



# Applying to CAO

*your next step*

**CAO**  
[www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)

# Purpose of the CAO

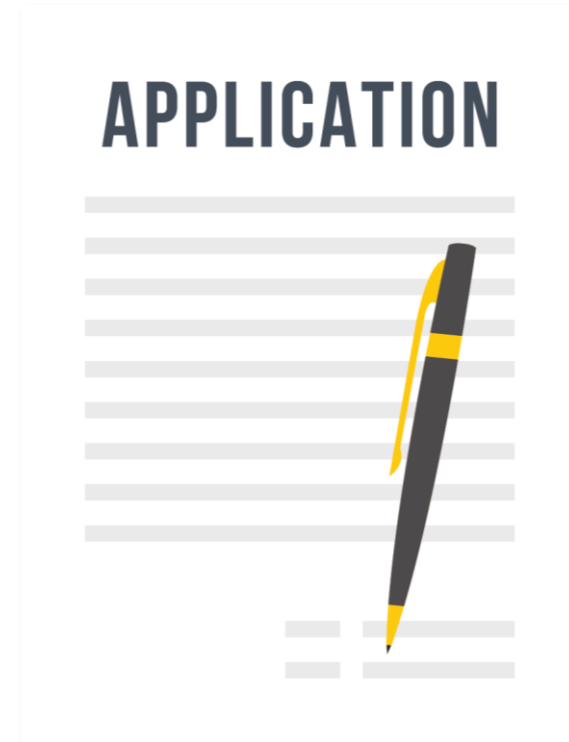
- **CAO processes applications to undergraduate courses in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).**
- **Offers are issued and acceptances are recorded by CAO.**
- **Assessment of applications and decisions on admissions are made by HEIs Admissions Officers.**



# Application Process



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



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

# Create a personalised handbook



**CAO**  
www.cao.ie

## Handbook 2023

The purpose of the Central Applications Office (CAO) is to process centrally applications for undergraduate courses in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and to deal with them in an efficient and fair manner. The HEIs retain the function of making decisions on admissions.

This handbook has been prepared to provide information about the CAO application process. By reading this handbook carefully you will find out the information that you need to assist you with your application.

[Personalise your Handbook](#)

[Show me everything](#)

[Skip personalisation](#)

Already have a Handbook account? [Log in](#)

# Start your search by choosing one or more levels

Apply Now [↗](#)

My Handbook

Save Share

Login

Register

What study level are you interested in?

Level 6

Level 7

Level 8

Continue

# Select the subject area (s) you are interested in

Apply Now [↗](#)

My Handbook

Save Share

Login

Register

Which subject area(s) are you interested in?

Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary

Arts and Humanities

Business, administration and law

Education

Engineering, manufacturing and construction

Health and welfare

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics

Services

Social sciences, journalism and information

Continue

# Choose the Institutions that you would like to attend

Apply Now [↗](#)

My Handbook

Save Share

Login

Register

## Where would you like to study?

Atlantic Technological University

Dublin City University

Marino Institute of Education

Mary Immaculate College

Maynooth University

Munster Technological University

National College of Art and Design

National College of Ireland (NCI)

St Nicholas Montessori College Ireland

Technological University Dublin

Technological University of the Shannon

Trinity College Dublin

University College Cork (NUI)

University of Galway


University of Limerick

Continue


# Click on the + icon to select courses of interest

Apply Now  My Handbook Save Share [Login](#) [Register](#)

Please select your courses




St Nicholas Montessori College Ireland  
**Montessori Education**  
Level 7  
Course Code: NM701

Select course 



St Nicholas Montessori College Ireland  
**Montessori Education**  
Level 8  
Course Code: NM801

Select course 

[Continue](#)

A refined list of course will be returned based on your earlier selection. Level 8 courses are navy, level 7 courses are orange, and Level 6 courses are turquoise.



# When you have selected the courses, you will be brought to your personalised handbook page

The screenshot shows the 'Your Handbook' page on the CAO website. At the top right, there are navigation links: 'Apply Now', 'My Handbook', 'Save', 'Share', 'Login', 'Register', and 'Start over'. The main heading is 'Your Handbook'. Below it, a welcome message states: 'Welcome to your personalised CAO Handbook. Take a look at the refined list of courses which have been suggested based on your search criteria. You can continue to search for courses as you discover new areas of interest. Remember, creating a personalised CAO Handbook is not the same as making an application to CAO. If you have not already done so, make your application at [www.cao.ie/apply](http://www.cao.ie/apply) when it is permitted to do so.'

Under 'Handbook Instructions', a note says: 'You must read the CAO Handbook in its entirety before making a CAO application. Click a section to read from the beginning, or click a sub-heading to jump to a specific sub-section.'

There are eight instruction cards:

- Introduction**: Handbooks, Applicant's responsibility
- Applying to CAO**: Application Dates and Fees, Late Applications, Categories of Qualifications and Assessments, Applying for a Maintenance Fee
- After Applying**: Interacting with your CAO account, Important correspondence, Check and confirm, Changing courses / Change of mind, Changes to your personal and
- The Offer Stage**: The Offer Issues, Accepting an Offer, Available Places, Points Calculation for Leaving Certificate Applicants
- Direct Applications and Exceptional Late Applications**: Applications to be Made Direct to Higher Education Institutions, Exceptional Late Applications (Open only to the Institutes), Change of Mind (Exception to the Timetable)
- Further Information**: General Principles, Inquiries to Appeals Commission, Contacting CAO, Supporting Documents
- Contact a participating Higher Education Institution**
- Timetable of Events**: A Summary of the Major Stages of the CAO Application Process

Under 'Courses', there are three cards:

- St Nicholas Montessori College Ireland, Montessori Education, Level 7, Course Code: 34201
- St Nicholas Montessori College Ireland, Montessori Education, Level 8, Course Code: 34201
- Add more!** Refine your selection further

A blue arrow points from the 'Add more!' card towards the explanatory text on the right.

You can add more courses, click on the links to learn more information about your course choices, and read the CAO Handbook instructions.

# To save and share your Handbook, you should register

Apply Now [↗](#) My Handbook Save Share **Login** Register [↺](#) Start over

[←](#) Back

## Register

To save and share your personalised handbook, we will need some details from you!

Full name \*

Email address \*

Choose a password \*

By continuing, you agree to Prospectus Plus [Terms & Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)

**Get started**

OR

Already have a Handbook account? [Log in](#)

Registering a Handbook account is separate to making a CAO application.

