



ACCREDITED

THOUGHT LEADER - EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

August 10th 2019

The Practicalities of the CAO System

-You Always Have Options...

The results of the State Examinations Commission (SEC) jury are now in and we await round one of CAO offers (online) on Thursday August 15th at 2pm. Over the next few days, it is sensible not to overly predict what will happen with your CAO application. Predicting points for courses can be a futile exercise, as points on a given year are determined by demand from students for a course combined with the number of available places on it.

Level 6, 7 and 8 options

On Thursday, you may get two possible offers; one offer from your level 6/7 list and one from your level 8 list, assuming you filled in both. Level 6 courses are ones offering a two-year higher certificate, which are found mostly in the Institutes of Technology. Level 7 consists of three-year ordinary level degree courses while level 8 are honours degree courses.

You may be offered a third level place from both lists; however, you can only accept one. Once you accept a place on a course, you cannot be offered a place on a potential course below it (on the same list) in future rounds. You can however be offered a place on a course above it (on the same list), irrespective of whether you accepted the Initial offer or not. You can always move up on your lists but never down. Note that if you do not accept an offer and no other offer is made to you, that original offer will be distributed to another applicant.

If you are offered a place on any course, I would advise you to do some serious research on its content to ensure it is suitable for you. You can do this on the Qualifax or specific college website. Do not accept a course that you don't really want to do, as you may end up dropping out and possibly paying full fees (€3,000) if you wish to take on a subsequent course the following year. It is important to be somewhat passionate about a course in order to study it for three or four years. If you wish to defer a course you have been offered, I would ring the specific college/university immediately and they will guide through the required process.

Remember that the level 6/7 route is a viable option for students. In many cases, you can subsequently progress to complete an 'add on year' to reach your level 8 target. This course transfer process is known as 'Advanced entry'. If you accept a level 6/7 course, you should then think

about this potential pathway to maximise your qualifications later. You always have options.

Plan B

If you miss out on your desired course due to not obtaining the required points, you should seriously consider reviewing your scripts with the possibility of a recheck (completed through a shorter timeline from now on) later. Under the new system this year, upgrades after rechecks will not see students lose out on college places which they have achieved the required points for (unless they are unlucky enough to lose out through 'random selection', which can happen at any stage of the process). Some third level institutions will allow you to complete a 'Second chance' Maths exam to reach a specific grade requirement and therefore be accepted on a course you have enough points for.

Script review

If you wish to review your scripts, you must apply to do so by 5pm on Friday August 16th.

I would recommend all students to go and review their scripts. Some of the script reviews will be done online (for the first time) by the student. I would bring a subject expert to the review (in your school) in order to find out if it's worth getting your paper rechecked. You must attend the review yourself but can bring in a separate adult for each script. If you

wish to get a subject rechecked, the cost is €40, which is refundable if you achieve an upgrade. Around twenty percent of all rechecks are upgraded.

Script viewing in schools will take place as follows:

Script viewing time 1: Tuesday 20th August 5-8pm

Script viewing time 2: Wednesday 21st August 9-12pm

Script viewing time 3: Wednesday 21st August 2-5pm

Scripts marked online will be made available for students to view online over the period Tuesday 20th August 5pm to Wednesday 21st August 5pm.

Remember also that round two and three still might hold offers for you. You also need to be aware that ‘available places’ emerge where colleges don’t manage to fill the total places available on a given course. This facility will become available on www.cao.ie on Tuesday 20th August at 12pm and will be updated on an ongoing basis.

Apprenticeships and PLC courses

If a CAO offer doesn’t come your way, don’t lose hope. Apprenticeships and PLC courses are also real options for you. Full Information about these options are available on www.careersportal.ie Apprenticeships were traditionally based around the crafts, but many new ones have

emerged (almost fifty in total) including in areas such as Accounting, Commi Chef, ICT and Insurance.

PLC's courses can be used as a springboard to a certificate, diploma or even a degree course. Again, I find the courses section of the Careers Portal website brilliant for researching this type of Information and this site will also show you a route to move from your chosen PLC course into higher courses at college/university later. This allows you to map out your future pathway. The minimum requirements on PLC courses are usually lower than college/university ones. Once you get your foot on the first step of the ladder, it is a lot easier to keep climbing.

I wish you all good luck and remember you always have options. Keep an eye on my Facebook page (link below) for Information on ACE'ing the CAO and college offer process over the next few weeks.

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