



## Where can one obtain information that relates to special educational needs and the CAO (Central Applications Office) process?

- [FAQ](#) [1]

Information on [Disability/Specific Learning Disability in relation to the CAO \(PDF - 48 KB\)](#) [2] process can be viewed here

Although students are not obliged to do so, they are encouraged to indicate any disability or specific learning difficulty on the appropriate section of the CAO Application Form. CAO will then supply the applicant with a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) so that further details can be provided. These details will then be presented to the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to which the student has applied. [Sample completed forms](#) [3] are available here. The purpose of this procedure is to allow HEIs to consider, in consultation with the applicant, any specific support needs he or she may require.

The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability ([AHEAD](#) [4]) also has information relating to this question which can be accessed here. AHEAD has also produced a book Accessing Third Level Education in Ireland - A Guide for Students with Disabilities & Learning Difficulties. This can be ordered from AHEAD directly, the contact number is 01 7164396.

## What is the Supplementary Admission Route in relation to applying for a college place?

The Supplementary Admission Route facilitates access to a number of higher education colleges for applicants who, because of their disability or specific learning difficulty, may not meet the competitive CAO points for the course of their choice.

To date at least eleven higher education colleges have become involved in a common approach. These colleges are:

1. Athlone Institute of Technology
2. Dublin City University
3. Dublin Institute of Technology
4. National University of Ireland, Maynooth
5. National University of Ireland, Galway
6. Trinity College Dublin
7. University College Cork, NUI
8. University College Dublin, NUI
9. University of Limerick
10. Mater Dei
11. National College of Ireland

It is likely other colleges will join this common system – please check directly with the admissions office of colleges that you may be interested in.

To qualify for entry under this scheme, each student must reach at least the minimum entry requirements for their course along with any specific course requirements. Students who have a language exemption in Post-primary must apply directly to the participating colleges to have it recognised. This means a student with an Irish exemption must apply to the National University of Ireland to have the Irish or 3rd language exemption recognised.

Further [information in relation to this admission system is available here \(PDF - 128 KB\)](#) [5]. Applicants should take specific note of any timeframes involved.

### **What if the student with special educational needs cannot read the CAO handbook or complete the relevant forms?**

Applicants whose special educational needs prevents them from reading the CAO Handbook or completing the relevant forms should be advised to contact CAO. Individual arrangements will then be made by CAO to overcome such difficulties. An audible version of the CAO Handbook is available to download from the downloads section of the [CAO website](#) [6].

### **Do colleges have a special quota of places specifically for students with disabilities?**

Only some colleges allocate a small number of places for students on grounds of disability. Please contact colleges directly for more information.

### **What options are available to a student with special educational needs who wishes to pursue education, training or work opportunities other than those available through the CAO route?**

There is a range of options available to all students interested in education, training or work opportunities that do not come under the CAO system, a sample of which are referred to below.

For example many courses are accredited by FETAC ([The Further Education and Training Awards Council](#) [7]) and these give people the opportunity to gain recognition for learning achieved in a variety of education or training centres (see Fetac website). The local VEC (Vocational Education Committee), for example, may be running FETAC courses in its schools and other education centres. [You can find your local VEC here](#) [8].

Another alternative is [Rehab](#) [9]. Through the National Learning Network, Rehab provides an extensive range of courses for those who want to continue in education and training after Post-primary school.

For those who wish to seek information about going directly into employment, the [National Disability Authority \(NDA\)](#) [10] has relevant details here, which may be a useful source of information.

For further options such as these, please ask advice from your Career Guidance Counselor in school.



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**Special Education Support Service** is an initiative of Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education

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and Skills, funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, "Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All".