

29/01/2026

CAO Press Release

Normal closing date for CAO applications is 1 February at 5pm

The Central Applications Office (CAO) is reminding prospective higher education applicants that the normal closing date for registering on the CAO system for 2026 entry is Sunday, **1 February at 5pm**.

Applicants who have yet to obtain a 2026 CAO application number can do so for a fee of €50 up to 1 February at 5pm.

Commenting on the closing date, the CAO's Head of Communications, Eileen Keleghan, reminded applicants of the importance of early submission:

“We encourage all applicants to register on the system in advance of the 1 February deadline. Applying early avoids unnecessary stress and ensures applicants avoid any restrictions that may apply.

“Applicants who are considering applying for the HEAR and/or DARE schemes must have applied to CAO by 1 February at 5pm. So too should mature applicants or those who are considering applying for a course that is listed as restricted in the CAO handbook”.

A late application facility is available for applicants from 5 March up to the 1 May at 5pm for a fee of €65, however restrictions apply.

Ms Keleghan went on to advise applicants to enter course choices on their application at this time:

“We also encourage registered applicants to add some course choices to their application in advance of 1 February at 5pm. Most applicants will have an opportunity to edit these choices using the Change of Mind facility from 5 May to 1 July at 5pm; however, some restrictions apply.

“Mature applicants or applicants who may wish to apply for a restricted course, should include their course choices by 1 February or by 1 March for the extra fee of €10.

The CAO website contains several guides and supports for applicants which should make the application process easy to navigate, including a ‘Demo Application Facility’, the CAO Handbook and Information Sheets, and step-by-step video guides.

Applicants for the HEAR or DARE scheme are advised to complete the online HEAR and DARE forms well in advance of 1 March at 5pm and to ensure that supporting documents are sent by post to CAO before 10 March at 5pm.

Mature applicants are reminded to complete the Mature Applicant form before 1 March at 5pm, and to upload or post supporting documents within ten days of making their application.

To apply to CAO go to www.cao.ie and click on ‘Apply’.

-Ends -

Notes to the Editor:

- CAO Normal Closing Date is 1 February at 5pm
- CAO Change of Course Choices Facility opens on 5 February at noon and closes on 1 March at 5pm – a fee of €10 applies.
- HEAR and/or DARE applicants have until 1 March at 5pm to complete their online HEAR or DARE form.
- HEAR and/or DARE applicants must submit their supporting documentation to CAO by 10 March at 5pm.
- The CAO Change of Mind facility opens on the 5 May. This free facility allows applicants the opportunity to add, remove or change the order of their courses as many times as they like right up to the 1 July at 5pm, however it is important to note that restrictions apply. Applicants are reminded that they should list their course choices in genuine order of preference.
- The CAO's late application facility will be available to applicants from 5 March to 1 May at 5pm for a fee of €65, however, there are certain categories of applicant who need to have applied by the deadline of 1 February at 5pm, for example, applicants for the HEAR and/or DARE schemes, mature applicants, and applicants applying for restricted courses.
- A number of video guides are available in the Applicants section of www.cao.ie

For more information contact Eileen Keleghan, Head of Communications by email ekeleghan@cao.ie