



Applying to CAO 2026

CAO Course Choices DOs and DON'Ts

DOs

- Do list your courses in genuine order of preference. This means putting your dream course in first place, your second favourite in second place, and so on.
- Do check that you meet the minimum entry requirements for the courses that you wish to include on your application. If you don't meet these requirements, you will not be offered a place, regardless of your points score.
- Do add courses to your Level 7/6 list as well as your Level 8 list; give yourself plenty of options at the offers stage.
- Do research your courses carefully, taking note of the course content and other information provided on the colleges' websites and in their prospectuses.
- Do attend open days and education events where you can ask questions about the course, the institution, campus life, etc.
- Do take note of the restrictions outlined on page 3 of the CAO Handbook.
- Do check your course choices carefully before the Change of Mind facility closes on the 1 July at 5pm.

DON'Ts

- Don't list your courses based on assumptions about what the points are going to be or how well you think you are going to do in your examinations. Points can vary significantly year on year based on demand, supply and applicant performance.
- Don't list a course on your application higher up than the course that you really want – if you get the higher preference offer you will not be offered anything lower.
- Don't apply for a course that you're not interested in just because you have the points for it.
- Don't place a course on your application if you do not meet the minimum entry requirements. This will be a wasted course choice as you will not be considered for a place if you do not meet these requirements (regardless of your points score).
- Don't leave your Level 7/6 list blank. You should spend some time researching Level 7/6 courses to give yourself plenty of options at the offers stage. Level 7/6 courses offer qualifications in their own right and most offer progression pathways into Level 8 courses.