



# County Carlow Adult Educational Guidance & Information Service



## What is CAO?

### CAO = Central Applications Office

The task of the CAO is to process applications to undergraduate courses (Higher Certificate, Ordinary Degree or Honours Degree) in a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Republic of Ireland.

Students wishing to go to a HEI can make **ONE** CAO application either:

- Online ([www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie))
- Paper

Courses provided at HEI's are at one of three levels (according to the National Qualifications Framework):

Honours Bachelor Degree	Level 8
Ordinary Bachelor Degree	Level 7
Higher Certificate	Level 6

On the CAO form you can apply for up to ten level 8 courses and up to ten level 7 or level 6 courses

### Level 8

Pref.	Course Code
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

### Level 7 & Level 6

Pref.	Course Code
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

**Take special care not to put your course choices in the wrong list/level. At the offer stage you can receive one offer from each of the lists. You can only accept one offer.**

### Where to find course codes:

- HEI/ HEI website
- CAO
  - [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)
  - Handbook - <https://www.cao.ie/handbook.php>
- Qualifax website – [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie)

**You must place your course choices on the appropriate list according to the order of your preference. It is very important that preference 1 is the one you would most like to be offered. Preference 2 – your next preference and so on.**

### Application dates and fees:

Online application	Fee	Closing date
Online discounted rate	€30	20 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2025 (5pm)
Normal online application	€45	1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2025 (5pm)
Amend course choice before March 1 <sup>st</sup>	€10	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2025 (5pm)
Late online application	€60	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2025 (5pm)
Change of mind	Nil	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2025 (5pm)

### Before filling in the CAO form:

- 1) Read information on the HEI's, the courses available, entry requirements, course content, restrictions etc.
- 2) On [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) if you click on the course code you will be linked to the page for that course on the HEI website
- 3) Contact the HEI's admissions office if you are not clear on any aspect of the information in the prospectus/ online
- 4) Read the CAO handbook carefully - <https://www.cao.ie/handbook.php>
- 5) Check out whether fees are payable for the course – not all HEI's come under the "Free Fees Scheme"
- 6) You are responsible for ensuring that you meet the specified entry requirements and conditions for all courses

### Paper Application Form

If you wish to apply to CAO using the paper application form please contact CAO well in advance of the closing date and a copy of the form will be posted to you.

The CAO form consists of 2 pages

#### First page (Standard Application)

- Your personal details
  - Please note all applicants must supply a valid email address.
- Your course choices
  - This page must be completed by **ALL** applicants and also will be sufficient for applicants who only want to be assessed on their Leaving Certificate and or full QQI level 5/ 6 award results

## **Second page (Non-Standard Application)**

Is designed to cater for non-standard applicants e.g. mature students

**It is the applicant's own responsibility to ensure that the application is submitted accurately and on time.**

### **CAO recommendation – Online Applications**

CAO advise applicants to avoid the use of smartphones or tablets when submitting an online application to prevent errors or issues of device compatibility.

### **How are offers decided?**

Eligible applicants (those who satisfy the basic entry requirements) are placed on an order of merit list for each course to which they have applied.

Their position on the order of merit list is decided....

- A. For those presenting Leaving Certificate/QQI results only, on a points score, based on their examination results.
- B. For mature applicants and those presenting other examinations, the place on the order of merit is based on a variety of evaluation procedures which might include examination results, interview, written application or assessment.

### **Restricted application courses:**

The late application deadline does not apply to certain courses e.g. art, music, drama, because these courses have early assessment procedures e.g. aptitude tests, interviews, portfolio assessment etc. Check with the individual HEI for more information and if you are interested in these courses, ensure to include these on your form before February 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Incorrect or incomplete applications:**

CAO reserves the right to suspend processing of any application which is considered to be either incomplete or inaccurately completed. Processing will resume only after you make good any deficiency by a specified date and upon payment of an extra fee of €10.

### **Evidence of submitting an application:**

If there is any loss or delay of an item in the post, CAO will require proof of postage. Each time you post something to CAO you should ask for a Certificate of Postage.

If you apply online, you will be advised on screen if CAO has received your application. You should save/ print a copy of this on-screen message.

### **Late Applications: received by CAO after 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025**

- Late applications may **NOT** be made for restricted application courses.
- If you are applying for entry to nursing/ midwifery, and/ or primary teaching on the basis of mature years you must apply for these courses through CAO by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025 by 5pm.
- Individual HEI's may have further restrictions on late applications e.g. some may not consider late applications from certain categories of applicants. In particular, mature applicants, transfer applicants and those presenting qualifications other than recently-taken EU school-leaving examinations should make enquiries from the appropriate Admissions Office **BEFORE** submitting a late application.

### **For more information:**

Central Applications Office (CAO)

Website: [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)

Email: Use the 'contact' form on the CAO website

Address: Tower House, Eglinton St., Galway, H91 X25V

Tel: (091) 509800

### **Some Definitions:**

- "Undergraduate" = a student attending a level 6, 7 or 8 course at a Higher Education Institution (Universities, Technological Universities, Colleges of Education)
- "Standard application" = students applying to the CAO based on their Leaving Certificate or QQI FET results.
- "Non-Standard application" = students applying for a course place, not based on Leaving Certificate/ QQI FET results e.g.
  - Pre-2006 GCE/GCSE (England, Wales & Northern Ireland Exams)
  - Other School Leaving Exams (e.g. Baccalaureate, Scottish exams, pre-1985 Irish & UK exams, Leaving Exams outside of UK & Ireland)
  - FETAC Level 5/6 or NCVA Level 2/3 (2002 or earlier)
  - Further Education (other than FETAC 5/6 (NCVA level 2/3)
  - Mature candidates
- "Mature Student" – students who are 23 years of age on the 1<sup>st</sup> January in the year in which they are applying

### **Other factsheets/ links you might find useful:**

- Information Sheet – Mature Applicants - [https://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/2025/infosheets/mature\\_infoheet\\_2025.pdf](https://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/2025/infosheets/mature_infoheet_2025.pdf)
- Information Sheet – Mature Student Applicant Form - [https://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/mature\\_sections.pdf](https://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/mature_sections.pdf)
- "CAO Mature Student Checklist"

Information for this fact sheet was taken from the CAO Handbook - ([www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)). Although every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this information sheet is accurate it is essential that readers should check with the appropriate organisation for the latest information. Co. Carlow AEGIS accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the information contained in this document or for any actions arising from its use.