# Saving and sharing your handbook

- **If you click on register, you can create a CAO Handbook account. You can then login to view your personalised handbook from any device.**
- **Once you have registered your handbook account, you can share a link to your handbook with your parents, guidance counsellor, etc.**
- **You do not have to register to use the handbook. If you wish you can continue to search, skip personalisation, or use the 'Show me everything' feature where you can search courses by keyword.**

# Download the CAO Handbook Web-App

- **When you first go to [handbook.cao.ie](http://handbook.cao.ie) you will be prompted to download a desktop shortcut/app (if you dismiss this prompt you will not be reminded again, unless you clear your cache or use a different browser or device)**
- **The app is not available to download from your App Store – it appears as a prompt when you first go to access the handbook**
- **You do not need to download the app;, you can continue to use the handbook by going to [handbook.cao.ie](http://handbook.cao.ie)**
- **If you download the app, you will be able view the handbook when you are offline**

# Timely Action

**DO NOT LEAVE  
EVERTHING TO  
THE LAST  
MINUTE!**



**FEBRUARY**

**1<sup>st</sup>**

**DEADLINE**

**In order to be fair to all applicants, closing dates are strict and therefore action should be taken in good time.**

# Restrictions

**RESTRICTED COURSES**

**MATURE APPLICANTS**

**HEAR**  
**SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
DISADVANTAGE**

**DARE**  
**DISABILITIES/SLD**

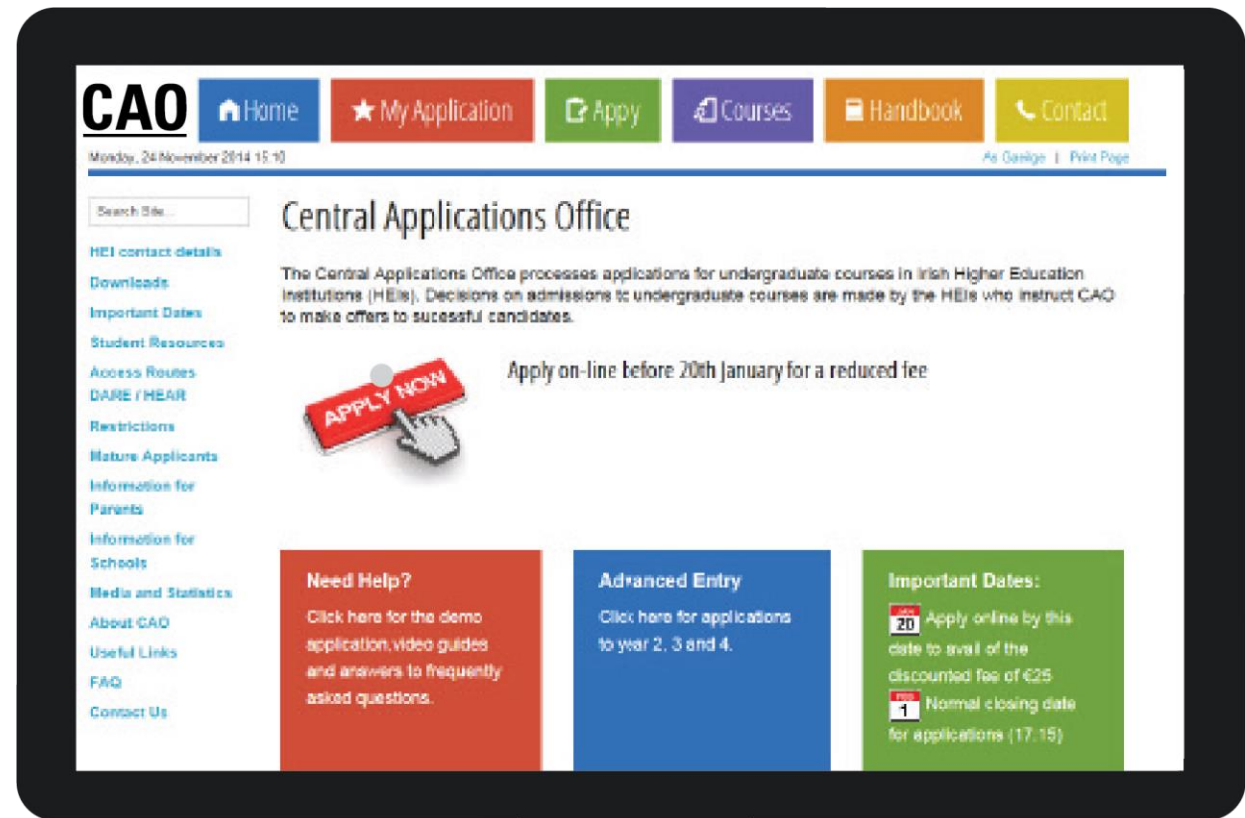
**Applications must be made by 1 February at 5pm. Consult CAO Handbook for full details.**

# Making an Application

Applicants apply online at  
[www.cao.ie/apply](http://www.cao.ie/apply)

Carefully enter details such as your name, address, date of birth, schools attended, examination information, etc.

Make sure you inform CAO about all relevant qualifications and exemptions – select the relevant section(s) on the application form.



# CAO Application Number

- When you apply online your application number will appear on screen. You will also receive an email containing your CAO application number and an email verification code.
- Your application number is private and it will be used in every correspondence between you and the CAO for the rest of the year.
- You will require your CAO application number, date of birth and password when you log in to your account via the 'My Application' facility to update your application.



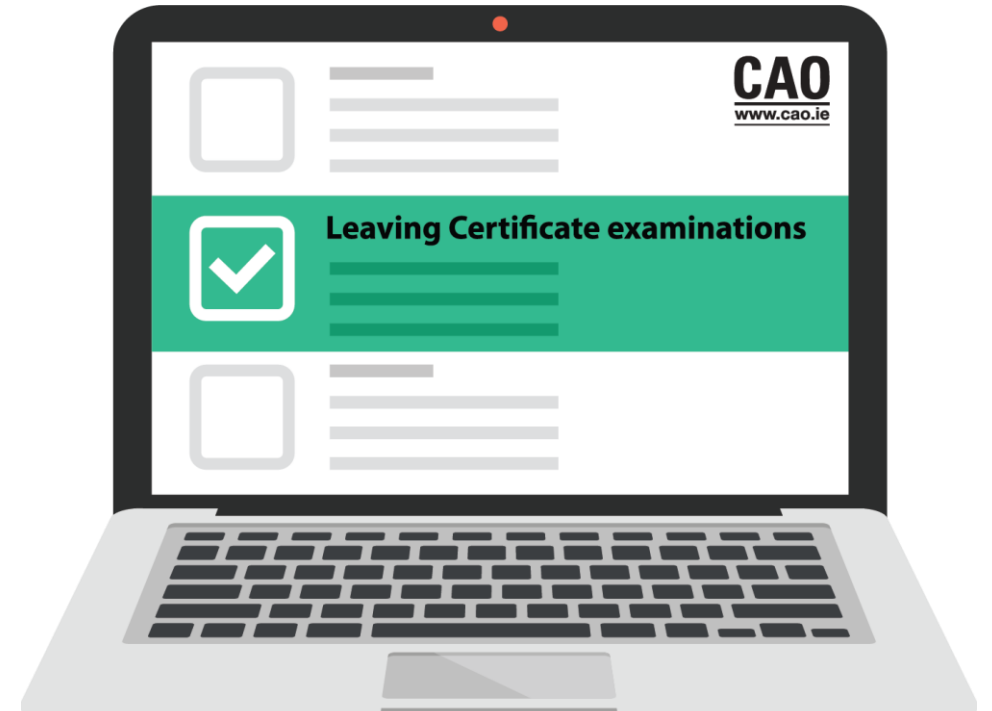


# Qualifications & Assessment

- **You must complete the Qualifications and Assessments section(s) that is relevant to you.**

