

CENTRAL
APPLICATIONS
OFFICE

MEDIA PACK 2026

CAO
www.cao.ie

Contents

CAO Figures 2026 (2025 figures are in brackets).....	4
Points Charts Recipients	5
Set of Conditions	5
Summary of Important Media Release Dates	5
Requests for Comment or Interviews	5
Offer Round Dates and Reply Dates.....	6
The Process	7
Offers.....	7
Applicant Queries.....	7
Acceptances	7
Important Information for Applicants.....	8
Additional Information.....	9
Conditions governing the provision of points data under embargo to media outlets.....	10

Dear Education Correspondent/Editor,

We have put together some information and statistics which we hope will be of use to you as you prepare for the upcoming supplements issued around the release of the Leaving Certificate results, and the subsequent CAO offer activity.

1. Attached you will find the draft Level 8 & Level 7/6 points tables in the layout as we will send them to you on 26 August.
2. The courses will appear in Handbook order, i.e. alphabetical by location.
3. We have also attached 2025 points for Level 8 & Level 7/6 for Round One and end of season. If you print previous points levels, the year must be shown clearly so that there should be no confusion caused. Please check all course codes as early as possible to ensure the relevant HEIs have time to address your queries.
4. We intend to send the points tables for Round One offers on Wednesday, 26 August. Once we have generated the offers we begin working on the points charts, and we will send them to you as soon as they are complete. This year we hope to have these charts ready by 1pm.
5. CAO will make the cut-off points available on its website from 2pm on Wednesday, 26 August. They are strictly embargoed until that time. If you wish to place them on your website they should NOT be available before 2pm.
6. Round One offers will be available on the CAO website www.cao.ie from 2pm on 26 August. Applicants will also receive an email notification and a text message if they have selected this option. Separate emails/texts will issue in respect of Level 8 and Level 7/6. These emails and texts will be sent from approximately 1pm on 26 August. **There will be no paper offer notices for any of the offer rounds.** The acceptance date for Round One offers is no later than 1 September at 3pm. Offers may be accepted online only.
7. Round Two offers will be available on the CAO website www.cao.ie from 2pm on 7 September. The reply date for Round Two offers is no later than 9 September at 3pm.
8. We hope to email the Round Two points charts to you on the afternoon of the 7 September. **It will not be possible to circulate the points charts before Round Two offers issue.**

Please note: The figures quoted in this media pack include Advanced Entry applicants (The Central Applications Office processes applications for years 2, 3 and 4 of undergraduate courses in several Irish Higher Education Institutions).

Terms and conditions:

- Confidentiality is a crucial part of this process. The publication or broadcasting of CAO points data is strictly embargoed until 2pm on 26 August (Round One) and 2pm on 7 September (Round Two).
- Only personnel directly concerned with their preparation for publication may be given access to these points before this time.
- No tables or articles relating to this information should be available online before 2pm on the 26 August and 2pm on 7 September.
- Points charts are supplied on condition that both lists are published i.e. both level 8 and level 7/6 points charts must be published in full.

All media enquiries and requests for interviews, comments and statistics should be addressed to: Eileen Keleghan, Head of Communications, by email to ekeleghan@cao.ie.

We understand you work to deadlines, so please try to give Eileen plenty of time to collate your enquiries and requests and obtain the information you require. As you know, this is a very busy time for our applicants and the operation of the offer/acceptance process is our priority.

As in previous years, CAO will supply advance notification of points data to media interests as soon as this data is completed and ready. Work on the points charts requires time and concentration, and they are produced in a combined effort with the assistance of our correspondents in participating Higher Education Institutions.

If you have any questions regarding the following material please contact Eileen as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph O'Grady

General Manager

CAO Figures 2026 (2025 figures are in brackets)

- 95,710 (89,308) applicants (July 1st)
- 8,637 (8,295) mature applicants (over 23-years of age)
- 75,884 (71,132) applicants presenting Leaving Certificate (LC) results from 1985 to 2026
- 66,884 (61,610) candidates entered with the SEC to sit the LC this year and, of these,
- 55,357 (51,350) applicants to CAO are presenting LC from this year
- 4,076 (3,637) Applicants indicating General Certificate of Education (GCE) Qualification
- 14,206 (13,160) having a QQI FET qualification
- 2,940 (2,759) presenting Further Education (FE) awards other than a QQI FET qualification
- 11,460 (10,273) presenting other school leaving exams.
- 7,646 (7,030) presenting with previous attendance at Higher Education
- Change of Mind: 76,325 (68,743) changes submitted by 55,568 (50,787) applicants
- 13,863 (12,040) applicants to the DARE scheme (see accesscollege.ie for information)
- 8,104 (8,220) applicants to the HEAR scheme (see accesscollege.ie for information)

Points Charts Recipients

Set of Conditions

Points charts and offer statistics are provided in advance of publication and under embargo under the set of conditions listed on page 10.

