

HEAR

Higher Education Access Route

Handbook 2027

Guiding you through your HEAR application



www.accesscollege.ie

HEAR | HIGHER
EDUCATION
ACCESS
ROUTE

Key dates

Deadline	What to do
CAO deadline Monday 1 February 2027 at 5pm	Apply to the CAO (Central Applications Office) at www.cao.ie You can apply from Thursday 5 November 2026.
HEAR deadline Monday 1 March 2027 at 5pm	Complete your online HEAR application.
Supporting documents deadline Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm	Post your supporting document to the CAO: HEAR Applications 2027 CAO Tower House Eglinton Street Galway Don't forget to get a free certificate of posting as proof of postage from the post office.

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About this handbook

In this handbook, we want to help you apply for HEAR – the Higher Education Access Route. HEAR is a higher education admissions scheme. It is for school leaving applicants resident in the Republic of Ireland (under 23) who, due to their economic or social background, are underrepresented in higher education (college).

This handbook provides you with an overview of the HEAR application process. HEAR may be able to help you get into college on reduced points.

We hope to see you at your college of choice soon.

Advice and support

All participating colleges and universities have a staff member who can advise you on how to apply to HEAR. If you wish to speak to someone about your HEAR application or have questions relating to a specific college or university, contact any member of the HEAR team in the participating colleges on page 10.



Important: Unfortunately, HEAR can't guarantee that all applicants will get a college place even if they are eligible for the HEAR scheme. Our role is to explain the application process. This will help to increase your chances of getting the course of your choice, where possible.

For questions about completing your online HEAR application, you can contact the CAO helpdesk.

- Click on the 'Contact Us' button at www.cao.ie
- Phone 091 509 800

For questions about the criteria for your online HEAR application, contact the participating colleges. See page 10.

Introduction to HEAR

What is HEAR?

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a college admissions scheme for school leavers (under 23) who live in the Republic of Ireland who have experienced social or educational disadvantage during secondary school.

Long-term poverty can badly affect how well a student does at school and whether they go on to college. This is why some colleges and universities set up HEAR.

While HEAR does not offer financial support, it may help you get a college place. First, you must apply to see if you are eligible. Eligible HEAR applicants will compete for HEAR reduced points places on college courses.





HEAR is not your SUSI grant

HEAR is a separate scheme from SUSI. You should apply to SUSI directly if you want to be assessed for a student grant — see www.susi.ie. SUSI is the main source of financial assistance available from the Irish State for students in full-time:

- Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLCs)
- Higher education (college) undergraduate courses.



Who can apply to HEAR?

- HEAR is for school leavers under the age of 23 as of 1 January 2027 who live (are resident) in the Republic of Ireland.
- HEAR has four priority groups of applicants. If you think you are a priority applicant, you may need some evidence to support your application. Please see page 13 for more information.
- HEAR applications can only be made online.
- For contact details of colleges and universities taking part in HEAR see page 10.

What about mature applicants or Further Education Training students?

Mature and Further Education Training (FET) students have their own admissions routes separate from HEAR. They should contact college admissions offices for more information.





What are the benefits of making a HEAR Application?

You may be offered a reduced points place

If you are eligible for HEAR, the college or university may offer you a place even if you do not have the points for your preferred course. Each college and university taking part has reserved places they can offer to eligible HEAR applicants at reduced points.

How reduced points work

For example, let's say the points requirement for a particular course is 366 points. If you are eligible for HEAR, the college could still offer you a place if you have only 355 points. However, like all other applicants applying to college based on their results, you would still need to meet the:

- minimum entry requirements such as subjects or languages needed for your college course
- any specific programme requirements.

The reduction in points for HEAR places varies every year and depends on the:

- overall number of places available on the course
- number of reserved HEAR places on the course
- number of applicants who are eligible for HEAR competing for these reserved places.

You can get more information at www.accesscollege.ie

You will get extra college support if you are eligible

If you get a place through HEAR, you will receive a variety of academic, personal and social supports while at college.

Examples of extra college supports

One of the supports you may get is an Orientation Programme to introduce you to the university or college. Please contact participating colleges for the 2027 orientation dates.

When you are in college you may also get:

- extra tuition if required
- help with study skills and exam preparation
- one-to-one meetings with student advisers
- to take part in social gatherings with other students
- mentoring
- to apply for extra financial assistance when available
- advice about possible grants and scholarships when in college.

Important instructions for HEAR applications

Essential HEAR information



Applicants applying for HEAR must:

- 1.** Be under the age of 23 as of 1 January 2027.
- 2.** Apply online to CAO by **1 February 2027 at 5pm**. CAO applications open on **5 November 2026**.
- 3.** No later than **Monday 1 March 2027 at 5pm**, indicate in your CAO application that you wish to apply for the HEAR scheme and fully and correctly complete all elements of the online HEAR form.
- 4.** Once you have completed the HEAR application form, a checklist will appear on screen telling you which documents you need to supply. **You must post supporting documents to arrive in CAO no later than Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm.**

Get the help you need

Get help from your parent(s) or guardian(s) when filling in your online application. Use this handbook to help you answer all relevant questions on your online HEAR application.

If you were eligible in 2026, you have the option of carrying forward HEAR eligibility from 2026 to 2027. Check details on how to do this in Section 7: Carrying Forward HEAR eligibility from 2026 to 2027. (See page 28 of this handbook).

Attend an open day in 2026/2027

- Attend a college open day or HEAR/DARE information event to learn more about the application process and supports that are available in college.
- Scan the QR code to find upcoming open days and HEAR/DARE information events



Add key info on each document you send

If you are required to post documents to CAO, make sure your documents are clear and can be easily read. On each page please include:

- a page number
- your name
- CAO application number
- the date

Get proof of postage when sending documents

Keep the originals of all documents and proof of postage. You can get a free certificate of posting from the post office. If you include a stamped postcard with your address, HEAR will return this to confirm we received your documents. HEAR will not contact you about missing, incomplete or incorrect documents.