For example, if you are a first-time Leaving Certificate candidate under the age of 23 with no other relevant qualifications, you will be asked to enter your school name and address and the years attended. You must also tick the Leaving Certificate examinations box and subsequently indicate the year of your Leaving Certificate.

If you have a previous sitting of the Leaving Certificate, you must also remember to supply the year and examination number in the space provided on the application form.



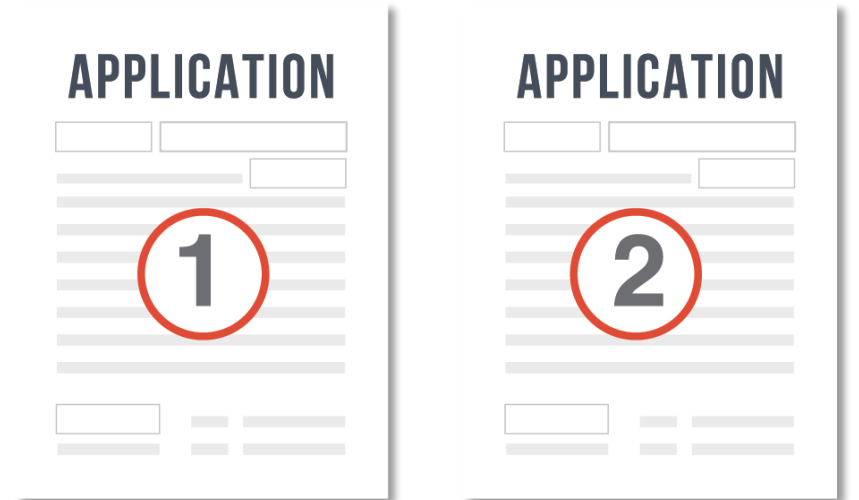
# Choosing Courses

- **Consult your Guidance Counsellor.**
- **Discuss your options with family and friends.**
- **Details about courses may be found in HEI prospectuses and by consulting HEI websites.**
- **A course search facility is available at [www.cao.ie/courses](http://www.cao.ie/courses) and via the personalised CAO Handbook**



# Level 8 and Level 7/6 lists (Course Choices)

- There are 2 course choice lists (Level 8 and Level 7/6) and applicants may make up to 10 course choices on each list.
- Your choices on one list do not in any way affect your choices on the other list. They may be considered two separate applications on one form.
- It is possible to receive an offer on both lists. You may then decide to accept either your Level 7/6 or your Level 8 offer.
- Alternatively, you might not wish to accept either offer.



# Order of Preference

- If you learn nothing else from this presentation let it be this...

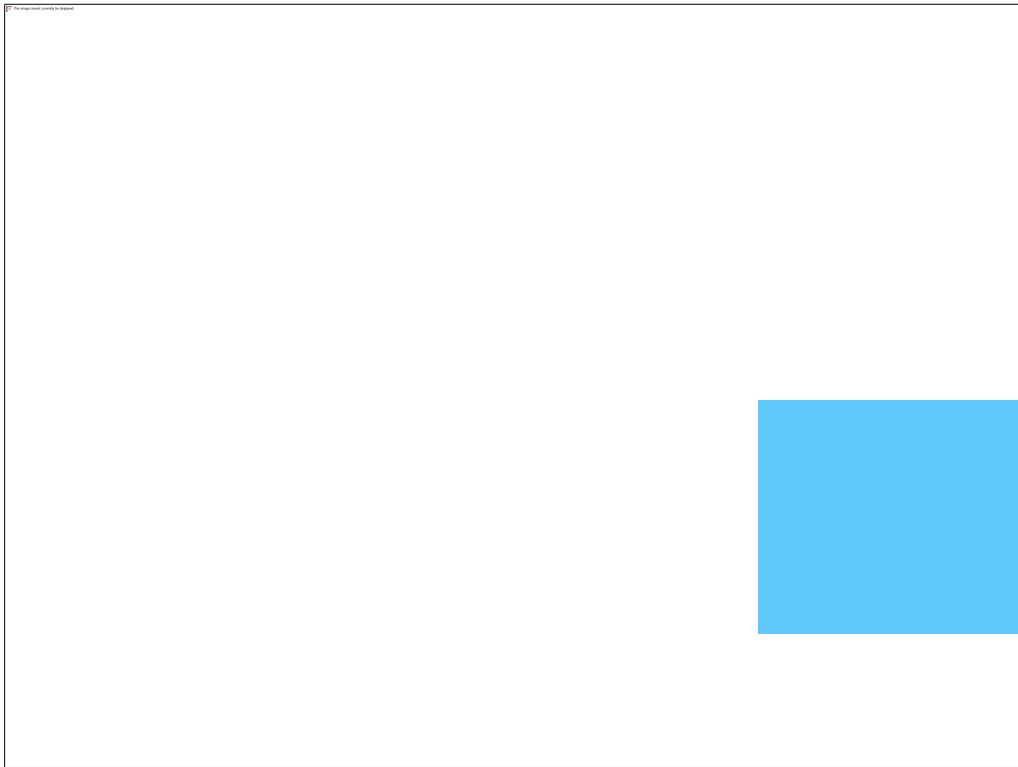
**PLACE YOUR  
COURSES IN  
GENUINE ORDER  
OF PREFERENCE!**



To do otherwise is a  
grave mistake.



# Change of Mind Facility



**You may use this facility to change the order of your course choices and/or to introduce new courses, subject to the restrictions detailed in the handbook.**

**The Change of Mind opens in early May and closes on the 1st of July at 5pm.**

# Statement of Application Record Email

**If you do not  
receive a  
Statement by**



**contact CAO  
immediately.**

Before the end of May you will be sent a Statement of Application Record email. The purpose of this e-mail is to instruct you to log in and verify that all of your information has been recorded completely and correctly on your CAO account. There may be very serious consequences for your application if you do not follow these instructions immediately.

Check the following carefully, and if there is any error or omission amend the Statement and return it to CAO.

