Coláiste Bríde

Templeshannon, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.

Coláiste Bríde
Guidance Counselling Department

2nd October 2026

Important CAO 2027 / HEAR & DARE Admissions Schemes Information

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Leaving Certificate students have been made aware they can access and download the **CAO Handbook 2027**, required for application to third level/higher education institutions in the ROI **online** at www.cao.ie. The CAO website also contains additional **key information, video guides and resources**, which students and parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to make use of. Please ensure that **both you and your daughter/ward read the CAO Handbook carefully and comply with all applicant rules and responsibilities.**

Parents/guardians and applicants should pay particular attention to the CAO guidelines relating to important topics such as **seeking exemptions** from minimum entry requirements (e.g. **exemptions from Irish and/or a modern language requirement**) and **residence outside the EU: (past or present)**. **Failure to comply with such directives may have serious implications.**

If you have a daughter/ward who intends to apply to third level education, the following information about the HEAR and DARE admissions schemes may also be of interest to you.

Equity of Access to Higher Education

Irish Higher Education and Government are committed to the objective of promoting 'equality of access to higher education, irrespective of social class, age or disability'. To widen access to third level, participating colleges have developed a range of initiatives including the HEAR & DARE supplementary admission routes.

What is the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)?

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a college and university scheme which offers places on **reduced points** and **extra college support** to school leavers from **socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds** who are resident in the Republic of Ireland. HEAR has been set up by a number of colleges and universities as evidence shows that long-term poverty can have a negative effect on how well a student does at school and whether they go on to college. HEAR **applicants must meet a range of financial, social and cultural indicators to be considered** for a reduced points place and extra college support.

What HEAR is Not!

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HEAR is **NOT your maintenance GRANT** (i.e. SUSI grant). The maintenance grant is the main source of financial assistance from the Irish State for students in full-time Post Leaving Certificate (PLCs) and full-time higher education undergraduate courses. HEAR is an admissions scheme to **help students who may not traditionally go on to third level.** Students applying to HEAR are also encouraged to find out more information on the maintenance grant. For detailed information on **financial support, student grants and scholarships**, when going to third level see www.susi.ie, www.careersportal.ie and www.studentfinance.ie.

Who is HEAR for?

HEAR is for school leavers under the age of 23 as of 1 January 2027 who are resident in the Republic of Ireland. Applications to HEAR can only be made **online through the CAO** at www.cao.ie **(N.B. CLOSING DATES APPLY.)** Please note Coláiste Bride takes part in the **DEIS** (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) **scheme** run by the Department of Education and Skills and therefore, meets the '**DEIS School Attendance' HEAR indicator**.

What is the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)?

The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a third level alternative admissions scheme for school-leavers whose **disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education**. DARE offers **reduced points** places to school leavers, who as a result of having a disability, have **experienced additional educational challenges** in second level education. DARE has been set up by a number of colleges and universities as evidence shows that disability can have a negative impact on how well a student does at school and whether they go on to college.

Who Should Apply to DARE?

DARE is for school leavers under the age of 23 as of 1 January 2027 with a **disability**, who have been **educationally impacted as a result of that disability**. Applicants to DARE can present with an Irish Leaving Certificate, A-Levels and/ or other EU qualifications. **N.B. CLOSING DATES APPLY.)**

N.B. Please note **DARE applications are managed by the AEN Coordinator, Ms. L. Murphy**. It is **crucial students inform and speak to the AEN Coordinator as soon as possible**, about their intention to apply to DARE and give **adequate notice and time** for the **Educational Impact Statement (EIS)** to be completed in consultation with them. It is the **responsibility of you**, the applicant, to ensure the Educational Impact Statement is **forwarded to CAO to arrive in time** before the closing deadline.

What Disabilities are Eligible for Consideration for DARE?

- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD, including Asperger's Syndrome)
- Blind or vision impaired
- Deaf or hard of hearing

- Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) – dyspraxia
- Dyslexia or significant literacy difficulties
- Dyscalculia or significant numeracy difficulties
- Mental Health Condition (such as depression, severe anxiety and schizophrenia)
- Neurological condition (such as brain injury and epilepsy)
- Physical disability (significant mobility issues)
- Significant Ongoing Illness (such as cystic fibrosis)
- Speech and language communication disorder

[Please refer to www.accesscollege.ie for additional, and the most up to date information]

Information on HEAR & DARE

Accesscollege.ie Website & Handbooks

N.B. **Crucial HEAR & DARE information** can be found at www.accesscollege.ie (where there are **essential documents which should be consulted,** such as the **HEAR HANDBOOK 2027** and **DARE HANDBOOK 2027**). The appropriate **handbook(s) should be consulted by parents/guardians and students BEFORE attempting to complete any application**.