You are responsible for making a complete application

It is your responsibility to make sure all forms have been signed, stamped and completed with the correct information.

Remember to check your email account regularly for important CAO notifications

It is important that you have access to your email account and check regularly for notifications. You will receive an email at the end of June with the outcome of your HEAR application.

Get in touch with questions

Please contact a HEAR advisor if you have any questions about your application. All colleges have a staff member who can advise you on how to apply to HEAR.

Find a list of advisors on page 10 or at www.accesscollege.ie/hear/participating-colleges

HEAR application timelines

By Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm, make sure that you have posted copies of your supporting documents to

HEAR Applications 2027
CAO
Tower House
Eglinton Street
Galway



HEAR application timelines

To apply to HEAR, you must agree to the HEAR terms and conditions

The terms and conditions are part of the online application form.

You must be under 23 on 1 January 2027

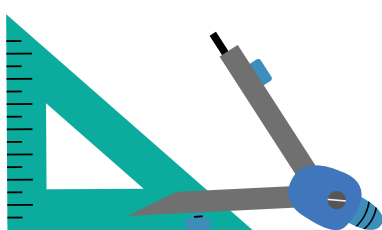


Please complete the following steps

Date and timeline	What you need to do
From Thursday 5 November 2026 CAO applications open	• Review this HEAR Handbook with your parent(s) or guardian(s) • Make your CAO application at www.cao.ie • Fill in the online HEAR Application at www.cao.ie • Gather any supporting documents you may need to send
Monday 1 February 2027 by 5pm CAO deadline	You must have applied to CAO by this deadline to make a HEAR application.
Monday 1 March 2027 by 5pm HEAR deadline	Complete your HEAR application You must complete and submit your online HEAR application form by 5pm on Monday 1 March 2027. You must indicate in your CAO application that you wish to apply for the HEAR scheme and fully and correctly complete all parts of the online HEAR form. All applicants should gather the supporting documents they need.
Wednesday 10 March 2027 by 5pm Deadline for supporting documents	Post supporting documents Post copies of any supporting documents to: HEAR Applications 2027 CAO, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway. HEAR does not accept emailed or uploaded documents. Make sure your copies are clear and can be easily read. On the front of each page please write: • the page number • your CAO application number • your name • the date. Keep the original of all documents and get a certificate of posting from the post office every time you post supporting documents to CAO. If you wish to get confirmation that the documents you posted arrived safely in CAO, you need to enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard with details of the documents you have submitted.

After you apply

April – June 2027 HEAR assessment	Your HEAR application is assessed to check if you meet HEAR criteria.
In late June 2027 HEAR outcome	You will be notified of the outcome of your HEAR application by email.
End June and early July 2027	If you receive an ineligible outcome, you can make a review and appeal application.
August 2027 Review and Appeals outcome	If you made a review and appeal application, you will be notified of the outcome by email.
August 2027	• Leaving Certificate exam results come out. • Eligible HEAR applicants compete for reduced points places. • CAO makes course offers to eligible applicants. • If you get an offer you want, you need to accept it through the CAO.
Late August and early September 2027 Orientation	You must attend the HEAR college orientation (an intro to the college) programme.



HEAR participating colleges

Name of college	Phone	Email	Website
Atlantic Technological University			
Donegal Campus	(074) 918 6170	hear@atu.ie	www.atu.ie/study/undergraduate/
Galway Campus	(091) 742 598	hear@atu.ie	undergraduate-entry-routes/hear-applicants
Sligo Campus	071 930 5417	hear@atu.ie	
ATU St Angelas	(071) 917 9632	hear.stangelas@atu.ie	
Dublin City University	(01) 700 8868 (01) 700 9213	hear@dcu.ie	www.dcu.ie/access
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	(01) 239 4628	hear@iadt.ie	www.iadt.ie
Dundalk Institute of Technology	(042) 937 0236	hear@dkit.ie	www.dkit.ie
Marino Institute of Education	(01) 805 7752	access@mie.ie	www.mie.ie
Mary Immaculate College	(061) 204 510	accessoffice@mic.ul.ie	www.mic.ie/access-disability
Maynooth University	(01) 708 4600	hear@mu.ie	www.maynoothuniversity.ie/hear
Munster Technological University			
Cork Campus	(021) 433 5138	HearCork@mtu.ie	www.mtu.ie/access/hear
Kerry Campus	(066) 714 5636	HearKY@mtu.ie	
National College of Art & Design	(01) 636 4200	hear@ncad.ie	www.ncad.ie/students/support-services/
National College of Ireland	(01) 449 8500	hear@ncirl.ie	www.ncirl.ie
Pontifical University, Maynooth	(01) 708 4600	hear@mu.ie	www.mu.ie/hear
RCSI University of Medicine & Health Sciences	(01) 402 2228	hear@rcsi.ie	www.rcsi.com/hear
South East Technological University			
Carlow and Wexford Campus	(059) 917 5600	Hear.cw@setu.ie	www.setu.ie/study/teachers-hub/access-to-higher-education-2/hear
Waterford Campus	(051) 306 192	Hear.wd@setu.ie	
Technological University Dublin	(01) 220 7096	hear@tudublin.ie	www.tudublin.ie
Technological University of the Shannon			
Athlone Campus	(090) 646 8123	hear.midlands@tus.ie	www.tus.ie
Limerick Campus	(061) 293 130	hear.midwest@tus.ie	
Trinity College Dublin	(01) 896 3696	hear@tcd.ie	www.tcd.ie/trinityaccess
University College Cork	(021) 490 4806	hear@ucc.ie	www.ucc.ie/hear
University College Dublin	(01) 716 7123	hear@ucd.ie	www.ucd.ie/all/entrypathways/heardare/
University of Galway	(091) 493 553	hear@universityofgalway.ie	www.universityofgalway.ie/access-students
University of Limerick	(061) 234 122	hear@ul.ie	www.ul.ie



Should I apply?