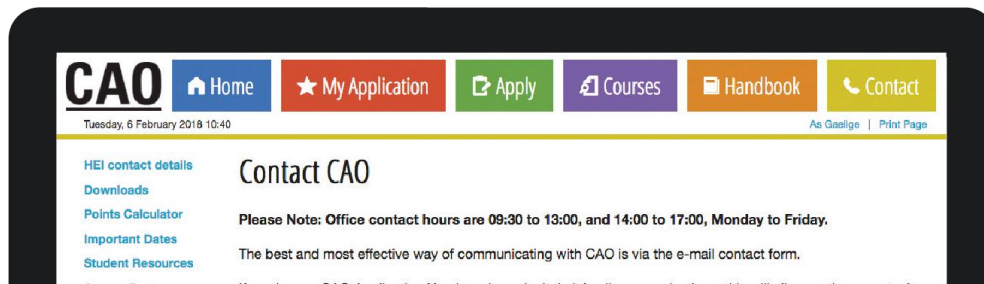
**Are your exam numbers correct? (do not assume that they are)**

**Are all exams mentioned?**

**Are all exemptions listed?**

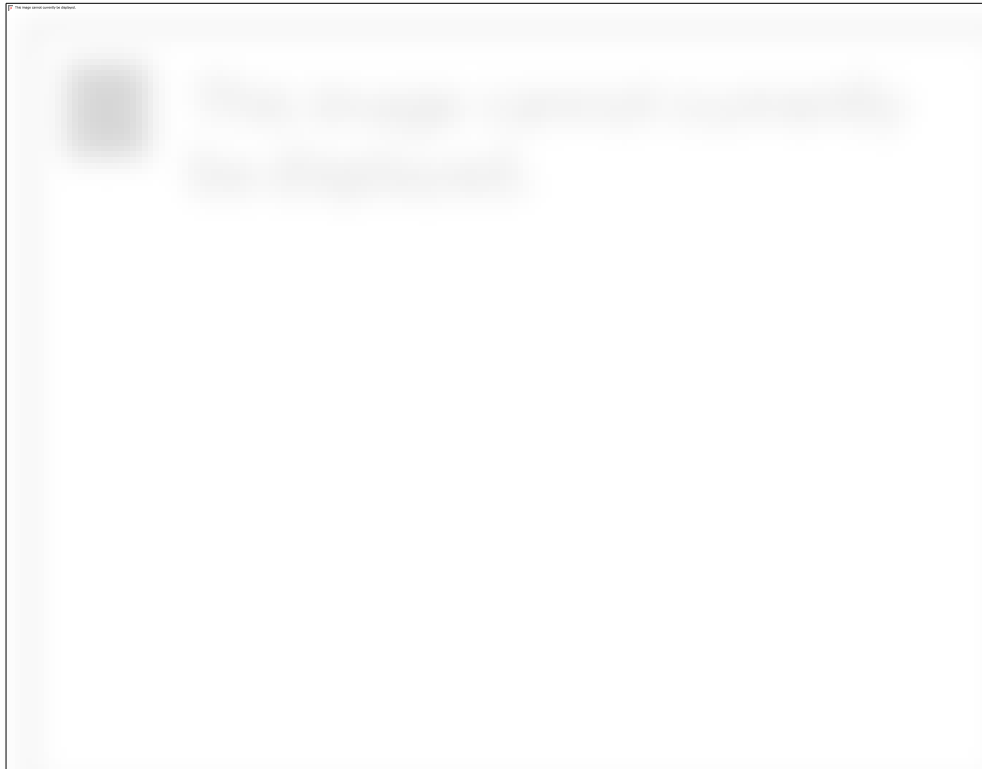
**Are all the courses shown and in the correct order?**

# Check for emails from CAO



- Please make sure to regularly check the e-mail account that you used when registering with CAO for new emails from CAO containing important information and instructions.
- You should periodically check your spam, bulk, promotional or junk mail folders, etc. If you find emails from CAO or HEIs are being directed to these folders you should consider adding these email addresses to your contacts or email address book.
- You should also check the Correspondence section of your account which contains a log of all emails sent to you by CAO, and any online queries that you have submitted to CAO whilst logged in to your application.

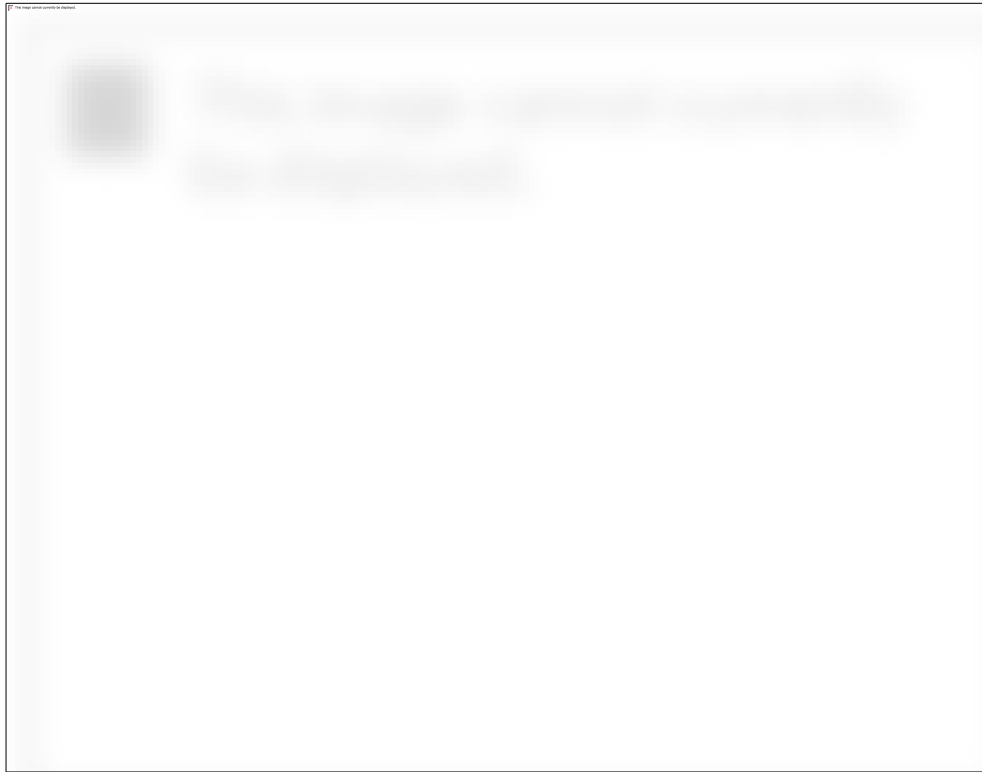
# The Offer Process



- **Following the release of the Leaving Certificate results CAO will send a communication to all applicants.**
- **If you have not yet become entitled to an offer in Round A, Round 0 or Round 1, you will be sent a Statement of Application email asking you to check your account information carefully as important information may be incorrect or missing.**