Summary of Important Media Release Dates

Date/Time	Release Type
5 August	2026 Points Chart Template and Reference File released to all authorised media outlets.
26 August (1pm - estimated)	Embargoed CAO 2026 Points Table and press release issued to authorised media outlets.
26 August (2pm)	CAO 2026 Round One Points Table available online at www.cao.ie/points
7 September (4pm - estimated)	CAO 2026 Round Two Level 8 Points Table released to all authorised media outlets, followed by Level 7/6 Points Table when available.

Requests for Comment or Interviews

CAO will endeavor to support media with their requests where possible, however, please bear in mind that it is an extremely busy time of the year and not all requests may be feasible.

You may contact Eileen Keleghan, Head of Communications, by e-mail: ekeleghan@cao.ie for comment or to arrange an interview.

CAO will be available to comment on the following information:

- Advice in advance of the offer season
- Advice on accepting an offer and the next steps if no offer is received
- Advice on Available Places applications
- The number of acceptances recorded on day one of Round One offers
- The number of acceptances at the close of reply date for Round One offers
- The number of acceptances on day one of Round Two offers
- The number of acceptances at the close of the reply date for Round Two offers
- The number of acceptances at close of the CAO Offer season

CAO will not:

- Comment on the performance of any individual institution or course
- Speculate or comment on emerging trends, e.g. any increase or decrease in points for a particular course
- CAO will not discuss or deliver direct comparisons with previous year's points data – this information is available on our website, but comparative analyses will not be provided by CAO

Please note: The most effective way of contacting Eileen during this time is via e-mail at ekeleghan@cao.ie.

Offer Round Dates and Reply Dates

Round	Offer Date	Reply Date
Early Round (Round A)	6 July (from 10:00)	9 July (by 15:00)
Round Zero	6 August (from 10:00)	11 August (by 15:00)
Round One	26 August (from 14:00)	1 September (by 15:00)
Round Two	7 September (from 14:00)	9 September (by 15:00)

Early Round/Round A

In early July, a small number of offers of places are issued to applicants such as:

- those who need to make visa or other arrangements before taking a place;
- deferred applicants, mature applicants;
- mature nursing/midwifery applicants.

Round Zero

In early August there are a small number of offers of places which go to certain categories of applicant e.g. mature applicants and applicants presenting QQI FET/FETAC for courses with QQI FET/FETAC quotas.

Round One

Issue of main body of offers takes place after Irish Leaving Certificate Examination grades become available.

Round Two

A second round of offers will be issued to fill any remaining vacancies.

After Round Two

Offers will be issued as necessary to fill any vacancies which may arise (until the close of the offer season).

Available Places - Opens for Applications on 27 August at 12:00

After Round Two, the **Available Places** facility operates on a weekly schedule of applications, offers and acceptances. Full details are available online here: www.cao.ie/ap

The Process

The CAO processes applications for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Republic of Ireland. The HEIs retain the function of making decisions on admissions. On receiving instructions from Admissions Officers, CAO issues offers to eligible applicants in order of merit, as determined by the assessment of applications carried out by Admissions Offices. Applicants who wish to accept an offer must do so by recording an acceptance online.

Most applications are assessed on the basis of the Common Points scale for the Irish Leaving Certificate (the Common Points Scale was developed by Higher Education Institutions and is in operation since 1992; a new scale was introduced in 2017), but some courses are assessed on the basis of a portfolio/interview or other assessment, and some categories of applicant such as mature applicants or those presenting other qualifications are assessed individually by Admissions Offices.

Offers

Details of all offers will be made available on the CAO website, www.cao.ie.

Round One Offer(s) will be available online only from 2pm on the 26 August. By the same date, applicants who have not received an offer in Round One, or an earlier round, will be sent a **Statement of Application email**. This provides applicants with instructions for checking that the CAO has all of the applicant's relevant data on file.

Applicant Queries

Applicants with queries for CAO should use the Correspondence Section of their CAO account. A response will usually be issued by the next working day.

