

What Next?

Education and
Training
Opportunities
for Adults in
Ireland





get yourself back on track



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in 60 seconds

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Welcome to the AONTAS Information Booklet 2016

Whether you are looking for ways to develop yourself personally, to improve your current job prospects or to simply learn for fun, **What Next?** offers you lots of useful tips and advice for getting started.

The wide variety of courses available along with different entry criteria and funding options can be overwhelming. This booklet aims to introduce adult learners and potential adult learners to the options available to them in a way that is simple and easy to understand.

There is an extensive range of courses available for adults wishing to return to learning. With programmes from improving literacy skills to a third level degree, part time or full time, we are confident that there is something to suit everyone in their pursuit of lifelong learning.

Remember, this booklet is simply a starting point in your discovery of lifelong learning, call AONTAS on **01-4068220** if you have any further queries and keep an eye on our website for further updates, www.aontas.com.

We wish you every success in your journey through lifelong learning.

The Adult Learner

AONTAS believes that people are continually learning throughout their lives from the time they are born until the end of life. We also know that adults have many responsibilities, in the workplace, at home and in their communities, and that formal learning has to be fitted around things we need to do in everyday life. Many of us have left school early while others have completed primary, secondary and third level education.

Work life is also changing and most adults are now likely to change jobs several times in their lifetimes. Information technology has transformed both the workplace and home life and this means that we constantly need to renew our skills. We also need to take periods of time

away from the workplace to take care of our children or older people and will need to refresh our skills to return to employment. Whatever our situation there are opportunities available to us. At our National Adult Learner Forum during the Adult Learners' Festival the message from adult learners was:

“Start where you left off”.

The first thing you will need to do is find out what education and training opportunities are available and assess how they fit with your current level of education and training, and where you want to get to. The information in the booklet will help you to do that. Hearing how other learners got started can also provide great motivation.

Here is what learners are saying about returning to education:

Joanne Mc Cabe, Adult Learner

My name is Joanne McCabe and I am 33 years of age. I live in the north inner city of Dublin and I have 5 children (one deceased) and I am the youngest of three children. I lead a busy life looking after my children and have always struggled to take care of myself.

I left school at eighteen, two months before I was due to sit for the Leaving Certificate. I had very little interest in studying and was eager to get out working. It turned out that I had very little choice but to go out working and I was directed by my parents to go and earn some money.

I worked in many different settings, including a cleaner and a general operative, making sausages. Before I returned to education, I used to spend a lot of time watching television. I had hopes of returning to education and had begun some courses but never completed any of them for one reason or another. I was a little lazy and fearful of anything new. I did complete a parenting course with Foundations but I found it hard to commit to.

Around this time, my keyworker told me about an education service called the PETE programme in Focus Ireland where they delivered QQI

level 3 courses and various other programmes of support and skills. I decided that I would go over and give it a try for a week. Part of me wanted to show my kids and make them proud of me for returning to education but another part of me was terrified about meeting new people in a school environment. I enrolled with the PETE programme and it was a perfect fit for me. It was fun and I met loads of new people who wanted to achieve the same goals as me. It gave me structure and routine and something that I could look forward to on a daily basis. I completed five QQI level 3 awards there. It was nothing like my memories of school. I improved my self-confidence, learned about beliefs and values and it was my first time to try public speaking.

Throughout this time my confidence levels were increasing and I attended various meetings with AONTAS and I was given the opportunity to represent Ireland at the European Anti-Poverty Network in Brussels. I spoke in front of a large group for the first time and I applied the basic principles of public speaking and group work that I had learned in the self-advocacy class. My dream for the future is to complete the QQI level 3 course – Career Preparation with the PETE programme and get a good curriculum vitae together. I would love to be a keyworker in the future so I can help others achieve their hopes and goals.

Anthony Byrne, Adult Learner

I left secondary school and went to Ballymun Youthreach for 4 years. After that I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I tried to get a job but the economy had taken a downturn. I fell in to a rut of not doing anything and I felt lost in where I wanted to go in life.

In 2013 I got a letter from my local Social Welfare office about courses that were available in my local area. I thought the courses looked good and I decided that I wanted to do a personal development course to build up my confidence after being unemployed. I took part in QQI level 3 Communications & Personal Effectiveness. Then I moved on to Career Planning at QQI level 4. These courses helped me with my interview skills, my communications skills and taught me how to deal with conflict.

Through the Career Planning course I found that working with computers was something that I had a real interest in. This year I took part in Computer Literacy & Word Processing at QQI level 3 and IT Skills at QQI level 4. I was feeling more confident so I went to an open day at Coláiste Dhulaigh. I was pleased that I could show them that I had been building my computer skills. I also wanted to complete the courses so I could build up my CV. This helped keep me motivated during the course, other people in the class had different goals and motivations. We were all at different levels but we supported each other, the courses helped me in so many ways and I would highly recommend doing a course through the Partnership.

During my time over the last year I have done a lot of self-reflecting and developed a philosophy of stepping stones. I looked at every course as an opportunity to not only learn something new but also as a stepping stone to other opportunities and it has really benefited me a lot to have that outlook. In September 2014 I began attending Coláiste Dhulaigh to train to be a Computer Systems Technician. Back in 2013 I never believed that it would be possible for me to go to college. My experience is proof that this is something that anyone can achieve-you just need to take that first step.

To read more inspirational stories visit the AONTAS blog at: www.aontas.com or visit One Step Up at: www.onestepup.ie.

Getting Started

A number of key changes have taken place in the further education and training sector (FET). The 33 former VECs have been amalgamated to form 16 new Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The ETBs are responsible for co-ordinating further education services formerly delivered by the VECs. FÁS has been dissolved and the training delivery functions of FÁS have now transferred to the new ETBs. The Education and Training Boards are now responsible for the delivery of Further Education and Training.

SOLAS is the new Further Education and Training Authority and manages, co-ordinates and supports the delivery of integrated Further Education and Training by Education and Training Boards. The FET strategy was developed following a wide consultation with a range of stakeholders including learners. It will be implemented by the ETBs in partnership with other stakeholders. Education and training courses will continue as normal and learners will not be affected by the change. For information regarding education and training programmes contact your local Education and Training Board or visit www.etbi.ie.

Please note: FETAC, which was the awarding body for Further Education and Training (FET) is now Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). Learners now receive QQI awards when they finish a course.

Services provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

ETBs are the main providers of education and training programmes in Ireland. There are a wide range of programmes available for all ages. Currently an Adult Education Officer in the ETB manages and coordinates the adult education services and he or she can put you in touch with the other services within the Education and Training Boards. The following diagram shows the services provided by the 16 ETBs. Many ETBs have Open Days to showcase their services visit www.onestepup.ie to find a local event near you.