To help you to decide to apply, it may help to know the following about HEAR:

- HEAR uses a scoring system for applicants. This system prioritises certain groups of applicants called priority groups (see page 13).
- The most an applicant can score on HEAR's scoring system is 7. If you are in a HEAR priority group, you will automatically score 7 points.

However, there is a range of eligibility scores for HEAR, so if your score is 2.5 or higher, you should still apply for HEAR. (See page 12 for more specifics on the scoring criteria).

The following page shows you a range of criteria HEAR consider when assessing who is eligible to apply for HEAR. Not all criteria will apply to each applicant, and the criteria have different scores. Have a look at page 12 to see if you meet any of the HEAR criteria.



HEAR Criteria scores

Criterion 1: Income

Applicants to HEAR need to meet the low-income criteria. This means your family income falls on or below the HEAR Income Limit for 2025 (see page 15). There is no score awarded for this criterion. Please note, this income criterion does not apply to some applicants including Traveller, Roma and care-experienced applicants.

See page 15 for information on income requirements.

Criterion 2: Medical card or GP Visit Card

If you or your parent(s) or guardian(s) have a Medical Card or GP Visit Card that was in date on 31 December 2026, you will get a score of 1.

See page 21 for more details on requirements.

Criterion 3: Means-tested department of social protection payment (DSP)

If your parent(s) or guardian(s) received a means-tested payment from the Department of Social Protection for at least 26 weeks in 2025, you will get a score of 2.

See page 27 and 32 for more details.

Criterion 4: Disadvantaged area profile

If you live in:

- an extremely disadvantaged area, you will get a score of 2.5
- a very disadvantaged area, your score will be 2.5
- a disadvantaged area, you will get a score of 1.5.

If you live in an area with a Marginally Below Average or higher deprivation score you will receive a score of 0 for this criterion.

See page 20 for more details on requirements.

Criterion 5: DEIS School attendance

If you completed five years in a secondary school that takes part in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) scheme run by the Department of Education and Youth, you will get a score of 1.5.

See page 20 for more details on requirements.



Priority applicants for HEAR

HEAR has four priority groups of applicants. You can see these in column 1 in the table below. If you think you are a priority applicant, you may need some evidence to support your application. If you apply under a HEAR priority group, provide the required documents and are eligible you will receive a score of 7. You can compete for HEAR reduced points places and will be prioritised for offers.

However, Priority Groups shown below are eligible for HEAR.

Priority Groups	Supporting evidence	Score	More info
Care-experienced	None required, HEAR needs your consent to share data with Tusla to confirm your care-experienced status	7	Find on page 21
Member of the Traveller Community	School or Community Reference form	7	Find on page 22
Member of the Roma Community	School or Community Reference form	7	Find on page 23
Young Parent	Low-income and Department of Social Protection (DSP) Statement	7	Find on page 25

Important: If you are HEAR and DARE eligible, you are considered a priority applicant and can compete for reduced points priority offers.

Homeless applicants

If you experienced homelessness during your secondary school education between 1 January 2025 and 1 March 2027, and you or your parent(s) or guardian(s) are registered on the Pathway Accommodation and Support System (PASS), you will get a score of 2.5. Please read more on page 24.



What your score means

HEAR adds up your criteria scores to see if you are:

- HEAR priority
- HEAR eligible, or
- HEAR ineligible.

Total HEAR score	What it means for your application
5.5 – 7 HEAR Priority	You can compete for HEAR reduced points offers through the CAO and will be prioritised.
2.5 – 5 HEAR Eligible	You can compete for HEAR reduced points offers through the CAO, although you will not be prioritised.
2 or below HEAR Ineligible	You are not eligible for HEAR but you can still be considered for CAO offers.

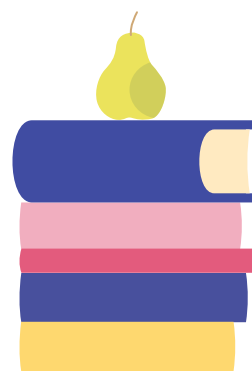


How to check if your family income is within the HEAR criteria income limit

Before making your HEAR application, most applicants will need to make sure that their family income is within the HEAR income limit (see pages 16 and 17 which include helpful examples to show you how this works).

Important: You don't have to check this if you are applying:

- as a member of the Traveller Community
- as a member of the Roma Community
- as Care-experienced



HEAR household income levels (thresholds) – 2027 entry

For HEAR, low family income is determined by:

- how many children (your siblings) there are in your family
- if any people are medically certified as permanently unfit for work
- how many people in your family are in full-time education
- how much your parent(s) or guardian(s) earned in income during the year ending 31 December 2025. (You will need to talk to them about this for the year 2025).

Use the table below to estimate if your family's income is equal to or less than the HEAR income limit.

HEAR income limit table by number of dependent children

Number of dependent children in your household. See below for definition of dependent child*	HEAR income limit: Depending on the number of dependent children in your household, your family income must be at or below these figures (€) for the year 2025.
1–3	€58,470
4–7	€64,080
8+	€69,465
For each 'relevant person' (see next page)**, you can add a set amount to the total family or household income. For each relevant person, this set amount is:	€4,785

*What is a 'dependent'?

A dependent includes:

- a brother or sister in your household under the age of 16 years on 1 October 2026; or
- a brother or sister over the age of 16 years on 1 October 2026 who is:
 - attending secondary school education, or
 - attending a full-time course in further education and training (FET) or higher education, or
 - medically certified as permanently unfit for work.
- a parent or guardian attending a full-time course in further education and training (FET) or higher education

**What is a 'relevant person'?

A relevant person is another member of your household who is attending a full-time course in further or higher education at the same time as you. The course must be at least one year in duration and lead to a major award at Levels 5 to 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications. The reckonable income thresholds can be adjusted to take account of relevant persons attending a full-time course of at least one year's duration or an approved part-time course in Ireland, the EU or the UK leading to a major award at Levels 5 to 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

For a HEAR applicant who is dependent on their parents, relevant persons include:

- your dependent siblings (brothers or sisters) in further or higher education
- your parent(s) or legal guardian(s) attending a full-time course in further or higher education

For each relevant person, add €4,785 to the income threshold.