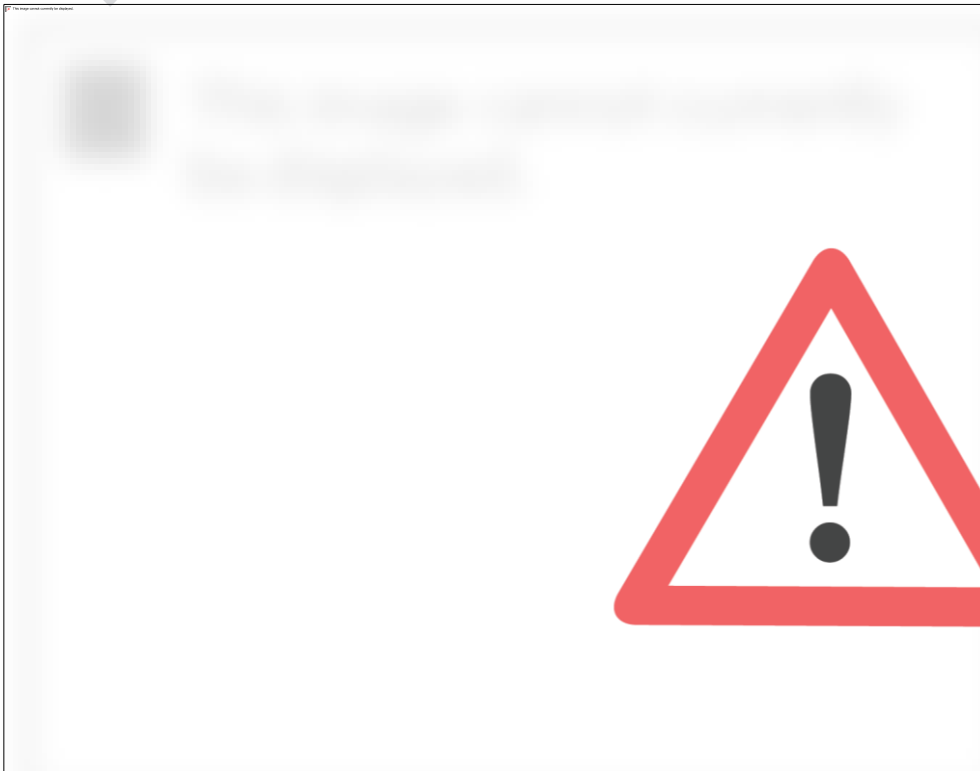


# The Offer Process



- **Offers will also be available on the CAO website.**
- **You may check for and accept offers on the website.**
- **If you are entitled to an offer, you will be sent an email with details of your offer(s). You may receive more than one email if you have received an offer off both your Level 8 and Level 7/6 lists.**
- **You will also receive an SMS text message if you have selected this option.**
- **You should check that all of the details in your CAO Account are correct and that there are no errors or omissions.**