Services provided by the Education and Training Boards

Adult Education Guidance Service

If you need advice from someone on what your first step should be, the Adult Education Officer in your local ETB will be able to direct you to your local guidance service. Many people are unsure of where they should start when returning to education and often the first step is the hardest. The Adult Education Guidance Service, delivered by the ETBs, is available to adults who are thinking of returning to learning. Guidance counsellors and coordinators give guidance to adults who are participating in, or are considering adult education programmes such as the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS), Adult Literacy programmes and Community Education, including the Back To Education Initiative (BTEI).

Guidance Information Officers in the ETBs can also provide advice and information on local, regional and national opportunities for adult learners and supports for adult education. In many areas this information service is open to members of the public as well as the designated target groups. For more information contact the Adult Education Officer in your local ETB or your local Adult Guidance Service. Visit www.etbi.ie for details of your local ETB.

Adult Basic Education

What is Adult Basic Education?

Lots of adults return to learning to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills. Courses organised by the Adult Literacy Service in each county are offered to adults and can be done on a one-to-one basis or as part of a small group. These courses are provided free of charge and the service is confidential.

What are the benefits of taking a course like this?

People who return to adult basic education want to catch up on what they missed at school. It's a great opportunity to improve your skills and also gain the confidence to go on and learn new ones.

Where do you find Adult Basic Education courses?

If you are interested, or know someone else who could benefit from a course:

- ✓ Contact your local Adult Education Officer (AEO) in your nearest Education and Training Board (www.etbi.ie) for advice
- ✓ Freephone the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), 1800 20 20 65 for support and information on where to go for help or visit www.nala.ie

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)

What is the Back to Education Initiative?

The Back To Education Initiative provides:

- ✓ part-time further education programmes
- ✓ aimed at people with less than the Leaving Certificate

BTEI is free to all those:

- ✓ with less than the Leaving Certificate
- ✓ in receipt of certain Social Welfare payments
- ✓ dependant on a Social Welfare recipient
- ✓ with a current medical card
- ✓ signing for credits
- ✓ people on low incomes


“My quality of life has improved dramatically. For the first time in a long time I have a sense of routine in my life.”

All other participants are charged a participation fee. In general, you are allowed to take part in BTEI funded programmes for up to 17 hours per week without it affecting your Social Welfare payments. However, on certain payments you are expected to remain eligible for work.

Contact your local Employment Services/Intreo office for more information www.welfare.ie.

BTEI gives you an opportunity to combine your learning with family, work and other commitments. It offers a wide range of subjects from Junior and Leaving Certificate courses, catering, tourism, communication, arts & crafts, and others. Courses are certified by QQI.

For application forms and further information on BTEI options in your locality, contact an Adult Education Officer in your local ETB or your local Adult Guidance Service. Visit www.etbi.ie for details of your local ETB.



“I couldn’t help my kids with their homework. Their school gave me the number of my local ETB and I began with a personal development course and went from there.”

Youthreach

Youthreach is a programme that is targeted at unemployed, young early school leavers aged 15-20. It offers participants the opportunity to identify and pursue practical options and provides them with opportunities to acquire certification. It operates on a full-time, year-round basis. Find your local centre at www.youthreach.ie.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

VTOS is a scheme which includes a range of full time courses designed to meet the education, training and qualifications needs of people in receipt of a range of social welfare payments. Each VTOS centre will provide a different combination of learning opportunities.

To get information on learning opportunities under VTOS contact the Adult Education Officer in your local ETB. Visit www.etbi.ie for details of your local ETB.

You can also browse courses available through VTOS centres on Qualifax (www.qualifax.ie), the National Learners Database.

Who are VTOS courses for?

You may qualify for the VTOS scheme if you are:

- ✓ **Aged 21 or over and**
- ✓ **In receipt of a Job Seekers' Allowance or a Job Seekers' Benefit or signing for credits for at least six months or**
- ✓ **In receipt of a One Parent Family Payment, Disability Allowance, Illness Benefit, Blind Pension or Invalidity Pension for at least six months or**
- ✓ **Getting Blind Pension, Deserted Wife's Allowance/Benefit, Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pension, Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Non-Contributory Pension or Prisoner's Wife's Allowance for at least 6 months (conditions may apply in the case of these payments)**
- ✓ **A dependent spouse, civil partner or cohabitant of an eligible person.**

Periods spent on certain training courses, Community Employment Schemes, Job Initiative, Youthreach programmes and time in prison can count towards the qualifying period. Your individual circumstances may affect your eligibility. Check with your local Employment services/Intreo office or visit www.welfare.ie for more information.

Post Leaving Certificate/College of Further Education courses (PLCs)

PLC courses provide a large range of full-time and part-time education and training options. Courses are delivered flexibly and provide learners with the opportunity to gain recognised education and training qualifications. Many PLC courses lead to QQI awards which are included in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) (www.qqi.ie) and often have progression links to higher education and training courses. Courses are accredited through the National Qualifications Framework (NFQ). Use the National Learners' Database, www.qualifax.ie, to find the courses. Then apply directly to the school or college offering that course.

Who are PLC Courses for?

They are for:

- ✓ **People who have completed senior cycle education, and require further vocational education and training**
- ✓ **Adults returning to education that may not have completed the Leaving Certificate but have the necessary capacity to undertake their chosen programme**
- ✓ **Adults who were unable to enter third level education after leaving school**

When offered a place you may be required to attend an interview.

Community Education

What is Community Education?

Community Education works with adults who wish to return to or continue their education, offering a learner-centred approach involving personal supports and tuition leading to positive personal, social and economic outcomes. It focusses its work on people who are distant from education, training and the labour market, and is generally developed in local community projects and centres. It starts from the person's current situation and you are encouraged to work together in creative and participative ways to set and achieve goals such as employment, personal and social change, formal certification up to Level 8, and community activity.

Who delivers Community Education?

Community Education is delivered all over Ireland by a range of providers including Education and Training Boards and independently managed not for profit groups. It takes place in a wide variety of community projects, resource centres, voluntary organisations etc. Community education in the ETBs is co-ordinated by Community Education Facilitators. Contact your local ETB for more information. AONTAS also supports the work of community education groups outside of the ETB structure through the Community Education Network. Visit www.aontas.com for more information.

Further Education contacts and other useful resources:

Education and Training Boards (ETBs)	www.etbi.ie	045-901070
Youthreach	www.youthreach.ie	
Local Libraries	www.askaboutireland.ie/libraries/	
National Adult Literacy Agency	www.nala.ie	1800 20 20 65
Qualifax – The National Learners' Database	ww.qualifax.ie	
Department of Social Protection	www.welfare.ie	

The Next Steps: Qualifications

Before choosing a course to study you should do a bit of research;

- ✓ Find out what, if any, qualification will be awarded upon completion of the course
- ✓ Find out who awards the qualification
- ✓ Find out how you can progress from this course to another one if you decide you want to
- ✓ Always fully research the qualification before commencement

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established as a new amalgamated agency (replacing the now dissolved agencies Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and incorporating the functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board).