Examples of how to estimate your family income for 2025

The following are three examples of how to estimate your family income for 2025. HEAR encourages you to get help estimating your family income.

Example 1: Applicant who will qualify to apply for HEAR (due to income threshold)



Caroline is a 17-year-old leaving certificate student. She lives with her two younger brothers who are still at school. The family income in the home for 2025 was **€55,000**.

This means Caroline will be eligible to apply for HEAR under the income criterion, as her family's income (with three children) is less than the **€58,470** income limit for this family. Caroline should apply for HEAR.

Example 2: Applicant who may qualify to apply for HEAR (due to income threshold)



Obi is an 18-year-old leaving certificate student. He lives with four brothers and his mum and dad. Obi's 19-year-old brother and their dad are both studying a full-time college course.

The family income in the home for 2025 was €63,500. This is just below the income limit for a family with 4-7 children for HEAR which is €64,080 (see table above). Obi may be eligible for HEAR under the income criterion. Here is how it will work:

- Obi's family income for 2025 is €63,500.
- However, Obi's family income threshold can be increased by €4,785 for Obi's brother and by another €4,785 for their dad as both of these are in full-time education. (This is because they are 'relevant persons' in full-time education).
- This means the total income threshold (limit) for Obi's family HEAR considers is: €73,650. Obi should apply for HEAR.

Example 3: Applicant who won't qualify to apply for HEAR (due to income threshold)



Jacob is 17 years old and is preparing for his leaving certificate. He has one sister. The family income is **€64,000**. Jacob will not be eligible for HEAR, as his family income is over the limit for families with fewer than three children for HEAR.

Important:

If you are ineligible (won't qualify), please read page 36 for further advice.

Is your family income less than the HEAR income limit and do you think you may meet a correct combination of the other HEAR criteria?

'Yes' - your answer indicates you should consider making a HEAR application.

'No' - your answer indicates you should not consider making a HEAR application.

If you tick Yes to this question, we will ask you if you wish to be considered for HEAR.

If you need help to work out your particular situation, ask a parent, guardian, teacher or guidance counsellor for help.

To complete your HEAR application, you must submit documents proving your household income (Criterion 1) and, if relevant, your parent(s) or guardian(s)' means-tested department of social protection payment (Criterion 3). See pages 29-34 for the full list of documents required.

Completing your HEAR online application

This section contains information on how to complete the online HEAR application form.

This will help you and your parent(s) or guardian(s) make a complete HEAR application.

Remember to check your email account regularly for important CAO notifications about your application.

You can view a demo of the HEAR online application form at www.cao.ie/demo

How to apply

My Application: To log-in you must enter your CAO account details in the My Application section of the CAO website and click Log-in.

The following sections describe what information the HEAR form requires.

In the HEAR online form you must do 3 things:

1. Confirm your family income is within the HEAR income limit. See page 15.
2. Agree to be considered for HEAR.
3. Agree that you have read and accept the HEAR Terms and Conditions. (You read and agree to these online.)

Sections of the online HEAR application form

The HEAR online application form has seven sections. Not all sections may apply to you, so please read carefully.

Every applicant must fill in:

- **Section 1:** Your address
- **Section 2:** Secondary school education
- **Section 3:** Medical Card/GP Visit Card

Some applicants will have to complete parts of Section 4.

Read the sub-sections of Section 4 here to see if they apply to you.

- **Section 4.1:** Care-experienced applicants – complete this section if you were or are care-experienced. For the purpose of applying to HEAR, care-experienced refers to anyone who was or is cared for by a Tusla (Child and Family Agency) appointed caregiver, rather than parent(s) or guardian(s) for any period of time between birth and 18 years.
- **Section 4.2:** Members of the Traveller Community – complete this section if you wish to be considered for HEAR by referring to your membership of this community.
- **Section 4.3:** Members of the Roma Community – complete this section if you wish to be considered for HEAR by referring to your membership of this community.
- **Section 4.4:** Applicants who experienced homelessness or became homeless while in secondary school education from 1 January 2025 to 1 March 2027.
- **Section 4.5:** Applicants who are young parents.

Most applicants must also fill in sections 5 and 6.

While most applicants must fill in sections 5 and 6, you do not need to fill in these sections if you are care-experienced or a member of either the Traveller Community or the Roma Community.

- **Section 5:** Family dependents
- **Section 6:** Household Financial Circumstances
- **Section 7:** This section is for applicants who are carrying forward HEAR eligibility from 2026 to 2027. You only need to complete this if you are re-applying to CAO in 2027 or taking up a deferred college place from 2026.

Tips: To make a complete online HEAR application, have the following ready before you start



To complete the relevant sections of the form, you will need your Personal Public Service (PPS) number. You may also need your parent(s)' or guardian(s)' PPS number. You may also need the dates of birth of your parent(s) or guardian(s) that you live with and the names of colleges they may be attending.

Important Application deadlines

All applicants must post supporting documents to arrive in CAO by Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm. Make sure to check what documents you need to send.

Sections of the HEAR online application form:

Section 1: Your address

HEAR uses your address to find out whether you live in an area of urban or rural disadvantage. Please fill in your address carefully using the format you see on your online form. This will make sure HEAR has the best picture of where you live. Please note, HEAR may contact you and ask you to provide evidence of this address.

Some addresses don't have house names or numbers. If your address doesn't have a name or number, leave this bit blank. Please try and fill in your Eircode. If you don't know your Eircode, you can search for it on www.eircode.ie

Section 2: Secondary school

HEAR uses this information to check if you attended a DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) school for five or more years of your secondary school education. The Department of Education and Youth compiled the list of DEIS schools. In order to assess your application, HEAR needs your permission to contact the Department of Education directly to verify your DEIS School attendance(s). In order to do that you must enter your Personal Public Service (PPS) Number.

If your information cannot be verified by the Department of Education, you may be asked to provide documentation from your secondary school(s) detailing your DEIS school attendance. To complete this section of the form, select the county where you went to secondary school and then the school you attended. If your school is not listed, select My School is Not Listed.