CAO Online Handbook and Website

HEAR & DARE information can also be found in the online **CAO Handbook** and **website** at www.cao.ie Please note that students can apply to both HEAR and DARE if eligible.

Contact Facilities

All participating colleges have a staff member/access officer who can advise on how to apply to HEAR & /DARE. If you wish to speak to someone in an Access Office about an application, you are advised to use the **'Participating Colleges' link** at www.accesscollege.ie

For questions about completing online HEAR & /DARE application(s) contact the **CAO Helpdesk** using the **'Contact Form'** at http://www.cao.ie/contact (best and most effective way of communicating) *or* by phoning (091) 509800.

HEAR & DARE Application Information Days

N.B. Information on Higher Education Institute (HEI) **HEAR and DARE Application Information events** will be published on www.accesscollege.ie in due course. So please **keep a close eye on the website for further details**.

CAO Online Information Evening for Parents/Guardians and Students

N.B. An online CAO Information Evening for Parents/Guardians and Students will take place on **Thursday, 15th October 2025 at 6pm**. **Registration for this event is now open at**

www.cao.ie/webinar and **spaces are limited**. Parents/Guardians and students are **strongly encouraged to attend**. A **recording** of this event will also be made available in the days following the event from the same link.

Useful Information for Parents/Guardians and Students on Teams

All Leaving Certificate students are members of the **6th Year Guidance Team**, where students have unlimited 24/7 access to **important information** covering a wide range of relevant topics (e.g. National Framework of Qualification (NFQ), CAO, PLCs, UCAS, etc.). **Parents/guardians may also find this information to be of help.**

The following **websites** will also support you and your daughter in planning for her future.

- **CAO** www.cao.ie – Key website for CAO information with multiple useful links (e.g. 'Student Resources', and 'Information for Parents').
- **Accesscollege.ie** www.accesscollege.ie – HEAR and DARE information, handbooks, supporting documentation forms, video guides, list of participating colleges, etc.
- **Qualifax** www.qualifax.ie - Provides information in relation to e.g. Open Days, Interest/Career tests, Minimum entry requirements, Third Level and Further Education courses (i.e. PLCs), Accommodation, etc.)
- **CareersPortal** www.careersportal.ie – Provides a vast amount of useful information in relation to e.g. Third Level and Further Education courses, Interest/Career/Personality tests, Careers, Jobs in demand, Grants, Scholarships, etc.)
- **Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI)** www.qqi.ie – National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Explains various levels of education (e.g. Level 8 {Honours Bachelor Degree – approx. duration of 3/4+ years}, Level 7 {Ordinary Bachelor Degree – approx. duration of 3 years}, Level 6 {Higher Certificate – approx. duration of 2 years}, etc.)
- **Synergy Careers** www.synergycareers.ie – Free career guidance webinars.
- **CareersNews** www.careersnews.ie – free daily careers and educational news.
- **NUI** www.nui.ie – Provides important information for CAO applicants, whom for **various reasons, may be required to seek exemption(s) from minimum entry requirements (e.g. exemptions from Irish and/or a third/modern language requirement(s) (as advised per CAO Handbook and website). If you are unsure about (an) exemption(s), please speak to the AEN Coordinator, Ms. L. Murphy.**
- **Individual College Websites and Admission Offices** – Provide information in relation to each specific institution's rules, regulations and application procedures, etc. (e.g., how to apply for **exemption(s) from Irish and/or a third/modern language requirement(s) in a NON-NUI College (as advised per CAO Handbook and CAO website); If you are unsure about (an) exemption(s), please speak to the AEN Coordinator**, **EU and International (Non-EU) Fees**, scholarships, etc.
- **SUSI** www.susi.ie – Provides information relating to student grants and application.
- **Student Finance** www.studentfinance.ie – Provides information on topics such as grants, bursaries, scholarships, etc.

- **UCAS** www.ucas.com – Information relating to application to higher educational institutions in the UK.

Applicant Responsibilities

N.B. Strict rules, regulations and deadlines operate in relation to CAO, HEAR and/ DARE application. It is the applicant's responsibility to be aware of and correctly comply with all rules, regulations and deadlines.

Parents/guardians and students should always consult the various appropriate websites for the most up to date information available.

I hope you find this information to be of help, and I wish both you, and your daughter/ward all the best in the months ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Aisling McDonald

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Guidance Counsellor