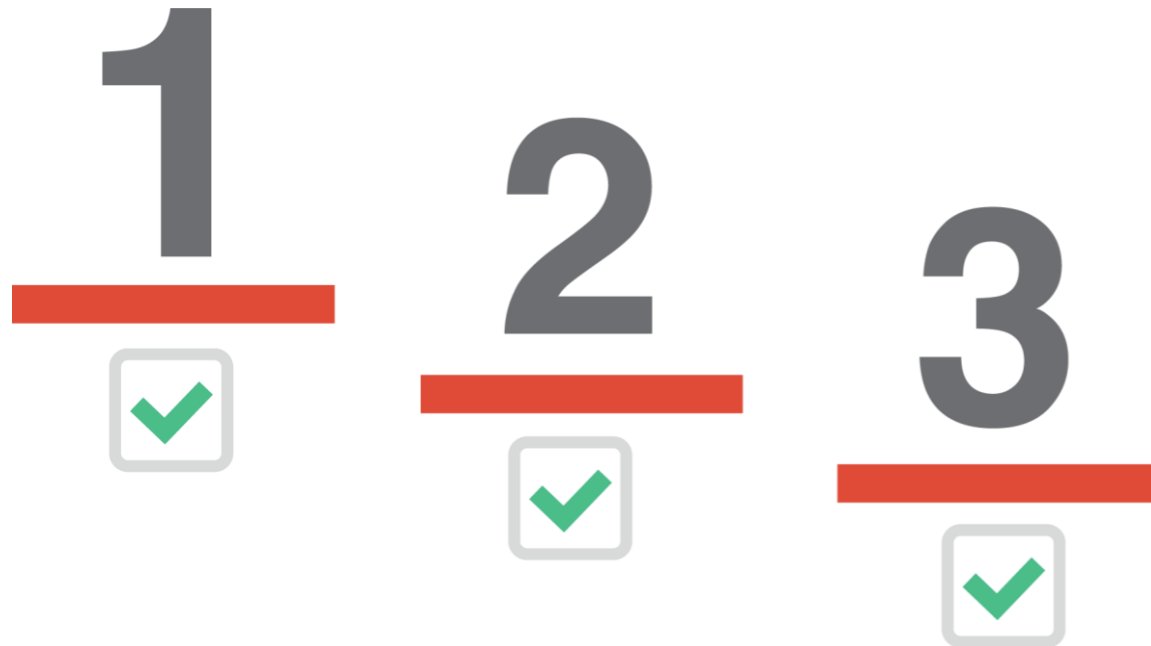
# The Offer Process



**There can be no delays at the offer/acceptance stage.**

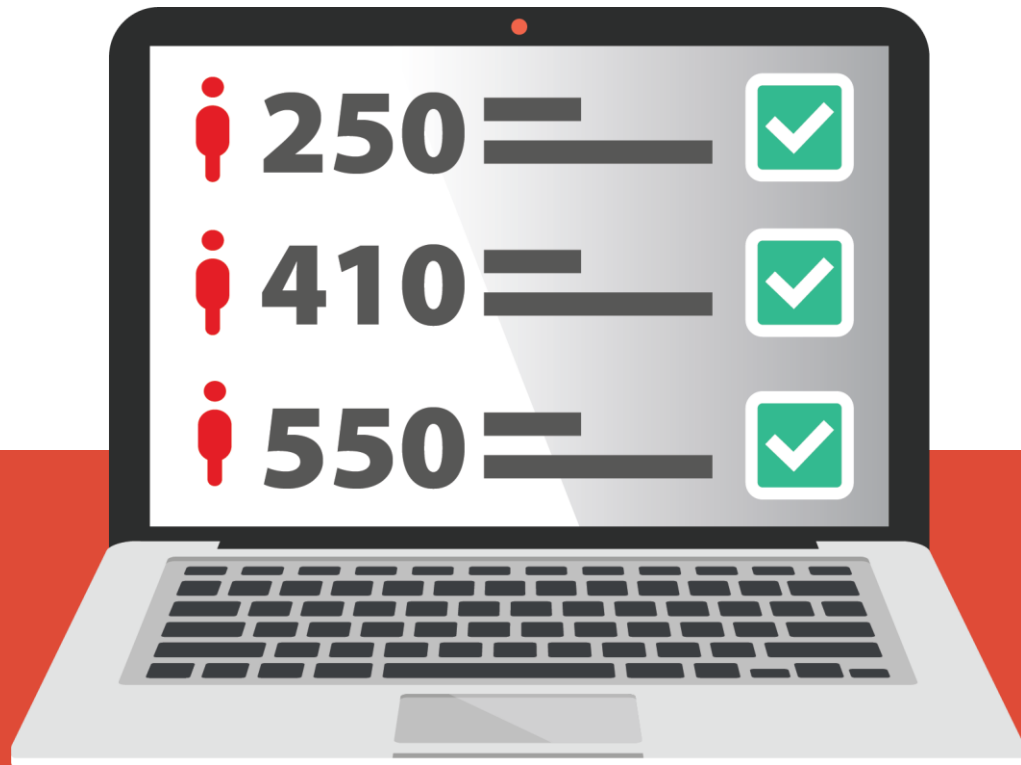
- **Any offer not accepted by the closing date for receipt of acceptance of offers in CAO may be offered to another applicant in the next round of offers.**
- **You will receive an e-mail acknowledging your acceptance.**

# Place Allocation



- We will look just at Level 8 courses, but exactly the same process will take place with Level 7/6 courses, and at the same time.
- The importance of you, the applicant, placing courses in genuine order of preference will become apparent in the following pages.

# Place Allocation



- When examination results are released they are entered into the CAO computer.
- The computer checks each applicant's results.

For each course the applicant has applied for, the computer first determines if the applicant has the minimum entry requirements for the course.

# Place Allocation

If the applicant meets the minimum entry requirements for the course, the applicant's points are calculated for this course choice.

All eligible applicants are then placed on a list, in order of academic merit, for each course that they applied for.

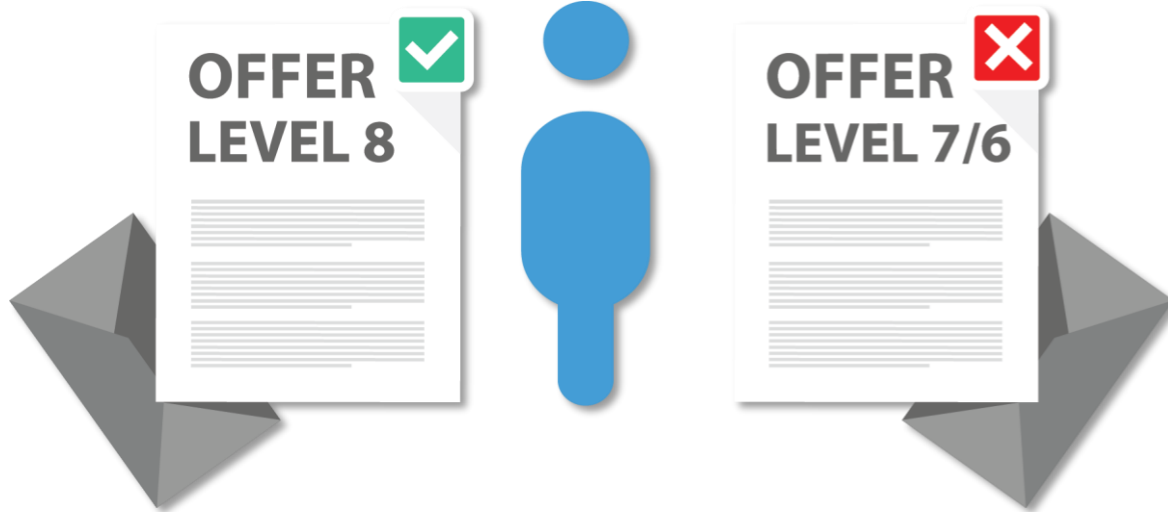
Minimum Entry Requirements + Points Score = **Position on Order of Merit List**

# Place Allocation



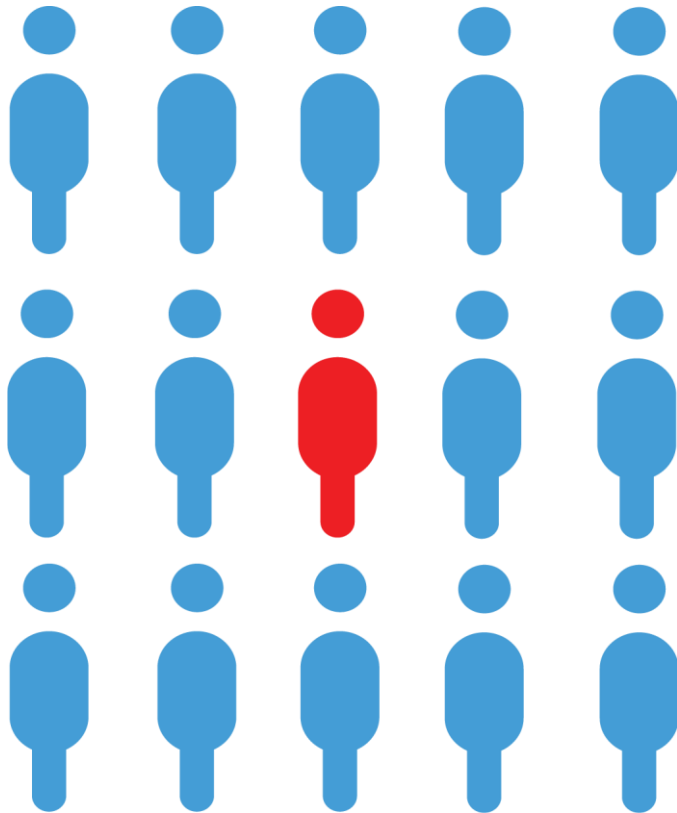
- The admissions officers of the Higher Education Institutions tell CAO how many places are to be offered on each course.
- CAO then makes offers to the required number of applicants on each course, starting with the applicant with the highest points and working down until enough places have been offered.

# Place Allocation



- Should some applicants decline to accept their offers these places become available in the next round of offers.
- They will be offered to the next applicants on the Order of Merit list. This process continues until all of the places on the course are filled or until all of the eligible applicants on the Order of Merit list have been offered places.