Please note: QQI has now replaced FETAC and is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. QQI validates programmes for some providers and makes awards to learners. QQI has replaced FETAC since 2012 and learners now receive QQI awards. In 2015 as many as 164,000 learners achieved QQI awards.

In 2015, QQI launched its new award brand QQI Award for further and higher education and training. To ensure wider knowledge of the change from FETAC to QQI, and to ensure the new award is being properly referenced and promoted, QQI is running an award brand promotion campaign that is running until 2017. It's called QQI Award Know it when you see it. For more information visit the QQI website www.qqi.ie.

Many PLC/ College of Further Education courses lead to QQI awards. For holders of QQI Level 5 and Level 6 awards the HELS (Higher Education Links Scheme) provides progression opportunities for learners to a number of higher education programmes. Details are available from individual higher education institutions and applications are through the CAO www.cao.ie.

National Framework of Qualifications

QQI is also responsible for the maintenance, development and review of the NFQ (National Framework of Qualifications) www.nfq.ie. The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is a ten level system that includes awards made for all kinds of learning, large and small, whether it is gained in schools, the workplace, the community, training centres, colleges or universities. For more information, visit www.nfq.ie and also www.QQI.ie. For a full page NFQ diagram please go to the back of the booklet.



Upskilling and Training

Intreo/Department of Social Protection

If you are looking to get back to work or to upskill there are various options open to you. Due to the economic downturn in Ireland and the high levels of unemployment the government have focused on the area of upskilling and training. Your first point of contact should be your local Social Welfare office. Visit www.welfare.ie for more information. They will be able to refer you to your nearest service.

Pathways to Work

Pathways to Work is a government strategy to respond to long term unemployment. The Pathways 2015 Strategy in line with previous years is about incentivising employers to provide more jobs for those who are unemployed. The Pathways to Work Strategy introduced in 2012 has been extended from 2016-2020 and aims to incentivise employers to provide more jobs for those who are unemployed. This includes guidance on job searching or education and training or work placement/ experience.

Intreo

Intreo is a new service from the Department of Social Protection and is part of Pathways to Work. It is a single point of contact for all employment services and the provision of income supports. It provides individualised supports to jobseekers to assist them in getting back to work and increasing their employability. The service is being extended across the Department's network of offices.

Intreo – Services and Supports to Jobseekers

Intreo provides practical, tailored supports and services to assist jobseekers with their individual needs. It gives them access to a wide range of employment and work experience opportunities.

The range of services include:

- Expert assistance and advice on employment, training, work experience and personal development opportunities.
- A focus on individual needs to assist a jobseeker to enter the workforce
- Self-service facilities to provide Jobseeker's with information and guidance on employment and training opportunities
- Access to information on job vacancies through www.jobsireland.ie
- Information on the full range of income supports provided by the Department of Social Protection, for example, jobseeker's payments, back to work and back to education payments, one-parent family payments, pensions and others
- On-going support with any queries in relation to Jobseeker's or one parent family payment claims will continue to be dealt with by the team in your local Intreo centre

SOLAS

SOLAS is the new Further Education and Training Authority and manages, co-ordinates and supports the delivery of integrated Further Education and Training by Education and Training Boards. FÁS has been dissolved and the training delivery functions of FÁS have now transferred to the new ETBs. The Education and Training Boards are now responsible for the delivery of Further Education and Training. Education and training courses will continue as normal and learners will not be affected by the change. Certification of courses will not be affected. SOLAS Specific Skills Training Courses that are both daytime and evening courses are run through local Training Centres under the ETBs. For more information contact your local ETB or visit: www.etbi.ie.

Training Centres

Training Centres (formerly FÁS Centres) offer a wide range of day and night courses for unemployed learners across a number of locations in Ireland. Courses can be delivered in the Training Centres but are also sometimes delivered in local areas making it easier for you to access training. A wide range of courses provide training to those who are entering the labour market for the first time, those who wish to upskill and/or change their career path. There is a range of full-time and part-time day courses along with a choice of night training options. Courses are designed to equip you with the skills necessary to progress to further training options and/or seek employment. Visit www.etbi.ie for details of your local ETB Training Centre.

Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is the recognised way in which people are trained to become craftspeople in Ireland. Apprenticeships are workplace and classroom training programmes for employed people aimed at developing the skills of the apprentice to meet the needs of industry and the labour market. On successful completion of an apprenticeship, a QQI Level 6 Advanced Certificate is awarded which is recognised internationally as the requirement for craftsperson status. For more information on apprenticeships or a list of apprenticeships available please visit: www.fas.ie/en/Training/Apprenticeships/default.htm.

Community Employment Schemes:

- ✓ offer part time training and work experience opportunities for people who are long term unemployed

Qualifying criteria vary, but in general you must be in receipt of a social welfare payment for at least one year.

Contact your local Employment Services/Intreo centre for information about Community Employment job opportunities.

For more information visit: www.welfare.ie.

TÚS – Community Work Placement Initiative

Tús aims to provide short-term, quality work for those who are unemployed and to provide services that are of benefit to the community. The type of projects carried out include: energy conservation work, social care, coaching sporting activities and many more.

Who can participate?

Participants will, in the first instance, be identified by the Department of Social Protection by applying the following criteria:

Visit the Department of Social Protection website to find out more information: www.welfare.ie.

The Work Placement Programme (WPP)

The Work Placement Programme provides a nine month unpaid placement for recent graduates and people who are unemployed. Placements are full time and you do not have to be in receipt of a social welfare payment to qualify.

Alternatively, if you are on a social welfare payment for at least three months, you may be able to keep your payment but you must get approval from the Department of Social Protection first. For a work placement, contact your local Employment Services/Intreo office or visit www.welfare.ie for more information.

Skills for Work

Skills for Work is a national programme aimed at providing training opportunities to help employees deal with the basic skills demands of the workplace. The initiative is delivered by the newly formed Education & Training Boards (ETBs) across the country. The project is managed nationally by Dublin & Dún Laoghaire ETB. For more information please visit www.skillsforwork.ie or email info@skillsforwork.ie.

Skillnets

If you are unemployed you can attend a range of Skillnets training courses for free. Training programmes are open to individuals not on welfare payments but eligibility criteria does apply. By training with a Skillnets network, you can access training relevant to industry needs and get networking opportunities with companies and employees in your chosen sector and/or region. Skillnets also offers a Job Seekers support programme which offers free training in skills which are in demand as well as work placement opportunities. To find out more information visit www.skillnets.ie or email info@skillnets.com.