- Check the official name of your school.
 - If your previous school was outside the Republic of Ireland, select: School Outside of Republic of Ireland.
 - If you attended more than one secondary school, enter the details of the previous school(s) you attended.
 - Enter the number of years you attended your secondary school(s).
-

Section 3: Medical Card/GP Visit Card

HEAR asks for your permission to contact the HSE directly to check that you and/or your parent(s) or guardian(s) have a Medical Card or a GP Visit Card that is in date on 31 December 2026.

You can supply HEAR with information for yourself or your parent(s) or guardian(s). If you have a Medical Card in your own name, you should enter your own PPS number in the box provided.

If you do not have a Medical Card or GP Visit Card in your own name but your parent(s) or guardian(s) does, you should enter their name, date of birth and PPS number in the box provided on this part of the form. Please remember to add your own PPS number also.

Section 4.1: Care-experienced/Tusla applicants

This section is for applicants who are or have been care-experienced and are under 23 when they apply to HEAR. For the purpose of applying to HEAR, care-experienced refers to anyone who was or is cared for by a Tusla (Child and Family Agency) appointed caregiver, rather than a parent(s) or guardian(s) for any period of time between birth and 18 years.

By applying to HEAR, you may be eligible to compete for HEAR reduced points places and access to additional and targeted supports in college.

Completing the online application form

You answer 'Yes' to the question in 4.1 to confirm you are care-experienced.

If you are not care-experienced, click 'No' on this section of the form and complete sections 5 and 6.

Applicants who are or have been care-experienced will meet the HEAR Priority Group criterion and receive a score of 7. This means once you provide the required consent and information confirming your care experience on the form, you will be considered an eligible HEAR Priority Applicant and you do not need to complete the rest of the online HEAR application.



What do I need to provide?

HEAR needs your consent so we can share necessary information between Tusla and the HEAR scheme to confirm your care-experienced status. HEAR can only assess your application if you provide the information below on your online HEAR application form.

In the application, HEAR will ask you to provide some basic information. This includes your:

- name (as it appears on your birth certificate)
- date of birth
- PPS number
- county or area or areas where you experienced care.
- If Tusla are unable to confirm that you are or were care-experienced, HEAR may contact you and ask you to provide further documentation.

Section 4.2: Members of the Traveller Community

This section is for HEAR applicants who are under 23 and who wish to be identified as members of the Traveller Community. This section only applies to you if you are a member of this community.

Completing the online application form

If you wish to be identified as member of the Traveller Community, you must answer 'Yes' to Question 4.2 on the form.

You only need to disclose (share) that you are a member of the Traveller Community in your HEAR application if you wish to do so. However, if you do not disclose that you are a member of the Traveller Community, HEAR will not be able to give you targeted support as a HEAR Priority Group.

If you do not wish to disclose that you are a member of the Traveller Community in your HEAR application, select 'No' and continue to complete the rest of the online HEAR application form (sections 5 and 6).

If you select 'No'

HEAR will assess your HEAR application based on the other criteria. HEAR will consider you for reduced points places, but you will not be prioritised.

If you select 'Yes'

You do not need to complete the rest of the online HEAR application.

What do I need to provide by post?

School or Community Reference Form

If you select 'Yes', you need to get and post a copy of the School or Community Reference Form to the CAO by Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm. This is a reference form for your school or community group to support your application to HEAR. For the form template, please download from www.accesscollege.ie/hear-supportingdocuments

Applicants who wish to be identified as a member of the Traveller Community and provide the completed form will meet the HEAR Priority Group criterion and receive a score of 7.

Section 4.3: Members of the Roma Community

This section is for HEAR applicants who are under 23 and who wish to be identified as members of the Roma Community in their HEAR application. If you are not a member of this community, this section does not apply to you.

Completing the online application form

If you wish to be identified as a member of the Roma Community, you must answer 'Yes' to Questions in section 4.3.

You only need to disclose (share) that you are a member of the Roma Community in your HEAR application if you wish to do so. However, if you do not disclose that you are a member of the Roma Community, HEAR will not be able to give you targeted support as a HEAR Priority Group.

If you do not wish to disclose that you are a member of the Roma Community in your HEAR application, select 'No' and continue to complete the rest of the online HEAR application form (sections 5 and 6).

If you select 'No'

HEAR will assess your HEAR application based on the other criteria.

HEAR will consider you for reduced points places, but you will not be prioritised.

If you select 'Yes'

You do not need to complete the rest of the online HEAR application.

What do I need to provide by post?

School or Community Reference Form

If you select 'Yes', you need to post a copy of the School or Community Reference Form to the CAO by Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm. This is a reference form to be completed with your school or community group to support your application to HEAR. For the form template, please download from www.accesscollege.ie/hear-supportingdocuments

Applicants who wish to be identified as members of the Roma Community and provide the completed form will meet the HEAR Priority criterion and receive a score of 7.

Section 4.4: Applicants who have experienced homelessness

This section is for an applicant who:

- has experienced homelessness while in secondary school education from 1 January 2025 to 1 March 2027
- is under the age of 23 as of 1 January 2027.

You can apply under this section if you or your parent(s) or guardian(s) that you live with is registered on the Pathway Accommodation and Support System (PASS). PASS is an online database used by all Local Authorities (LA) and homeless services in Ireland.

If you have experienced homelessness from 1 January 2025 to 1 March 2027 while attending secondary school, **you will receive a score of 2.5.**

Completing the online application form

HEAR needs your permission to contact the PASS (Pathway Accommodation Support System) office directly so we can assess your application.

HEAR needs this to check that you or your parent(s) or guardian(s), whom you live with, were homeless during the period of 1 January 2025 to 1 March 2027. HEAR will need your PPS number if you give your permission. HEAR will also need the name, date of birth and PPS number of your parent(s) or guardian(s). Remember, you must also meet the low-income criterion (Criterion 1). See Section 6 (pages 26–28) for the household income documents you need to submit with your application.



