

School Leavers Guide for Parents/Guardians

The Abbey Vocational School Guidance Department



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The information below is what the Guidance department in the Abbey Vocational School would like the parents/guardians of Leaving Cert students to know in relation to further study and career progression opportunities after completing their Leaving Cert.



1. Career Guidance 'Lingo'

There are a number of terms 'lingo' associated with the CAO process and 3rd level education that the student should be familiar with:

a) CAO - Central Applications Office

The CAO processes all applications for students applying to the first year of an **undergraduate** course in a 3rd level institution in the **Republic of Ireland**.

- The student simply lists the courses they wish to apply for in **genuine order of preference** on a CAO application form. This is done online via the CAO website which is [here](#).
- The decision on whether they are awarded a place will depend on the number of points they obtain in their Leaving Cert. Their points will be calculated on their **BEST SIX SUBJECT RESULTS**.
- All information regarding CAO can be found in the CAO **2018** handbook which is [here](#).
- A list of important CAO **dates** can be viewed [here](#).
- It is important you are clear on the **deadline dates** and **costs** involved in applying to the CAO:
 - i. **20 January 2018 @ 17:15:**
Apply online by this date to avail of the discounted application fee of €30
 - ii. **01 February 2018 @ 17:15:**
Normal closing date for applications - €40 fee applies

b) CAO Change of Mind

Details of the online CAO *Change of Mind* facility to make course changes (except restricted-application courses) can be viewed [here](#). The deadline date for **CAO change of mind** is the 1st of July each year.

c) Deferral

If it were a case that a student wishes to defer their offer of a place in a 3rd level institution within the Republic of Ireland it is important that they are fully aware of the **deferral** process. This part [here](#) of the CAO handbook will explain exactly how it works.

d) UCAS - Universities and Colleges Admissions Services

UCAS is the United Kingdom (UK) version of the Irish CAO system. The student will use the UCAS system if they wish to apply for a 3rd level course of study in the UK (Northern Ireland, England, Scotland & Wales).

- The UCAS website can be found [here](#). See the **2018 key dates** [here](#). In regards **entry requirements** for UK colleges read this link [here](#) (NOTE – this is only a guideline).
- The best way to **search** for courses in UK universities is to use this *search* tool [here](#) on the UCAS website. In the subject box you will put in your key word(s) e.g. *Physiotherapy, Electronic, Accounting* etc.
- A very helpful **Parent's Guide** section on the UCAS website can be found [here](#)

e) European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

The term ECTS is often seen on course listing pages - usually referred to as "credits". It is important students understand what ECTS are. *Trinity College* provide a good information section about ECTS [here](#).

f) Undergraduate Student

This is a student in a 3rd level Institution who has not yet obtained their **level 8** Degree.

- For example - if the student is in the 2nd year of a 4 year *Science* Degree then they are an **undergraduate** student.

g) Postgraduate Student

This is a student who has obtained their **level 8** degree and is now undertaking a further course of 3rd level study.

- For example - if the student has already graduated with a level 8 degree and then decides to do a further course of study at **levels 9 or 10**, they are now a **postgraduate** student.

2. Leaving Cert Grading Scale & CAO Points Calculator

a) Leaving Cert Grading Scale

As you may be aware, a new CAO **grading scale** was introduced from the 2017 Leaving Cert onwards.

- This poster [here](#) provides an easy to understand breakdown of the percentage marks, grades and points.