FIT (Fasttrack to Information Technology)

FIT is an initiative which was set up for unemployed people to access training in information technology and pursue employment opportunities in this sector. It is supported by industry in Ireland and involves companies such as IBM and Microsoft. FIT provides ongoing support to the graduates on its programmes, course applicants do not need any formal education or professional experience, just an interest in IT and a willingness to learn. For more information visit www.fit.ie.

JobBridge - National Internship Scheme

JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme (NIS) is a Government initiative, designed to offer jobseekers, who are on the Live Register and have been in receipt of certain welfare payments or signing on for credits for at least 3 months, the opportunity to enhance their current skills and develop new ones.

For more information visit: www.jobbridge.ie

Labour Market Activation Measures

In recent years the government has concentrated on Labour Market Activation Measures to target specific groups of people to equip them with the necessary skills to get them back into the workforce. The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 has a number of key goals which include Skills for the Economy and Active Inclusion. Keep an eye out for initiatives that you may be eligible for. An example of some recent initiatives are MOMENTUM and Springboard.

MOMENTUM

MOMENTUM is a:

- ✓ **Government initiative**
- ✓ **provides free education and training for long-term jobseekers**
- ✓ **It will assist 6,500 long term unemployed jobseekers to gain in-demand skills and to access work in sectors of the economy where there are job opportunities**
- ✓ **Programmes include work experience modules as well as the development of workplace skills**

Providers from both the private and public sector are offering individual MOMENTUM programmes in locations all across Ireland in areas such as ICT, digital media, healthcare and social services, the green economy, food processing and sales and marketing.

Specific projects were made available for those under 25 to assist them to enter or return to employment including, 'Train To Work Opportunities', 'Green Pathways' and a Graduate Activation Programme.

For more information and a full list of courses visit:

www.momentumskills.ie or contact your local Employment Services/ Intreo Office.

Springboard

Springboard offers free, part-time higher education courses at certificate, degree and masters level. Courses are particularly targeted towards people employed in areas now experiencing significant unemployment.

In order to qualify for a Springboard course there are a number of eligibility criteria. Springboard courses have been developed around the needs of adult learners and are generally flexible. They are ideally suited to people who have substantial work experience but need a third level qualification to upskill or retrain in growth areas. Applications must be made through the Springboard website – www.springboardcourses.ie, which also allows learners to compare different courses and search by area.

There is also a dedicated Springboard helpline at:

Freephone 1800 303 523. (The Helpline is open from May until late September/October).

Visit www.springboardcourses.ie for more information.

ICT Conversion Courses

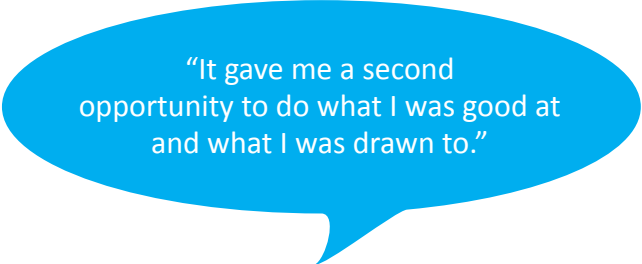
The ICT plan involves a number of higher education providers who offer various Level 8 Conversion Programmes which will provide graduates from other skills areas with the opportunity to up-skill or re-skill through a one year full time HDip Conversion Programme in core computing/programming skills. For ICT Skills conversion courses, you need not be unemployed to be eligible to apply, any suitably qualified individual is eligible. To see a list of courses visit www.springboardcourses.ie and show 'only ICT Skills Conversion courses'.

Upskilling/Training contacts and other useful resources:

Intreo	www.welfare.ie		
SOLAS	www.solas.ie	01-533 2500	
Community Employment Schemes	www.welfare.ie		
TÚS – Community Work Placement Initiative	www.welfare.ie		
The Work Placement Programme (WPP)	www.welfare.ie		
Skills for Work	www.skillsforwork.ie		
FIT (Fasttrack to Information Technology)	www.fit.ie		
Skillnets	www.skillnets.ie		
JobBridge - National Internship Scheme	www.jobbridge.ie		
Momentum	www.momentumskills.ie		
Springboard	www.springboardcourses.ie	Freephone 1800 303 523	
ICT Conversion Courses	www.springboardcourses.ie		
The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE)	www.inou.ie	For the WORKING FOR WORK Publication visit:	01-8560088
Jobs Ireland	www.jobsireland.ie		

SECTION 2: Higher and Third Level Education

Higher Education in Ireland is provided mainly by 7 Universities, 14 Institutes of Technology, including the Dublin Institute of Technology and 7 Colleges of Education. Also, a number of other third level institutions provide specialist education in such fields as art and design, medicine, business studies, rural development, theology, music and law. Please visit www.education.ie/en/Learners/Information/Providers-of-Higher-Education/List.html for a list of institutions that provide higher education. There are a number of independent private colleges. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland. For more information visit www.hea.ie.



“It gave me a second opportunity to do what I was good at and what I was drawn to.”

Foundation/Access Courses

‘Return to Learning’ or ‘Access Courses’ are designed for mature students (some access courses also work with students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are not mature students), who for social, economic or educational reasons were unable to access third level education. Access courses are primarily aimed at adults who have been away from formal education for a number of years and would like to improve their skills, confidence and knowledge in order to access a third level course. Access courses familiarise students with the structure and requirements of third level education. For further information about access courses, contact the HEA www.hea.ie, **1890 200 637**. You can also contact the access officer in the institution you would like to attend; a list of Third Level contacts are available in the contacts section at the end of the booklet.

Central Applications Office (CAO)

What is the Central Applications Office (CAO)?

The Central Applications Office (CAO) deals with the task of processing all applications to their first year undergraduate/diploma/certificate courses. In Ireland you apply for almost all full-time undergraduate courses Higher Certificates (Level 6), Ordinary Bachelor's degrees (Level 7) and Honours Bachelor's degrees (Level 8) in the universities and Institutes of Technology through the Central Applications Office (CAO). Entry requirements (as a mature student you may not need your Leaving Certificate) vary from course to course and from institution to institution. Universities, Institutes of Technology and private colleges offer courses with qualifications at certificate, diploma and degree level. Courses are available on a full-time and part-time basis.

How to make an application through the CAO?

The CAO provides an application pack with a handbook that lists all the courses on offer and gives information on how to apply. Decisions on offers of places are normally made in August and September after the results of the Leaving Certificate have been announced. A student must also have the particular academic entry requirements (also called matriculation requirements) for the course he/she wants to take. For all participants, higher level institutions applications can be made in paper and online via the CAO. Remember to check the closing date for application relevant to the year you are applying.

The application whether online or paper has a fee attached, however if you apply online before mid-January you may get a discount on this fee. During the year a number of colleges hold open days for students to become familiar with the college they wish to apply to. Remember www.cao.ie gives detailed information on criteria, deadlines and the application procedure. Students should check the exact dates well in advance to making an application with the CAO. Visit www.cao.ie for more information.