# Place Allocation



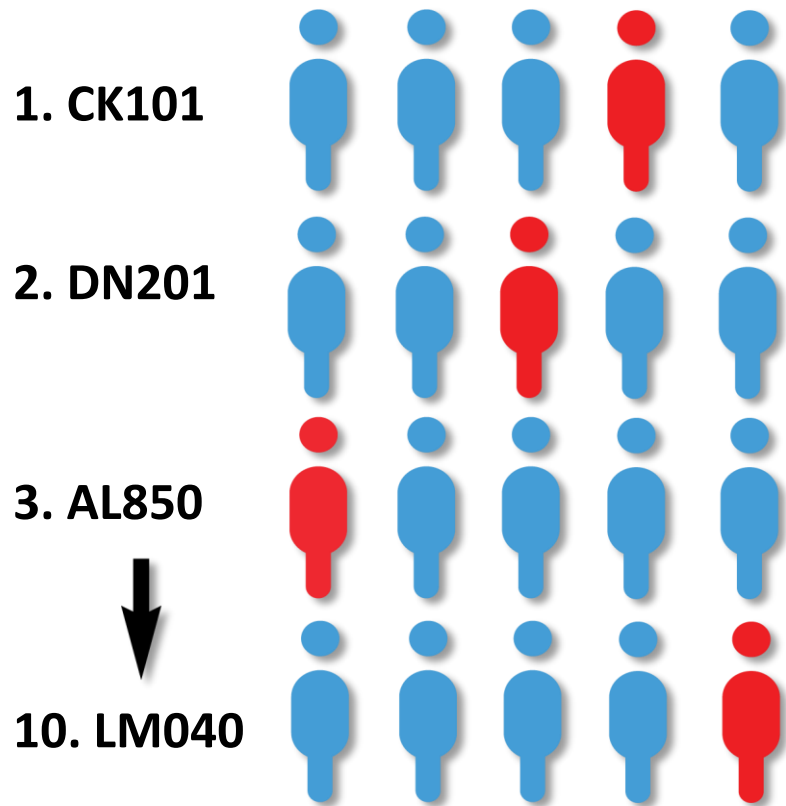
## EXAMPLE

– no results yet!

- These are the applicants for CK101 - Arts in UCC.
- The examination results have not yet been released, so these applicants are in no particular order.
- We are going to trace the progress of the applicant marked in **red**.



# Place Allocation

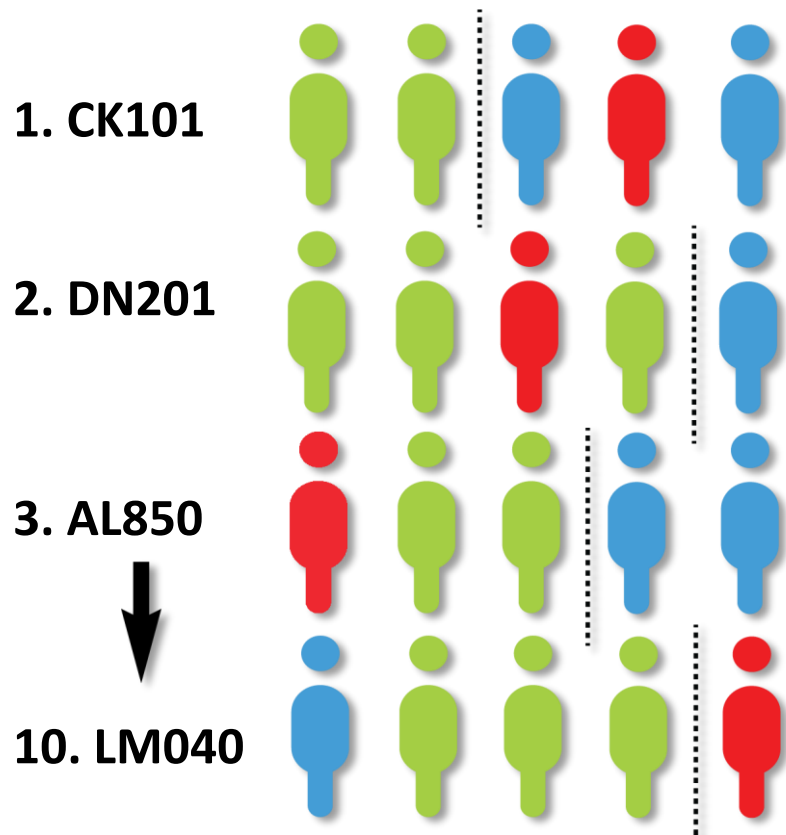


## EXAMPLE

– LC results have been released.

- Applicants are placed in a queue for each course they applied for. Their position in the queue is determined by their points.
- The applicant with the highest points is placed at the top of the queue. The points achieved by the applicant in red determines her position in the queue for each course she has applied to.

# Place Allocation

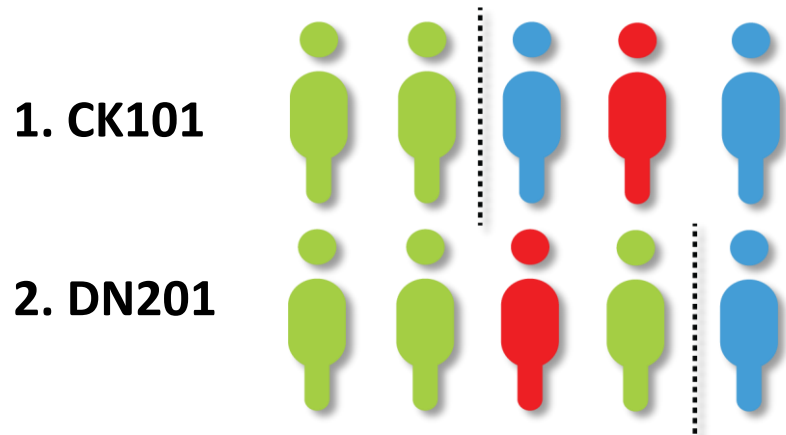


## EXAMPLE

– HEIs issue R1 offers

- The applicants marked in **GREEN** have enough points to be offered places.
- The applicant marked in **RED** has enough points for her second preference.

# Place Allocation



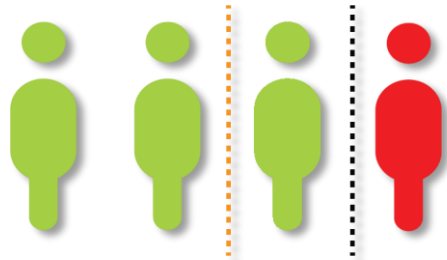
## EXAMPLE

– HEIs issue R1 offers

- The applicant in **RED** is offered her second preference, the highest preference course that she has enough points for, and she will now disappear from the queue for all her lower choices.
- Placing DN201 as her second preference meant that she would prefer to receive an offer on DN201 than on any other course except CK101 - which is her first preference.