Please note: To be considered for HEAR reduced points places you or your parent(s) or guardian(s) must be registered as homeless on the PASS system.

HEAR may be unable to check your application under this criterion if you have not accessed homeless services or emergency accommodation (for example before 1 January 2025).

Applicants who meet the criteria for homelessness and provide the information above will be awarded a score of 2.5 and be HEAR eligible. However, if you meet other criteria as outlined on page 12 (for example medical card, DEIS school etc) this may increase your score.

Section 4.5: Young Parents

This section is for an applicant who:

- has become a young parent while in secondary school education
- is receiving child benefit payment for the year 2026
- is under the age of 23 as of 1 January 2027.

The HEAR scheme recognises the impact having a child has on your own educational pathway.

Remember, you must also meet the low-income criterion (Criterion 1). See Section 6 (pages 26–28) for the household income documents you need to submit with your application.

Completing the online application form

Only the applicant should fill out this section

This section is relevant only to the applicant. It is not for the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the applicant who may themselves have been young parents.

If you are eligible under this category, you can compete for HEAR reduced points places in participating colleges. You can also avail of supports once you start college. These include:

- orientation
- mentoring
- additional resources.

What do I need to provide by post?

- Young parents need to fill in Part 1 of a Young Parent Request for Information Form.
- A Department of Social Protection Official must complete Part 2 of this form.

You can get a copy of the Young Parent Request for Information Form at www.accesscollege.ie/hear-supportingdocuments

Remember to send HEAR a copy of your completed form and keep the original. Applicants who wish to be considered young parents and provide the necessary documentation as outlined above will meet the HEAR Priority criterion and receive a score of 7.

Section 5: Family dependents

To determine your HEAR income limit, HEAR needs to know the number of dependent children in your family in 2026. Do not count yourself in this section. Pick the number from a drop-down menu on the form.

What is a 'dependent'?

A dependent includes:

- a sibling [brother or sister] in your household under the age of 16 years on 1 October 2026; or
- a brother or sister over the age of 16 years on 1 October 2026 who is:
 - attending secondary school education, or
 - attending a full-time course in further education and training (FET) or higher education, or
 - medically certified as permanently unfit for work.
- a parent or guardian attending a full-time course in further education and training (FET) or higher education

You will also have to type in each dependent's name, date of birth, and the school or college they are attending (if any).

Section 6: Household financial circumstances

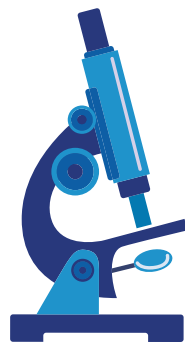
In this section, HEAR asks you to tell us who contributed to your family's income in 2025. Your household income may come from:

- Employment
- Department of Social Protection payments
- Pensions
- Rental property
- Farming

Section 6.1: Who contributed to your family's income in 2025?

Fill in this section with your parent(s) or guardian(s). Entering inaccurate information will affect the outcome of your HEAR application.

Tick who contributed financially to your family's income in 2025. If your parent(s) or guardian(s) are separated or divorced, only fill in the income of the parent you live with most of the time.



Section 6.2: family financial circumstances

Please list all sources of income your parent(s) or guardian(s) received in 2025 excluding child benefit. You must tick yes or no to all types of income.

Type of Income	Parent/ Guardian 1	Parent/ Guardian 2	Document Required
Was your parent or guardian in paid employment in 2025 on a full, part time or temporary basis?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Statement of Liability for 2025 from Revenue Commissioners. (See pages 29-30)
Was your parent or guardian self-employed, engaged in farming, or receiving rent from rental properties in 2025?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 for 2025 from Revenue Commissioners or Tax Exemption Letter. (See page 30)
Did your parent or guardian receive any social welfare payments in 2025 other than child benefit?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Department of Social Protection (DSP) Form or DSP Statement for 2025. (See page 32)
Did your parent or guardian receive any lump sum payments in 2025 from his/her former employer as a result of being made redundant?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Form RP50 Notification of Redundancy OR Letter from Employer. (See page 33)
Was your parent or guardian retired in 2025?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	• Retirement Lump Sum Letter from Employer (See page 33) and/or • Statement of Liability for 2025/Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 for 2025 (See page 30) and/or • Department of Social Protection (DSP) Form or DSP Statement for 2025. (See page 32)

Section 7: Carrying forward HEAR eligibility from 2026 to 2027

This section is only relevant to applicants who made a HEAR application and were eligible in 2026 (e.g. applicants who are now repeating the Leaving Certificate or taking up a deferral from 2026).

Eligibility for HEAR carries forward for one year provided that you:

- are under the age of 23 as of 1 January 2027
- apply to CAO by Monday 1 February 2027 at 5pm
- indicate that you wish to apply to HEAR by Monday 1 March 2027 at 5pm
- supply your correct CAO 2026 application number

Please note that even though you must apply to CAO by Monday 1 February, you have until Monday 1 March at 5pm to complete your online HEAR application



The outcome of your 2026 HEAR application was communicated to you by email in June 2026. If you applied to CAO in 2026 and you were deemed eligible for HEAR in 2026, then your HEAR eligibility can be carried forward to your application for entry in 2027.

You must enter your correct CAO 2026 application number in the box provided. You are still required to complete all relevant sections of the 2027 HEAR application form, however you do not need to supply supporting documents as part of your application. You can contact the CAO helpdesk if you require information about your 2026 HEAR eligibility.

In the event of being offered and accepting a HEAR place in 2027, you may be required to provide the supporting documents which accompanied your 2026 HEAR application.

You must be under the age of 23 as of 1 January 2027 to carry forward HEAR eligibility from 2026 to 2027.

Supporting Document Checklist

Supporting Document Checklist

Before posting your documents, check the supporting document checklist on your online HEAR application. It tells you exactly what you need to submit.

All supporting documents must reach the CAO by **Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm**.

If you include income for both parent(s) or guardian(s), you must provide supporting documents for both. HEAR requires evidence of your household income for the full 2025 tax year (52 weeks).