Changes in 2017

A new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate will be introduced from 2017. The new scheme means that the Common Points Scale used by the CAO to determine entry into higher education institutions, has also been revised. For more information visit: <http://www.transition.ie/>.

Mature Students

Mature applicants **MUST** register on the CAO system before the 1st February – most HEIs will not consider you on mature grounds if you apply using the ‘Late Application’ or ‘Change of Mind’ facilities. You can register on the system at any stage from early November, and you can go back to your application as many times as you like up 31st January.

Mature applicants should make enquiries from the appropriate Admissions Office and/or Mature Students Officer **BEFORE** submitting a late application or Change of Mind.



“Third level education offered me a second opportunity and it was a different experience, my opinions were valued and acknowledged.”

Higher and Third Level Education contacts and other useful resources:

Higher Education Authority	1890 200 637	www.hea.ie
Central Applications Office (CAO)	091-509800	www.cao.ie
Union of Students of Ireland (USI)	01-7099300	www.usi.ie
Postgraduate Ireland	www.postgradireland.com	

Distance, Online, Flexible and Blended Learning

The options for learning in non-classroom settings, has increased dramatically over the past few years. Distance, online, flexible and blended education allows a learner to study at a time and place that suits their own lifestyle.

Before engaging in any form of distance, online, flexible or blended learning check the course cost and qualification.

Distance education is learning where you do not have to attend a physical location at fixed times throughout the academic year. Open learning, online learning and distance learning all qualify as types of distance education. The main advantage of this type of learning is that it can be combined with home life and work commitments.

Online learning is where the whole programme is delivered over the Internet, notes are posted on the web, assignments are emailed between students and tutors, students set up chat rooms between each other etc.

Flexible learning provides learners with opportunities for more choice, convenience, and personalisation to suit the learner. It also recognises that different students have different learning preferences and requirements. Flexible learning courses might include using different modes of delivery for course materials, including web-based, CDs, DVDs and so on.

Blended learning refers to a mix of different learning environments. This approach to teaching and learning combines traditional face to face classroom methods with more modern computer-mediated activities. This strategy creates a more integrated approach for both instructors and learners.

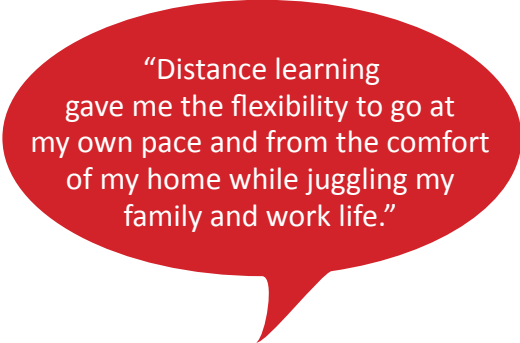
Why choose distance education?

- ✓ **Personal commitments mean you don't have time to attend classes or lectures**
- ✓ **The course you are interested in is only offered at a time when you are at work**
- ✓ **You live too far or don't have transport to get to classes or lectures**
- ✓ **No organisation locally offers the course you want to study**

As a learner you need to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages to this type of learning. e.g. you can study at your own pace, and you can combine study with domestic and work commitments, on the other hand you need to be very disciplined and allocate appropriate time for your studies and there is very little social contact.

What are the entry requirements?

Entry requirements vary depending on the institution concerned. Many web-based e-learning institutions base their entry requirements solely on interest, while others base entry on standard criteria. Check with the relevant institution for entry requirements. To find a distance course visit www.qualifax.ie.



“Distance learning gave me the flexibility to go at my own pace and from the comfort of my home while juggling my family and work life.”

Other useful contacts for Distance/Online Learning:

The Open University	1800 932 845	www.openuniversity.edu
Oscail - DCU Distance Education	01-700 5481	www.dcu.ie
Atlantic University Alliance	www.aua.ie	
eCollege	www.ecollege.ie	
NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency)	1800 20 20 65	www.writeon.ie
www.distancelearningireland.com		
www.learningireland.ie		
www.nightcourses.com		
www.daycourses.com		
www.distancelearningireland.com		
www.qualifax.ie - The National Learners' Database		
www.alison.com		
An Cosán Virtual Community College: www.ancosan.ie/virtual-community-college.html		

Computer and IT courses

We are very much living in a digital era where everything from paying our bills to contacting family members is done online. No matter what your level of knowledge of computers there is a course for you.

- ✓ **The Age Action Getting Started Programme delivers one to one training on computers, the internet and mobile phones to people over the age of 55. For more information call 01 475 6989 or visit: www.ageaction.ie/getting-started-programme**
- ✓ **Contact your local ETB for a list of courses www.etbi.ie**
- ✓ **Search www.qualifax.ie to find courses in your area**

SECTION 4: Financial Supports

General education and training allowances

As well as introducing some new measures to address rising unemployment, the government has reduced some payments. Allowances to participants in VTOS, and Youthreach have been reduced in line with the appropriate social welfare rates. Check with the Department of Social Protection for information on your benefits. Visit www.welfare.ie for more information.

The Free Fees Initiative

This is a state sponsored scheme. The state pays for the tuition fees of eligible students who are attending full-time third level education for the first time. Learners must be taking a full-time course that is more than two years in duration and they must be an EU national. You will have to pay a Student Contribution Fee (formerly the Registration Fee) to the institution you plan to attend before commencing, if you don't qualify for a maintenance grant. Prospective learners should contact the institution to see how much this costs. Prospective adult learners from outside of Ireland should visit www.education.ie to find out if they meet the eligibility criteria.

The Free Fees Initiative only applies to full time courses, if you intend taking a degree part time, then you may be required to pay full fees.

The Student Grant Scheme and SUSI

The student grant is the main source of financial support available from the Irish State for students in full-time post leaving certificate courses (PLCs) and full-time higher education undergraduate/postgraduate courses. Support is available to eligible students in most colleges in Ireland as well as eligible Irish students in many colleges in Northern Ireland, the UK and other EU States. For eligible students, the grant is

there to help with the various costs of participating in further or higher education. Students on part-time courses, access or foundation courses (in higher education institutions) and short courses are not eligible for a student grant.

From August 2012, a new online grant application scheme called SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) replaced the previous system. SUSI is managed by the City of Dublin ETB.

The Student Grant Scheme is available for the following course types:

- ✓ **Honours degree and Post Graduate Courses at Universities in Ireland for students who have already obtained a Higher Certificate or Ordinary Degree**
- ✓ **Honours Degree and Post Graduate Courses at Institutes of Technology**
- ✓ **Degree courses in universities in other EU Member States for students who have already obtained a Higher Certificate or Ordinary Degree**
- ✓ **Higher Certificate and Ordinary Degree at Institutes of Technology**
- ✓ **Full-time approved courses at approved further education colleges**

The existing grant awarding authorities will continue to process renewal applications for students to whom they have already awarded grants until such time as those students have completed their current courses. If you are changing your course or progressing to a new course you will have to apply through SUSI.

