

Dear Principal/Guidance Counsellor,

September 2025

We are pleased to enclose HEAR DARE application literature and a small number of CAO Handbooks and posters highlighting key 2026 application dates and promoting the interactive CAO Handbook at www.cao.ie/handbook. Printable PDFs of the 2026 course listings are also available online, including course codes, titles, special requirements, and campus names. Updates (e.g. cancelled or new courses) will be posted in the Important Changes section of the CAO website. A demo version of the 2026 online application form will be available in November, including HEAR and DARE sections.

I would like to draw your attention to the following important updates for 2026:

- **Application Fee Increase (2026)**

From 2026, we will be implementing a marginal increase in our application fee—from €30 to €35 for the discounted application fee deadline of 20 January; €45 to €50 for the 1 February application deadline; and €60 to €65 for the late application deadline of 1 May. We want to assure you that this decision was made with careful consideration and a long-term view of our shared goals. CAO is generally reluctant to increase the application fee and will do so only when necessary. This increase is the first since 2018, and is significantly less than the rate of increase in the Consumer Price Index over this time.

- **HEAR/DARE Documentation Deadline Change**

All supporting documents for the HEAR and DARE schemes must now be received by **10 March 2026 at 5pm**. This change reflects the growing applicant numbers and is a necessity to support the timely processing of DARE and HEAR applications. We would appreciate your assistance in communicating this change to applicants, parents and colleagues.

- **HEAR Review**

The HEAR scheme has undergone a review and there are changes for 2026. Details will be communicated separately and will be available on accesscollege.ie in advance of opening for applications in November.

- **Document Upload Facility**

After a successful pilot scheme for applicants presenting GCE qualifications, it has been decided to extend the document upload facility to other applicants who are required to supply supporting qualifications documents (for example, Other School Leaving candidates, Mature Applicants, etc.). **Please note: The document upload facility will not be available for HEAR, DARE and Graduate Entry Medicine documents** - these must still be posted to CAO, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway, Ireland.

- **Autumn Conferences**

Provisional dates and venues: 4 November – Ormonde Hotel, Kilkenny; 5 November – Clayton Hotel, Limerick; 7 November – Online Webinar; 11 November – Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth; 12 November – Slieve Russell Hotel, Cavan

Registration: Opens 6 October at noon and closes 24 October at midnight via the Guidance/Schools section at cao.ie

We look forward to seeing you at one of the upcoming conferences. If you have any questions or need support, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph O'Grady,

General Manager