# Place Allocation

1. CK101

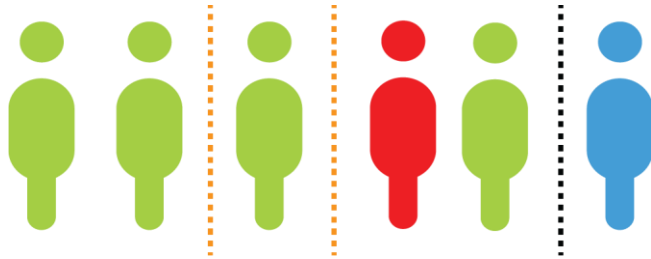


## EXAMPLE – R2 offers

- After Round 2 offers are issued, our applicant is now in first place on the waiting list for her first preference course.
- She has already accepted her 2nd preference course. **Accepting or not accepting** her 2nd preference course will not prevent her from receiving an offer of her 1st preference course if she is deemed eligible by the institution in a later round.

# Place Allocation

1. CK101



**EXAMPLE – An offer is issued in R3 for her 1st preference!**

- In the third round of offers two more offers are made on CK101 and our applicant, who was at the top of the queue, now receives an offer.
- She may do nothing and remain in DN201 or she may accept the offer.

# Genuine Order



- You do not need to guess what the points are going to be for the courses you are interested in.
- Simply list your courses in genuine order of preference from the highest preference 1, to the lowest preference 10.
- If you are entitled to an offer, you will be offered the highest preference that you are entitled to.

# Common Queries

Q

I have received an offer of my 2nd preference course – if I accept this offer does this mean I won't get any further offers?

Q

I received my 3rd preference course but I would prefer my 4th, what should I do?

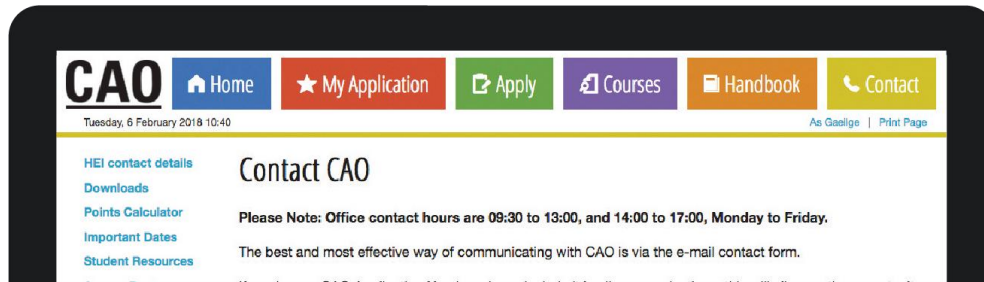
Q

I have the points, why didn't I receive an offer?

Q

I have not received any offers, what are my options?

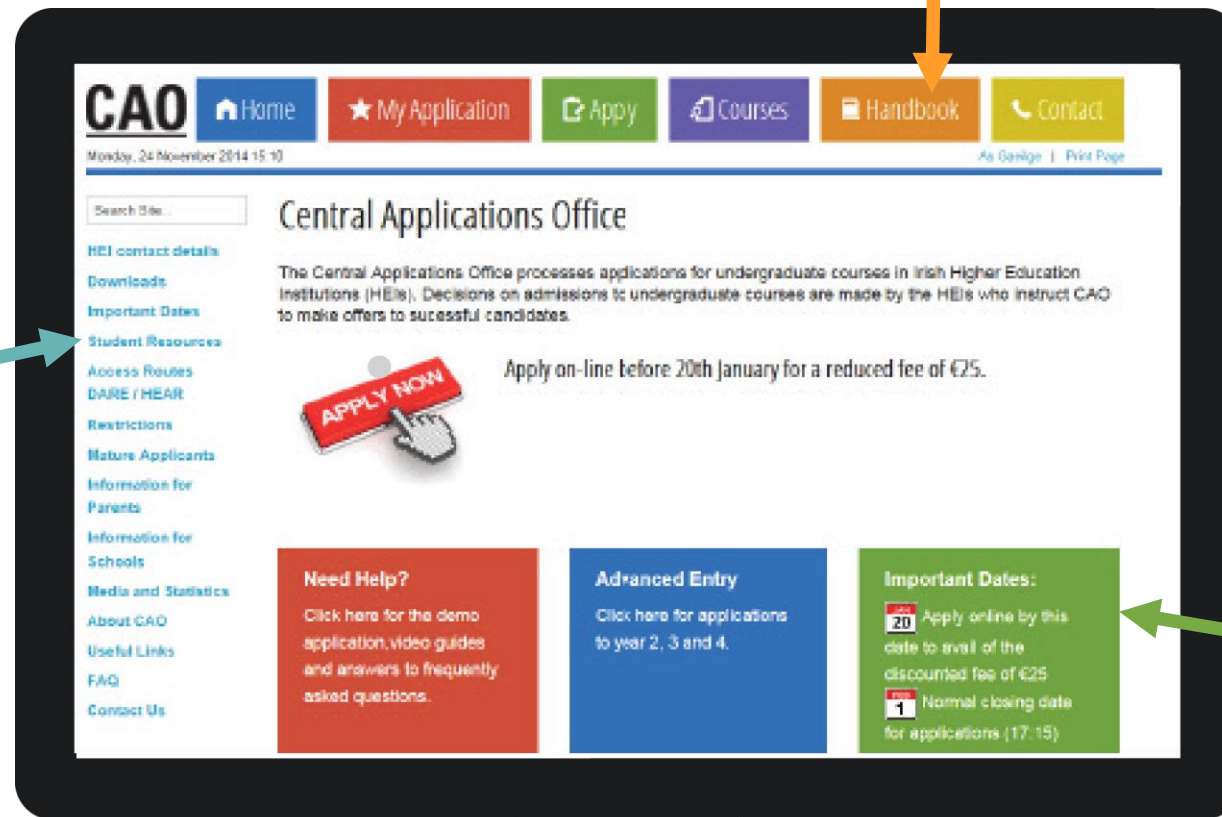
# Have a question?



- Please check the 'Have a question' page before submitting an email to CAO.
- If your question is not answered in the Have a Question page, the easiest and most efficient way to communicate with CAO is by using the Correspondence Section of your CAO Account. Give us as much information as possible and you will receive a reply to your query, usually within one working day.
- If you post something to CAO always obtain a certificate of posting at the post office. This is a free service and it offers you peace of mind.



# Useful Resources



Visit the 'Applicants' section accessible here for Video Guides and useful resources including the 'Demo Application' facility.

An online copy of the CAO Handbook is available here

Watch this space for 'Important Dates'.

# Finally...



**Remember to carefully read all of the documents and instructions from CAO.**

**Most applicants follow the simple instructions from CAO and get along just fine.**



**If you are unclear on any matter concerning the application process, please contact us via our website: [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)**