Visit www.susi.ie to make an application.

If you have any queries on the application process or the student grant scheme contact the “*SUSI Support Desk*” by telephone at 0761 08 7874 or email support@susi.ie. The SUSI support desk is available from **9.00am-5:30pm Monday-Friday**. To facilitate applicants with visual/hearing impairments, the scheme can be made available in different formats on request from the Department’s Higher Education - Equity of Access Section.

The Student Grant Appeals Board

The Student Grant Appeals Board is independent and was established under the Student Support Act 2011. It is the first such board for those seeking to appeal decisions made on grants and is open to students who applied for consideration in this academic year. A student must first submit a written appeal to the awarding authority or appeals officer who has refused their grant. If their decision is upheld the student then has 30 days to appeal to the Student Grant Appeals Board. Application forms are available from the awarding authority or the Department of Education and Skills. For more information and application forms visit www.susi.ie or call the Student Grants Appeals Board, Department of Education and Skills on **(057) 9325317**.

The Student Contribution Fee (formerly the Student Registration Fee)

If you are paying full fees, you will also have to pay the Student Contribution fee, the cost of which varies depending on the institution. If you are deemed eligible for the Back to Education Allowance, then the government may meet the costs of the Student Contribution Fee on your behalf. In order for this to happen, you must submit an application through the relevant students grant scheme. For more information visit: www.studentfinance.ie.

The maximum student contribution for the academic year 2015-2016 is €3,000. This may change with the coming budget. Check with your institution as the amount can vary from one institution to another.

The Back to Education Allowance

This is a second chance educational opportunities scheme for people on welfare payments who wish to participate in full-time education. There are two options:

- ✓ a second level option for those who didn't complete their formal secondary education
- ✓ and a third level option if you have not attended third level

From the 2011/12 academic year the Student Grant Scheme is divided into 2 components – **maintenance grants and fee grants**. You cannot get the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) and the maintenance component of a student grant together unless you were getting BTEA in the 2009/10 academic year and are continuing your studies or progressing to a new course. Although you are not entitled to the maintenance component of the student grant, you must still submit a student grant application form to be assessed for a fee grant to pay your Student Contribution (formerly called the Student Registration Fee), field trip costs and tuition fees (if payable).

New BTEA applicants in 2015/16 - If you were getting a jobseeker's payment, a One-Parent Family Payment or a Jobseeker's Transitional payment you must re-establish your entitlement to a primary payment to continue to be entitled to BTEA for the second or subsequent years of study. When you are accepted on a course, you should notify the Department of Social Protection (DSP) by filling in the Back to Education Allowance application form, which is also available from your Intreo centre. From June 2014 all new BTEA claims for jobseekers must be recommended by a DSP case officer before a decision can be made on your BTEA entitlement.

Who is eligible?

- ✓ An applicant must be in receipt of a relevant social welfare payment (for example, Jobseeker's Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance or One Parent Family Payment) for 3 months if pursuing a 2nd level course or
- ✓ 9 months if pursuing a 3rd level course and
- ✓ be at least 21 years of age prior to commencing an approved course of study
- ✓ You must be 24 or over for a third-level postgraduate course. However, people getting an illness or disability-related payment or a person who is out of formal education for 2 years may qualify at 18 years of age
- ✓ You may also be eligible for Back To Education Allowance if you are an adult dependent

From June 2014 there has been a relaxation of the progression rule for people applying for courses at Level 5 and Level 6 in certain limited circumstances. BTEA applicants who already hold a Level 5 or 6 qualification and who satisfy all the other scheme eligibility criteria may be allowed to do further courses at either of these levels. These cases must be referred to a Department of Social Protection Case Officer for their recommendation.

For further information: www.studentfinance.ie or contact your local Employment Service/Intreo office.

The Student Assistance Fund

The Student Assistance Fund provides financial assistance for full-time higher education to students who are experiencing financial difficulties whilst attending college. Students can apply for assistance to help them with either temporary or ongoing financial difficulties. The Student Assistance Fund provides a further source of funding for higher education students in addition to the student grant.

Students in need of financial support can then make application in the college for assistance under the Fund. The Student Assistance Fund is not available in further education/PLC colleges. To assess your eligibility for the Fund you need to be aware of the main conditions of the programme. You can check your eligibility with a 6-step guide on www.studentfinance.ie.

Tax Relief

Tax relief can be claimed on tuition fees. Applicants are advised to contact their local tax office in relation to this and to note that the course must be delivered through or in conjunction with an approved institution. For more information visit: www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/leaflets/it31.html.

Many universities and institutions offer bursaries so it is useful to keep to regularly check the institutions website for new funding opportunities.

When researching finance options have a look in their fees and funding section for up to date information, also visit www.postgradireland.com and www.studentfinance.ie for the latest information and advice.

Scholarships

Caranua (formerly the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund)

Caranua is the new service name of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund established in March 2013, to improve the quality of life and well-being of survivors of institutional abuse.

It can do this by ensuring that survivors are receiving statutory entitlements, adding to statutory entitlements and providing grants to individual survivors to avail of services. Assistance can be provided in the areas of:

- Health and wellbeing
- Housing support
- Education, learning and development

For more information on Caranua (RISF) please visit: www.caranua.ie.

St Vincent de Paul

SVP may offer some help with scholarship funds at a regional level. Keep an eye on their website: www.svp.ie, in the region section for further updates.

SIPTU

Members of SIPTU can apply for scholarships; awards can be made up to €1000. For more information on this scheme visit the SIPTU College section on their website: www.siptu.ie.

IMPACT

Members of IMPACT can apply for a grant for specific courses. For more information on eligibility criteria visit www.impact.ie.

SPIDAS

The Special Initiatives for Disadvantaged Adults Scheme (SPIDAS) forms part of the Community Education grant. SPIDAS is a small discretionary fund to enable ETBs support disadvantaged adult learners enrolled in second chance education at levels 1 – 4 by providing funds towards the cost of fees, books, materials, travel and meals. It is only used in exceptional circumstances where all other programmes do not apply to a disadvantaged adult learner. Those in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance or in receipt of an allowance pertaining to a particular programme are not eligible for additional funding from this fund. Contact the Adult Education Officer in your local ETB. Visit www.etbi.ie for details of your local ETB.

Female bursary - Financial supports for women apprentices

From time to time there are opportunities for women to broaden their career options into new and non-traditional areas of work. This bursary provides a grant to each employer for each female apprentice recruited. The grant is a contribution towards the first 28 weeks of phases 1 and 3 (on-the-job phases) of the Apprenticeship. For further information contact your local training centre. Visit www.etbi.ie to find details of your local Training Centre.