Acceptances

Applicants may receive more than one offer but only one acceptance may be recorded in each round, i.e. applicants may not hold two places at once and so must choose which offer to accept. If an applicant attempts to record two acceptances in the same round, CAO will record the latest acceptance received - prior to the closing date on the offer notice - as final.

Applicants should not delay submitting an acceptance. When an applicant accepts an application online they will receive an e-mail. At any stage, applicants may check the status of their application online.

Important Information for Applicants

1. Do not panic. If you have followed the few simple CAO instructions you will not lose any place to which you are entitled.
2. Read the CAO Handbook at www.cao.ie/handbook
3. Do not miss the deadline for accepting the offer. If you do, the place will be offered to another applicant.
4. There is no need to inform CAO if you do NOT wish to accept an offer.
5. Due to the large numbers of people involved, it will be very difficult to telephone CAO at the Offer Stage. All email enquiries received from applicants are processed as fast as possible by the CAO. Enquiries should be made by email using the **Correspondence Section** of your CAO account
6. When calculating points for the Leaving Certificate, remember that only your best 6 subjects are counted. There is a Points Calculator on the CAO website (please take note of the accompanying conditions) www.cao.ie/calc
7. Acceptance of offers cannot be made by telephone, fax or email. Only an online acceptance will secure a place.
8. When making an online acceptance, make sure that you follow **all** of the directions on the screen.
9. If you wish to defer the place until next year, read page 32 of the CAO Handbook. Do **not** contact CAO.

A video guide to the CAO Offer and Acceptance process is available to view here: [A video guide to the CAO Offer and Acceptance process is available to view here:](#)

Additional Information

If you have any queries regarding the details below, please contact Eileen Keleghan, Head of Communications, by e-mail to ekeleghan@cao.ie

Course categories:

As notified previously, in 2017 CAO adopted a course classification (The International Standard Classification of Education for Fields of Education and Training 2013 (ISCED-F)). All CAO courses have been assigned one ISCED-F code. In addition, in order to reflect previous subject categories and particular groups, the CAO has implemented a new specialist group classification. This specialist group classification is completely separate to the ISCED-F classification and not all courses will be in a specialist group, however, it is possible for a course to be in two specialist groups.

Comparative data is available from 2016 under this new classification.

Detailed breakdown of applicants:

CAO will also provide a breakdown of applicant data and offer statistics to show county-by-county details along with details for applicants from Northern Ireland, Great Britain (it is not possible to break these into England, Scotland, Wales), EU and non-EU groupings. Details for mature students and QQI FET/FETAC qualified applicants will be available by the end of season.

Conditions governing the provision of points data under embargo to media outlets

CAO provides points data to media outlets under embargo in advance of the release of offers in Round One. The purpose of providing this information is to enhance transparency in the offer process and to help provide adequate information, in easily accessible formats, to applicants, their parents, and Guidance Counsellors.

The embargo is in place to protect student welfare. CAO wishes to ensure that applicants are aware of their actual offer position (available online from 2pm in Round One and Round Two) before attempting to derive their position from external sources such as points charts or stories in the media.

CAO reserves the right to withdraw this service at any time, particularly if it determines that the advance provision of such information to the media is having a negative impact on applicants or the workings of this office.

Points charts and offer statistics are provided in advance of publication and under embargo under the following conditions:

- The individual/organisation will observe embargoes set out by CAO, or their agents, on all CAO data that they receive, obtain or have access to.
- The individual/organisation accepts that the publication or broadcasting of CAO points, or information derived from CAO points, is strictly embargoed until the dates and times that Round One and Round Two offers are issued (details are set out in the accompanying media pack).
- The data will be transmitted and stored in a secure location accessible only to those personnel directly involved in processing and analysing it for publication.
- The individual/organisation is solely responsible for the confidentiality of the data received until the date and time of the embargo has passed.
- No table or articles relating to this information will be available online or in any electronic format including e-mail, SMS text, social media, broadcast etc. before the embargo has passed.
- The individual/organisation accepts that points charts are supplied on condition that both lists are published in full, i.e. both Level 8 and Level 7/6 points charts must be published.
- The individual/organisation agrees that embargo breaches in electronic media will not be acceptable and that the CAO Board will determine the employment of a sanction in the case of any such breach. The Board has indicated that an appropriate sanction may involve two years suspension from receipt of all embargoed information from CAO for the entirety of the organisation involved, including online and physical editions.
- The individual/organisation accepts that the CAO Board of Directors will be the final authority in determining where a breach has occurred and in dealing with any breaches of the embargo.