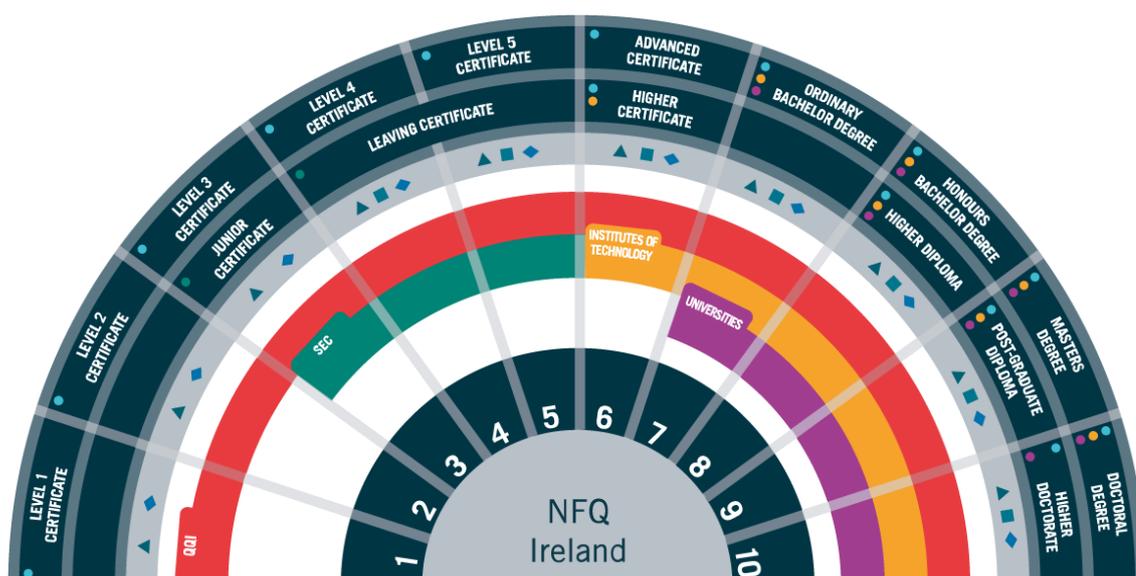
b) CAO Points Calculator

The use of a Leaving Cert **CAO points calculator** is a great way for student to “keep their eye on the ball”.

- *CareersPortal.ie* offer an easy-to-use points calculator, based on the new points system [here](#).



3. The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)



It is important that the student is familiar with the **National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)**

- The NFQ provides information about the different levels of learning from levels 1 to 10. Remember – the **Leaving Cert** is at **level 5** on the NFQ.
- For a simple explanation of the NFQ read this link [here](#). Also, take a look at the NFQ website [here](#) and the NFQ “wheel” [here](#) for further information.
- Many level 6 and 7 qualifications offer students the opportunity to progress to a level 8 qualification. This, of course, is dependent on the student obtaining the required results **and** meeting the minimum entry requirements during their level 6 and/or 7 qualification.

4. Minimum Entry Requirements (MER's)

- a) It is very important that students are fully aware of the **Minimum Entry Requirements (MER's)** for each course that they are going to consider listing on their CAO or other further study application. The MER's for **each course** must be checked **individually** when researching courses.
- b) It must be remembered that obtaining the required number of CAO points is **not** always the **only** requirement to allow them a place on a course. For example, if a student wants to study *Physiotherapy* in UCD [here](#) the MER's (**in addition** to CAO points) include:
- ✓ an O6/H7 in English, Irish & Mathematics
 - ✓ a third language
 - ✓ a laboratory science subject and;
 - ✓ one other recognised subject



NOTE:

Always double check with the institution in question if you are not clear about the minimum entry requirements for a particular course of study.

5. CAO Application Form and Offer Procedure *VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU ARE 100% CLEAR ON THIS

It is very important that the student is 100% clear on how to complete a **CAO Application Form** and how the **CAO Offer Procedure** works.



- Using a single CAO application form, the student may choose from the entire range of courses listed in the CAO Handbook. Each course in the handbook is categorised as level 6, 7 or 8.
- An applicant may apply for up to **10** courses in each category. There are 2 categories:
 - i. Level **8** Category
 - ii. Level **7/Level 6** Category
- It is most important that they list their choices in **genuine order of preference** (and **not** points requirement) in each category i.e. level 8 category and level 7/level 6 category.
- A student will be offered a place in the **highest** of their course preferences to which they are entitled (if any). This will be done, independently, in respect of level 8 and level 7/level 6 course choices.
- They may therefore receive two offers at the same time; one for the highest **level 8** preference to which they are entitled and the other for the highest **level 7/level 6** preference to which they are entitled. However, they are only allowed to accept **one** offer - a level 7/level 6 offer **OR** a level 8 offer.