Revenue Supporting Documents

If your parent(s) or guardian(s) pay tax through PAYE

Submit a Statement of Liability for 2025 (previously called a **P21**).

- An Employment Detail Summary will not be accepted.
 - If your parent(s) or guardian(s) are exempt from paying tax, submit a Tax Exemption Letter from Revenue.
 - If your parent(s) or guardian(s) are jointly assessed, one Statement of Liability is sufficient.
 - Include all pages of the Statement of Liability, including the front and back.
-

What is a Statement of Liability?

A Statement of Liability (previously called a P21) is a Revenue document that shows a person's income, tax credits and tax paid for a tax year.

Please note: An Employment Detail Summary is not accepted for HEAR.

How do I request a Statement of Liability?

The quickest way to request a Statement of Liability is through myAccount on the Revenue website.

1. Log in to myAccount at Revenue.
2. If you are not registered, you will need to complete the registration process.
3. Request a Statement of Liability for 2025.
4. Your Statement of Liability will be available in My Documents if you receive revenue correspondence electronically. Otherwise, it will be sent by post.

You can also request a Statement of Liability by submitting a paper Income Tax Return to Revenue. As this document can take several weeks to issue, request it as early as possible.

If your parent(s) or guardian(s) are self-employed or company directors

Submit a Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 for 2025.

- Do not submit a Form 11, as it will not be accepted.
 - If a Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 is unavailable, a Notice of Assessment Chapter 4 may be accepted.
 - If Revenue has issued a Notice of Amended Assessment Chapter 4 or Chapter 5, submit this instead.
-

What is a Self-Assessment – Chapter 4?

A Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 is a Revenue document for people who are:

- self-employed,
- company directors, or
- receiving income that is not taxed through PAYE.

It shows a person's income, tax due and tax paid for the tax year.

Do not submit a Form 11, as it is not accepted for HEAR.

How do I request a Self-Assessment – Chapter 4?

A Self-Assessment Chapter 4 will be in your parent(s) or guardian(s) Revenue On-Line Service (ROS) inbox after they have completed their return and self-assessment for 2025.

What if my parent(s) or guardian(s) cannot get a Self-Assessment – Chapter 4?

If your parent(s) or guardian(s) submit a paper tax return and do not complete a self-assessment, Revenue may instead issue a Notice of Assessment – Chapter 4. This document can be accepted for HEAR.

What if my parent(s) or guardian(s) have a Notice of Amended Assessment?

If your parent(s) or guardian(s) have a Notice of Amended Assessment – Chapter 4 or Chapter 5 for 2025, submit this document instead.

If you submit a Notice of Amended Assessment, you do not need to provide a Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 or a Notice of Assessment – Chapter 4.

How long does it take to receive Revenue documents?

A Statement of Liability can take several weeks to issue, so request it as early as possible.

If your parent(s) or guardian(s) are self-employed, they should complete their 2025 tax return as soon as possible so their Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 is available.

What if one parent or guardian is PAYE and the other is self-employed?

The documents you need depend on how your parent(s) or guardian(s) are assessed by Revenue.

- Jointly assessed: Submit a Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 for 2025.
 - Separately assessed: Submit a Statement of Liability for the PAYE parent or guardian and a Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 for the self-employed parent or guardian.
-



What if my parent(s) or guardian(s) earned income outside Ireland?

If your parent(s) or guardian(s) earned income outside the Republic of Ireland in 2025, submit the equivalent tax documents for that country.

For documents that are not in English or Irish, you must also provide a certified English translation.

If you are unsure what documents are required, contact one of the HEAR advisors in participating colleges listed on page 10 for advice.

What if my parent or guardian is self-employed and also in receipt of a Department of Social Protection payment?

Submit a copy of a Self-Assessment - Chapter 4 for 2025, plus a Department of Social Protection form or statement for 2025.

How do I complete the Department of Social Protection (DSP) form or statement?

If your parent(s) or guardian(s) received a Department of Social Protection (DSP) payment during 2025, you must provide either:

- a completed DSP form, or
- a DSP payment statement.

The document must show:

- the name of the person receiving the payment,
- the name of the payment,
- the total amount received in 2025, and
- the payment start date and end date (if applicable).

HEAR requires evidence of your household income for the full 2025 tax year (52 weeks). Depending on your circumstances, you may also need to provide Revenue documents or evidence of other income.

How do I get a DSP form or statement?

You can:

- ask your local Department of Social Protection (DSP) office to complete, sign and stamp the DSP form, or
- request a DSP payment statement online.

The DSP form is included at the back of this handbook and can also be downloaded from your online HEAR application.



Important instructions

Before sending your documents, remember:

- Send clear photocopies only. Do not post original documents, as they will not be returned.
- Make sure all forms are fully completed, signed and stamped, where required.
- If you lose your DSP form, you can download another copy from your online HEAR application or from the HEAR supporting documents webpage.
- Check that all documents are fully completed before posting them to CAO.

What if my parent(s) or guardian(s) received a redundancy or retirement payment?

If your parent(s) or guardian(s) received a lump sum redundancy or retirement lump sum payment in 2025, you must submit one of the following:

- all pages of Form RP50 – Notification of Redundancy, or
 - a letter from the employer or pension provider confirming:
 - the date employment ended,
 - the gross lump sum paid,
 - the number of years worked, and
 - the gross annual pension (if applicable).
-

What documents do HEAR Priority Group applicants need to submit?

Applicants from the Traveller and Roma Communities

If you are applying as a member of the Traveller or Roma community, you must submit a completed School and Community Reference Form.

The form must be signed, dated and stamped by your school or community organisation.

Young Parent applicants

If you are applying as a Young Parent, you must submit the Young Parent Information Request Form from the Department of Social Protection.

- Complete Section 1 yourself.
- Section 2 must be completed, signed and stamped by a Department of Social Protection official.

Remember, you must also meet the low-income criterion (Criterion 1). See Section 6 (pages 26–28) for the household income documents you need to submit with your application.

