

What is Access?

Equity of Access to Higher Education

Widening participation has been a priority for colleges and universities in recent years.

Recruiting students from all walks of life who demonstrate the ability, motivation and potential to succeed at third level will, over time, draw outstanding talent from a broad pool of applicants.

This will make sure that our colleges and universities remain diverse, vibrant places in which to study and become more representative of the society which they serve.

Entry to colleges and universities has been dominated by school leavers who have completed the Leaving Certificate Examination. Entry is decided on an open, transparent and competitive basis through the Central Applications Office [CAO] established by the universities.

Many colleges and universities have made significant strides in providing programmes aimed at achieving equity of access for learners of all backgrounds, identities and abilities.

As a means of widening participation in 3rd level participating colleges have developed a range of initiatives including the following supplementary admission routes:

- **Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)**
- **Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)**
- **Mature Students**

What is the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)?

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a college and university admissions scheme which offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

HEAR has been set up by a number of colleges and universities as evidence shows that socio-economic disadvantage can have a negative effect on how well a student does at school and whether they go on to college.

HEAR Applicants must meet a range of financial, social and cultural indicators to be considered for a reduced points place and extra college support.

Who is it for?

HEAR is for school leavers under the age of 23 as of January 1st 2014, who have completed an Irish Leaving Certificate. Mature and FETAC students have their own admissions routes and should contact college admissions offices for more information

Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)

A key strategic issue for the university sector is the flexible provision of courses in response to an increasingly diverse range of students.

If you are a student with a disability and you may not be able to meet the points for the course of your choice due to the impact of your disability, then the supplementary admission route – the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is for you.

Students who are eligible for DARE include those who:

- have a physical and mobility disabilities**
 - are blind or vision impaired**
 - are deaf or hard of hearing**
- have significant ongoing health issues**
 - experience significant learning difficulties such as dyslexia**
 - have disabilities such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Asperger's Syndrome**

Each university has set its own entry requirements to each programme. For more information, you can contact the disability officers for each university.

Mature Students

Universities and colleges actively encourage applications from mature candidates.

Mature students are those aged 23 years or older on 1 January in the year of entry.

Mature students have a wealth of knowledge and experience with which they make a valuable contribution to college life and to society.

Many colleges and universities embrace the ethos of lifelong learning and are committed to the objective of widening participation.

In order to increase participation of adult learners they continually work towards wider entry routes for mature students.

Each college and university provides a range of supports from advice on computers and technology to learning and study skills, health services, child care and financial aid.

For more information about admission routes for mature students, contact the colleges directly.