Are all the codes correct?
- Are the exam numbers correct?
- Are all exams mentioned?
- Are all exemptions listed?

If you do not receive a Statement by June 1st, contact CAO immediately.
The Offer Process

- In the days following the release of the A Level results CAO will email all GCE/GCSE applicants.
- Applicants must read this email carefully and inform CAO immediately if any details are incorrect or missing.
- Applicants must supply a certified copy of any missing results by post as soon as possible.
- Documents must be produced by the exam board i.e. they must show the exam board logo, and must be certified photocopies.
The Offer Process

- If you are entitled to an offer you will be sent an e-mail and SMS text message if you have selected this option.
- You should check that all of the details on the offer notification are correct and that there are no omissions.
- Offers will also be available on the CAO website.
- You may check for and accept offers on the website.
The Offer Process

There can be no delays at the offer/acceptance stage.

- Any offer not accepted by the closing date for receipt of acceptance of offers in CAO will be offered to another applicant in the next round of offers.
- You will receive an e-mail acknowledging your acceptance if you accept online.
We will look just at Level 8 courses, but exactly the same process will take place with Level 7/6 courses, and at the same time.

The importance of you, the applicant, placing courses in genuine order of preference will become apparent in the following pages.
Place Allocation

- When examination results are released in August they are entered into the CAO computer.
- The computer checks each applicant’s results.

For each course the applicant has applied for, the computer first determines if the applicant has the minimum entry requirements for the course.
Place Allocation

If the applicant meets the minimum entry requirements for the course, the applicant’s points are calculated for this course choice.

To view how to calculate your points go to the Applicants section of www.cao.ie or see the CAO Handbook.

All eligible applicants are then placed on a list, in order of academic merit, for each course that they applied for.

Minimum Entry Requirements + Points Score = Position on Order of Merit List
• The admissions officers of the Higher Education Institutions tell CAO how many places are to be offered on each course.

• CAO then makes offers to the required number of applicants on each course, starting with the applicant with the highest points and working down until enough places have been offered.
Place Allocation

- Should some applicants decline to accept their offers these places become available in the next round of offers.
- They will be offered to the next applicants on the Order of Merit list. This process continues until all of the places on the course are filled or until all the eligible applicants on the Order of Merit list have been offered places.
Place Allocation

• These are the applicants for CK101 - Arts in UCC.
• The examination results have not yet been released, so these applicants are in no particular order.
• We are going to trace the progress of the applicant marked in red.

EXAMPLE – no results yet!
Applicants are placed in a queue for each course they applied for - their position in the queue is determined by their points.

The applicant with the highest points is placed at the top of the queue. The points achieved by the applicant in red determines her position in the queue for each course she has applied to.

EXAMPLE

– Exam results have been released.

1. CK101
2. DN201
3. AL850
10. LM040
The applicants marked in **GREEN** have enough points to be offered places.

The applicant marked in **RED** has enough points for her second preference.

**EXAMPLE**
- HEIs issue R1 offers
  1. CK101
  2. DN201
  3. AL850
  10. LM040
Place Allocation

- The applicant in RED is offered her second preference, the highest preference course that she has enough points for, and she will now disappear from the queue for all her lower choices.

- Placing DN201 as her second preference meant that she would prefer to receive an offer on DN201 than on any other course except CK101 - which is her first preference.

**EXAMPLE**
- HEIs issue R1 offers
  1. CK101
  2. DN201
After Round 2 offers are issued, our applicant is now in first place on the waiting list for her first preference course.

She has already accepted her 2nd preference course. Accepting or not accepting her 2nd preference course will not prevent her from receiving an offer of her 1st preference course if she is deemed eligible by the institution in a later round.
In the third round of offers two more offers are made on CK101 and our applicant, who was at the top of the queue, now receives an offer.

She may do nothing and remain in DN201 or she may accept the offer.

EXAMPLE – An offer is issued in R3 for her 1st preference!
Genuine Order

- You do not need to guess what the points are going to be for the courses you are interested in.
- Simply list your courses in genuine order of preference from the highest preference 1, to the lowest preference 10.
- If you are entitled to an offer, you will be offered the highest preference that you are entitled to.
## Applicant Scoring for GCE/GCSE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>From 2019</th>
<th>Universities and associated colleges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best 3 A-Levels</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A-Level</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong>*</td>
<td>185</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>131</td>
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<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>106</td>
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<td><strong>D</strong></td>
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<td>Best 3 A-Lests</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(4th A-Level where presented)</td>
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† Extended Project is now accepted and scored as AS. It is possible to attain an A* in this.
‡‡ Applies to A-level only
Applicant Scoring for GCE/GCSE

Universities and associated colleges:

- Applicants are scored on the basis of their **best four A levels from a single academic year** (i.e. the 2024 academic year runs from September 2023 to August 2024)

  OR

  **Three A levels from a single academic year and an AS level** in a different subject from the same or preceding academic year.

- Note: Applicants presenting Grade E or above in one of A-Level Mathematics, Further Mathematics or Pure Mathematics will have 25 points added to their score for that subject. The bonus points will only be relevant where that subject is scored as one of the applicant's best four subjects for points purposes.
Applicant Scoring for GCE/GCSE

Technological Universities, Institutes of Technology (other than DkIT) and other HEIs offering QQI HET awards:

Applicants are scored on the basis of a maximum of 4 different subject results at A and/or AS level. For scoring purposes, the following combination of A Levels and AS Levels are permitted:

• The best 4 A level results in a single sitting.
• The best 3 A level results in a single sitting, plus the best AS level result from the previous or the same sitting.
• The best 2 A level subject results in a single sitting, plus the best 2 results at AS level from the previous or the same sitting.
• The best 1 A level subject result in a single sitting, plus the best 3 results at AS level from the previous or the same sitting.
• The best 4 AS level subject results in a single sitting.
Communication with CAO

• The easiest and most efficient way to communicate with CAO is by using the Correspondence Section of your CAO Account. You will receive a reply to your query usually within one working day.

• Always quote your CAO application number in any communication with CAO.

• If you post something to CAO, always obtain a certificate of posting at the post office. This is a free service and it offers you peace of mind.
Visit the ‘Applicants’ section for Video Guides and useful resources including the ‘Demo Application’ facility.

Watch this space for ‘Important Dates’.

An online copy of the CAO Handbook is available here.
Finally...

Remember to carefully read all of the documents and instructions from CAO.

Most applicants follow the simple instructions from CAO and get along just fine.

If you are unclear on any matter concerning the application process, please contact us via our website: www.cao.ie