Before you post your documents

- Post all supporting documents to reach the CAO by Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm.
 - Send clear copies and keep your original documents.
 - Make sure to get a free certificate of posting from the post office as proof of postage.
 - Sample forms and supporting documents are available at www.accesscollege.ie/hear-supportingdocuments
-

Final steps

Terms and conditions

To apply to HEAR you must agree to the HEAR terms and conditions on your online HEAR application form.

When you tick 'Yes', you want to be considered for HEAR, it also means that you have read and accepted HEAR's terms and conditions. These are available on your online HEAR application and on www.accesscollege.ie

Next steps in the application process



I have completed my online HEAR application and submitted supporting documents, what happens next?

After the Leaving Certificate ends in late June 2027, you will receive notification from HEAR about the outcome of your HEAR application and whether you are eligible to be considered for a HEAR place. You can view the outcome of your HEAR application by logging into your CAO account under the My Application section on www.cao.ie



What does it mean if I am eligible for HEAR?

If you are eligible for HEAR, you will compete for one of the reserved places on offer in the participating colleges. If you are successful, you will receive a HEAR offer through CAO in August 2027. You must meet the minimum entry and course requirements to be considered for a HEAR place. You can find details of places available and minimum course requirements at www.accesscollege.ie



What happens if I receive a HEAR offer?

If you are successful, you will be notified by CAO and by the college or university which makes you the HEAR offer. Accept your place through CAO and you must attend the orientation programme before the first term. You can find details of orientation dates at www.accesscollege.ie



What does it mean if I am ineligible for HEAR?

Being ineligible for HEAR means that you cannot compete for one of the reduced points places.

Applicants are ineligible because they:

- did not meet criteria, or
- failed to meet the terms and conditions of application.

It does not affect any application you have made for courses through the CAO. In other words, you may still be offered a place on a course if you meet the entry requirements.



I am ineligible, can I have my application reviewed?

Yes, HEAR uses a Review and Appeals process to make sure that all HEAR applicants are treated fairly and that HEAR has applied the assessment procedures consistently. You can get more information on the review and appeals process at www.accesscollege.ie/hear/reviews-and-appeals



What is a SUSI grant?

Apply for your SUSI grant

You should also apply for financial support for college. SUSI stands for Student Universal Support Ireland. SUSI is the main source of financial assistance available from the Irish State for students in full-time:

- Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLCs)
- Higher education undergraduate courses
- It offers different types of grants to students who qualify.

Steps to take

- Create a SUSI account as soon as SUSI opens each year
- For detailed information on financial support and student grants when going to higher education, log on to: www.susi.ie
- Use the Grant Eligibility Reckoner to find out if you meet SUSI's criteria to receive student grant funding. [SUSI Eligibility Indicator - Get Started](#)
- Apply early and return the documents it requests as soon as possible.
- Tick the SUSI option on your CAO application to share your college course details with SUSI.

HEAR policy on correspondence

HEAR will only discuss your application with you, your parent(s) or guardian(s) or a person nominated by you. Any correspondence from a third party will not be accepted.

Have you considered...

Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)?

DARE is a third-level alternative admissions scheme for school-leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their secondary school education. DARE offers reduced points places to school leavers who because of having a disability have experienced additional educational challenges in secondary school education.

You should apply to both DARE and HEAR if they are relevant to you. Applicants who apply and are deemed eligible for both DARE and HEAR will be prioritised by the participating colleges and universities when offering their reduced points places. If you apply to DARE, you need to do this online by Monday 1 March 2027 at 5pm and send supporting documentation to reach the CAO by Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm. For more information on DARE see www.accesscollege.ie



Your parent(s)/guardian(s) must complete Part 2 and submit this form at their local DSP Intreo Centre. Keep a photocopy and proof of postage. Post all documents to reach CAO by Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm. It is the responsibility of every applicant to ensure both pages of this form are filled in correctly.

Part 1: To be completed by HEAR Applicant

HEAR Applicant's Name:

Address:

CAO Number:

Date of Birth:

PPS Number:

Part 2: To be completed by applicant's Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

I authorise the release of information outlined below for the purposes of assessing a HEAR application.

Parent 1/Guardian 1 Signature

Parent 2/Guardian 2 Signature

PPS Number (Parent 1/Guardian 1)

PPS Number (Parent 2/Guardian 2)

Part 3: To be completed by DSP Official

Parent 1/Guardian 1 Name:

Please do not alter the year for which information is required on this form.

Total Social Welfare Income on all social welfare schemes* previously paid to this PPS number in the year 2025?

In receipt of means-tested social assistance payment(s) for at least 26 weeks or 6 months in the year 2025?

☐

YES

☐

NO

Name of Payment(s):

Payment 1:

Payment 2:

* Excluding Child Benefit and certain supplements paid under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance schemes.

Parent 2/Guardian 2 Name:

Please do not alter the year for which information is required on this form.

Total Social Welfare Income on all social welfare schemes* previously paid to this PPS number in the year 2025?

In receipt of means-tested social assistance payment(s) for at least 26 weeks or 6 months in the year 2025? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Name of Payment(s):
Payment 1:
Payment 2:

*Excluding Child Benefit and certain supplements paid under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance schemes.

Additional Payment Information

1. Is there an Adult Dependant on payments listed on this form? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Name of Adult Dependant:

2. Are means deducted for payments? ☐ YES ☐ NO
If yes, please enter amount of weekly means deducted

Weekly means deducted for Parent 1/Guardian 1 in 2025
Weekly means deducted for Parent 2/Guardian 2 in 2025

All forms must be completed, signed and stamped by a DSP official.
Forms that are not signed and stamped are invalid.

Name of DSP Official (BLOCK CAPITALS):
Date:
Signature of DSP Official

DSP Official Stamp

HEAR is a college and university admissions scheme for school leavers, resident in the Republic of Ireland, who are under represented at Higher Education due to their socio-economic background.

Post your supporting documents to:

HEAR Applications 2027,
CAO, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway.

by Wednesday 10 March 2027 at 5pm.



We wish you the
best with your
application
to HEAR