NOTE:

- i. When a student has been offered a place in one of their course preferences, they are **excluded** from further consideration for any course which is **lower** in their order of preference than the one in which they have been offered a place.
- ii. This means that while they may subsequently move **upwards** in their order of preference (if places become available) they will **not** be considered for a place on a course which is a **lower** preference than that already offered.
- iii. It is most important that they list their course choices in **genuine order of preference** (and **not** points requirement).

ALSO:

- i. Do **not** forget – they also have to meet the **MER's**. If they do **not** meet the MER's they will **not** be offered a place no matter how many points they get.
- ii. They should only list courses that they are **genuinely interested in**. They should **NOT** list a course just for the sake of it. Remember – once it's on their CAO application there's a chance they might actually get it. Whatever course they want the **most** – put it down **FIRST!**
- iii. Please read pages 17-19 of the CAO booklet [here](#) for further information about this process.

6. Studying in Northern Ireland

It is important to remember that students can apply to more than one application system – that is; they can apply to CAO **and** UCAS. They are two entirely **separate** 3rd level application systems.



- a) Applying to 3rd level institutions in Northern Ireland is done via the *UCAS* system. See section 1 (d) above for further information on UCAS.
- b) The two Universities in Northern Ireland are:
 - i. University of Ulster [here](#)
 - ii. Queen's University [here](#)
- c) Each of the two Northern Ireland universities have a number of campuses located throughout Northern Ireland. The main *University of Ulster* campus is in Derry. It is often referred to as "Magee".
- d) Colleges of **further education** (as opposed to 3rd level) include:
 - i. the *North-West Regional College (NWRC)* [here](#)
 - ii. the *South West Regional College* [here](#)

7. Studying Abroad

In relation to **studying abroad** – there is an organisation called [Eunicas](#) available to assist Leaving Cert students.

- a) *Eunicas* enables Irish and UK students to apply for up to eight degree programmes, taught through English, in Europe
- b) The current fee for using the service is €28 * this fee is subject to change
- c) Viewing the [website](#) will give you an idea as to what undergraduate courses European universities are offering English speaking students



8. Post Leaving Certificate (PLC)/Further Education & Training (FET)/Apprenticeships * these options are known as Further Education as opposed to Higher Education

It is important to remember that as well as the option of progressing to a 3rd level institution after completing the Leaving Cert, students also have the opportunity to progress to a PLC, FET or an Apprenticeship.



- a) In relation to **PLC** courses, the best way to search for a course is to use the *PLC Course Finder* on *CareersPortal.ie* [here](#). This will allow the student to do a simple search that will find all relevant PLC's in their area(s) of choice.
- NOTE (1): PLC courses are applied for via the institution offering the course and **not** CAO.
 - NOTE (2): It is very important the student understands that while a PLC **may** offer a pathway to 3rd level it does **not** in any way guarantee a place on a 3rd level course of study.
- b) In relation to **FET** courses, the best place to search is the *fetchcourses.ie* website [here](#).
- NOTE (1): FET courses are applied for via the institution offering the course and **not** CAO.
 - NOTE (2): It is very important the student understands that while a FET course **may** offer a pathway to 3rd level it does **not** in any way guarantee a place on a 3rd level course of study.
- c) In relation to **Apprenticeships**, a very good information portal developed by SOLAS (the state body in charge of apprenticeships) can be viewed [here](#). This part [here](#) of the website will provide you with a complete overview of **ALL** apprenticeships on offer. Please take careful note of the following:
- A number of new apprenticeships have become available in areas including Insurance, Finance & Accountancy. Please ensure you view these under the **Finance** heading [here](#).
 - Several more apprenticeships are due to come on stream between now and 2020. These include opportunities in ICT, MedTech, Logistics and Hospitality sectors
- ✓ It is important to understand that registration for an apprenticeship is done via the apprentice's employer [and](#) the Education & Training Board (ETB) local to the employer's address.