Credit Union Member Scholarships/Bursaries

Many Credit Unions in Ireland provide a number of scholarships or bursaries in their catchment areas for students studying at all levels of further and higher education. For details of your local Credit Union, visit www.creditunion.ie.

Dublin Port Company Scholarships

Dublin Port Company, in conjunction with the Dublin Port Community Liaison Committee, has initiated a scholarship scheme in order to provide opportunities for individuals living in the Port area of Dublin to fulfill their potential through education.

Candidates for Scholarships:

- ✓ Individuals living in the Port area of Dublin for a minimum of 5 years
- ✓ Individuals who would experience significant financial difficulty in undertaking a third-level course of study
- ✓ The scholarship programme does not include postgraduates.

Please note: Scholarships are no longer available if you are studying for a PLC or Diploma.

More information and application forms are available at: www.dublinport.ie.

Annie Kelly Education Bursary

The bursary is designed to help people from North Inner City communities access further education. For further information please phone **01 8366592** or email admin@nicdtf.ie.

Ernest Walton STEM Bursary

For the 2015/16 academic year eight bursaries (Ernest Walton STEM Bursary) are being made available and are aimed at students who intend completing a third level course in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) field. For more information visit: www.education.ie/en/Learners/Services/Scholarships.

The George Byrne Bursary

The George Byrne Bursary provides financial assistance to students resident in Dublin 8, particularly those who are pursuing a career in Food, Journalism or Music. Full details can be obtained from the South Inner-City Community Development Association on 01-4536098.

Irish Taxation Institute Third Level Scholarship Programme

This scholarship programme is open to all Leaving Certificate students in the Republic of Ireland who have an interest in a career in taxation. The Irish Taxation Institute sponsors the student through third-level education and afterwards through the AITI taxation programme, qualifying the student to become a professional tax adviser.

Visit www.taxireland.ie for further information.

POSTGRADUATE FUNDING

For a full and updated list of postgraduate funding please visit: www.postgradireland.com.

North/South Postgraduate Scholarship

These bursaries are open to students currently registered at an Irish or Northern Irish university or Dublin Institute of Technology (or who have graduated within the past two years) proposing to take up a place on a course which would require them to relocate to the other jurisdiction on the island of Ireland. For more information visit: www.universitiesireland.ie.

NUI Galway Scholarship

NUI Galway scholarships scheme for postgraduate students is designed to reward exceptional achievement. Postgraduate Scholarships will be awarded to all students studying a postgraduate taught Masters programme who have a first class honours undergraduate degree. The initiative is open to postgraduate students, applying for a fulltime taught Master's programme due to commence in autumn 2016. Scholarships will be awarded to students accepted on a fulltime taught Master's and who fulfill the criteria as outlined by the University. For more information visit: www.nuigalway.ie/postgraduate/scholarships.

Trinity College Dublin postgraduate awards and prizes

As well as various university studentships and fellowships, Trinity College Dublin has a number of postgraduate awards and prizes – largely private donations, bequests and bursaries . For more information please visit:www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/prospectivestudents/awards/scholarships/index.php.

UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School scholarships

UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School offers an Aspire Scholarship programme which offers three MBA and nine MSc scholarships, aimed specifically at those who could not otherwise afford to study at the School. The scholarships cover half the cost of the tuition fees of the relevant courses. For more information please visit: <http://www.smurfitschool.ie/scholarships/>.

Bord Bia Marketing Fellowship

UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School, in partnership with Bord Bia, offers 25 students the Bord Bia Marketing Fellowship. This intensive 12-month learning programme gives successful candidates the combined opportunity to gain hands-on experience working with some of Ireland's food companies and also gain a postgraduate qualification.

Participants' time is split between working in foreign locations, supported by Bord Bia, and studying for an MSc International Marketing Practice at UCD Smurfit School. This is a fully-funded programme, including all tuition fees. For more information please visit: www.smurfitschool.ie/bordbia/.

Financial Support contacts and other useful resources:

General education and training allowances	www.welfare.ie	
The Free Fees Initiative	www.studentfinance.ie	
The Student Grant Scheme and SUSI	www.susi.ie	076-108 7874
The Student Grant Appeals Board	www.studentfinance.ie	
The Student Contribution Fee (formerly the Student Registration Fee) & the Student Assistance Fund	www.studentfinance.ie	
The Back to Education Allowance	www.studentfinance.ie www.welfare.ie	
The Student Assistance Fund	www.studentfinance.ie	
Tax Relief	www.revenue.ie	
Caranua (formerly the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund)	www.caranua.ie 1800 212 477	
St Vincent de Paul	www.svp.ie	
SIPTU	www.siptu.ie	
IMPACT	www.impact.ie	
www.education.ie/en/Learners/Services/Scholarships/		
The Irish Research Council - www.research.ie		
www.careersportal.ie		

Female bursary-financial supports for women apprentices	www.solas.ie	
Credit Union Member Scholarships/Bursaries	www.creditunion.ie	
Dublin Port Company Scholarships	www.dublinport.ie	
Annie Kelly Education Bursary	admin@nicdtf.ie 01-8366592	
Ernest Walton STEM Bursary	www.education.ie/en/Learners/Services/Scholarships	01-8366592
Irish Taxation Institute Third Level Scholarship Programme	www.taxinstitute.ie	
North/South Postgraduate Scholarship	www.universitiesireland.ie	
NUI Galway Scholarship	www.nuigalway.ie/postgraduate/scholarships	
Trinity College Dublin postgraduate awards and prizes	www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/prospectivestudents/awards/scholarships/index.php	
UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School scholarships	http://www.smurfitschool.ie/scholarships/aspirescholarship/	
Bord Bia Marketing Fellowship	www.smurfitschool.ie/bordbia/	

SECTION 5: Other Supports

Supports for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with disabilities, looking for advice and support for returning to education, contact AHEAD. AHEAD promotes full access and participation in third level education for learners with disabilities also helping them gain employment after graduating. They provide an information service and other key resources for learners. They also have an excellent website www.ahead.ie which is a one-stop shop for information for legislation, funding, learning supports, training, projects, work placements and assistive technology or you can call them on: **(01) 7164396**.

Fund for Students with Disabilities

This fund allocates support to further and higher education colleges for the provision of services and supports to full-time students with disabilities. Eligible students can receive assistance from the Fund from PLC level right up to doctoral level. You do not have to be in the first year of a course to be eligible to apply for the Fund. Application for the first time can be made during any year of study on an approved course at further or higher education level. It allows colleges to provide specialised equipment and support the specific needs of a learner with a disability. Applications to the Fund are made on behalf of an eligible student by their college following an assessment of need. Contact the Disability or Access offices in your institution for further information. Find out more about the Fund for Students with Disabilities: visit www.studentfinance.ie and then click 'Fund for students with disabilities'.

