

# THE CAO SYSTEM EXPLAINED

# CAO



## WHAT IS IT?

The [Central Applications Office \(CAO\)](#) centrally processes applications for entry to the first year of undergraduate courses in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Republic of Ireland. It also issues offers to applicants, when instructed to do so by HEIs, and records acceptances.

The CAO processes, on behalf of the HEIs, school-leavers presenting qualifications from other EU/EFTA countries as well as applications from Irish school-leavers presenting Leaving Certificate qualifications.

## WHAT IS THE POINTS SYSTEM?

Details regarding the points system used by HEIs to score applicants, the minimum entry requirements to each university and to particular courses, and agreed entry requirements for applicants who present qualifications other than the Irish Leaving Certificate (e.g. other EU/EFTA school-leaver qualifications) can be found in the CAO Handbook on the CAO website.

Source: <https://www.iaa.ie/for-students/eu-students/practical-information/>

## 1 TIMING:

**How should students proceed when EB results become available?**

Applicants apply as per dates in CAO handbook.

**Select:** Other School Leaving Exams (e.g. Baccalaureate, Scottish Exams, pre-1985 Irish & UK exams, Leaving Exams outside of UK & Ireland, Leaving Cert Applied, Level 3 BTEC, GNVQs, VCEs, Irish Matric Exams, etc.) when completing the initial application page.

Results should be posted to CAO when available or you can have your exam provider arrange to have results transferred to CAO electronically, please check with the exam provider.

## 2 DESCRIBING THE EB ON THE CAO:

**How should I describe the EB on the CAO application? Do I need to send some additional information?**

**Select:** Other School Leaving Exams (e.g. Baccalaureate, Scottish Exams, pre-1985

Irish & UK exams, Leaving Exams outside of UK & Ireland, Leaving Cert Applied, Level 3 BTEC, GNVQs, VCEs, Irish Matric Exams, etc.) when completing the initial application page.

Baccalaureate can be included in the following section in the application *Enter your other school leaving exams:*

A drop-down menu will appear

## 3 OFFER:

**Is the offer schedule the same?**

Yes, the offer schedule is the same.

## 4 CONVERSIONS/ REQUIREMENTS:

**In terms of the conversion process for points & additional course requirements (applying for Medicine/ Restricted courses with portfolios etc.) Do the CAO have an input here?**

HEIs determine points awarded and entry requirements for Other School Exams.

## 5 IRISH AS AN ONL:

**If I am studying Irish as an ONL, where do I document this?**

Exams to be taken and exams previously taken should be mentioned in the application.

## 6 EXEMPTIONS:

**How does the CAO communicate the status of the applicant (i.e. that I don't require an exemption) to the NUI / Colleges and the applicant?**

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It is up to the applicant to determine if an exemption is required, you may contact the NUI or any of the colleges you are interested in applying to clarify this.

If you apply for a NUI exemption, this information will be passed on to CAO by NUI.

<http://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=exemptions&bb=studentresources>

Also see - <https://euroguidance.ie/resource/european-schools-exemptions>

## USEFUL RESOURCES



- **Applying to college in Ireland:**  
<https://euroguidance.ie/applying-college-ireland>
- **EB Schools Presentation:**  
<https://euroguidance.ie/resource/european-schools-presentation>
- **For CAO information see:**  
<https://euroguidance.ie/resource/european-schools-cao>
- **Prospectus links to all HEIs:**  
<https://euroguidance.ie/resource/european-schools-college-prospectus-list>
- **Agreed entry requirements for EU/EFTA school-leaver qualifications:**  
<http://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/Guidelines-EU-EFTA.pdf>
- **Other useful information:**  
<https://www.iua.ie/for-students/eu-students/practical-information/>
- **The CAO handbook:**  
<http://www.cao.ie/handbook.php>  
  
This contains:
  - > The CAO processes
  - > Courses available
  - > HEI contact details
  - > Demo application templates
  - > Other useful resources
- **Individual HEI contacts:**  
<https://euroguidance.ie/resource/european-schools-hei-contact-information>