CRC Ciaran Barry Graduate Scholarship

The scholarship is reserved for a student undertaking a postgraduate degree and is open to any academic discipline. The grant covers one year of study for students with disabilities. For further information on application form and rules visit www.crc.ie.

The NUI Award Scheme for students with disabilities

Awards are available to new entrant undergraduate students registered for the first year of a primary degree programme of studies, in one of the constituent universities or recognised colleges of the NUI, and who have serious physical disabilities.

More details can also be obtained from the Disability Office in each of the NUI colleges (NUI Galway, NUI Maynooth and University College Cork) or [visit www.nui.ie](http://www.nui.ie).

DCU Scholarship

DCU run a scholarship scheme which supports disabled students who wish to combine their academic course with their sporting interests. There is a limited number available; those eligible must have secured a place at DCU through CAO as a Leaving Cert student or as a mature applicant. The award aims to cover training, travel and coaching expenses and involves free access to the DCU sports complex. For more information: <https://www.dcu.ie/studentsport/scholarships.shtml#sportscholarship>.

Google Europe Scholarship for Students with Disabilities

Google has partnered with EmployAbility, a nonprofit organisation who assist students with disabilities while they pursue education and careers.

Scholarship recipients of the Google Scholarship for Students with Disabilities will each receive a €7,000 scholarship. Scholarships will be awarded based on the strength of the applicant's academic background, leadership skills and demonstrated passion for Computer Science.

For more information please:

<https://www.google.com/studentwithdisabilities-europe/> or email: googlescholarship@employ-ability.org.uk.

Can an adult learner with a disability qualify for exemptions when applying to third level through the CAO?

Through the CAO it is possible to gain entry below the points requirement in colleges that operate Supplementary Admission schemes for example DARE (Disability Access Route to Education). However it is important to note that entry criteria vary from one college to another. Some colleges accept learners with disabilities who have achieved 15% below the set points for the course the year an application is being made. Other colleges may have another system in place and may assess each application on an individual basis. Unless a learner has an approved language exemption learners must obtain the minimum core subject entry requirements for their chosen course.

What supports can a learner with a disability avail of once they have secured a place in third level?

Many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have a designated Disability Officer in place who provides information on disability related supports in the learning environment, assistive technology etc. In institutions without a Disability Officer this work is carried out by the Access Officer.

One of the most important things a learner with a disability can do in making their application is tick the box on the CAO form marked ***‘do you have a disability’***. This information will be given to the institution and they will be aware that they will need support upon entry. However all information given to the institution will be treated as confidential. It is also important to make arrangements in terms of examination facilities, and seek assistance and the relevant supports from the Disability Office/ Access Office at the beginning of your academic year. It may also be useful to make yourself known to your lecturers as they too may need to be aware of your circumstances.

Union of Students Ireland (USI) have also launched an innovative mental health awareness pack which has been disseminated to all HEIs as part of their Mental Health Awareness Campaign. This pack provides information to learners through postcards, stickers and bookmarks. Learners can obtain a pack from their Access Office.

DARE (Disability Access Route to Education)

In 2009, The Irish Universities Association, Dublin Institute of Technology and partners, on a national basis, launched an access route for students who wish to progress to higher education called DARE (Disability Access Route to Education). It is a supplementary admissions scheme for students with a disability. Visit www.accesscollege.ie for more information.

The Students Union of Ireland (USI)

The Students Union of Ireland (USI), Equality Officer has the responsibility of initiating campaigns for the defence and promotion of student's right in the areas of equality. The officer is responsible for running Equality Training Events and is the chairperson of Equality Working. Further information is available from the Equality Officer, USI, equality@usi.ie or refer to the contacts section.

WAM (Willing Able Mentoring) Programme

The WAM (Willing Able Mentoring) Programme run by AHEAD offers graduates with disabilities the chance to take up mentored work placements for up to six months in a variety of companies around Ireland. The placements offer graduates the chance to gain valuable experience and to pick up solid skills. All participants are paid the going rate for the work they do.

All WAM placements have a company mentor who helps graduates to settle into the workplace. This company mentor is the link between the WAM programme and the company. WAM is funded by the Department of Social Protection and has placed over 250 graduates with disabilities within its network of employers since 2006.

For more information on the WAM Programme and current work placement opportunities please telephone: 01-278 9325, E-mail: angela.glancy@ahead.ie.

National Learning Network

National Learning Network provides a range of flexible training programmes and support services for people who need specialist support (job seekers, unemployed, people with an illness or disability) in 50 centres around the country. For more information visit: www.nln.ie.

Disability Support contacts and other useful resources:

AHEAD	01-7164396	www.ahead.ie
AWARE	01-6617211	www.aware.ie
Centre for Independent Living	01-8730455	www.dublincil.org
CRC Ciaran Barry Graduate Scholarship	01-8542200	www.crc.ie
Deaf Hear	01-8175700	www.deafhear.ie
DCU Scholarship	www.dcu.ie/students/disability/faq.shtml	
Disability Federation of Ireland	01-4547978	www.disability-federation.ie
Google Europe Scholarship for Students with Disabilities	https://www.google.com/studentswithdisabilities-europe/	
ENABLE IRELAND	01-872 7155	www.enableireland.ie
Epilepsy Ireland	01-455 7500	www.epilepsy.ie
HADD Family Support Group	01-8748349	www.hadd.ie
DARE (Disability Access Route to Education)	www.accesscollege.ie	
Irish Deaf Women's Group	01-8601878	www.irishdeafsociety.ie
Mental Health Ireland	01-2841166	
National Council for the Blind	1850 334 353	www.ncbi.ie

National Disability Authority	01-6080400	www.nda.ie
The Irish Deaf Society	01-8601878	www.deaf.ie
The NUI Award Scheme for Students with Disabilities	www.nui.ie	
The Students Union of Ireland (USI)	01-7099300	www.usi.ie
National Learning Network	1890 283 000	www.nln.ie

Additional Learner Supports:

Returning to education can be a daunting experience especially when you are trying to juggle other life and work commitments. There are other supports available and you should always talk to your provider to see what additional supports may be available such as childcare, counselling and mentoring.

Childcare

The Childcare Education and Training Support programme (CETS) is administered by the Department of Children & Youth Affairs on behalf of the ETBs. There are about 2,800 places in total available at any one time under the programme. These are divided between SOLAS and ETB places, with full-time, part-time and afterschool places available.

The allocation of places under the scheme is managed by the Department, via the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs). Visit the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for more information www.dcy.gov.ie or contact your local childcare committee - you can find a list of details on the department's website.

Please Note: It was announced in Budget 2016, that a new single affordable childcare programme will be developed to replace a number of childcare programmes including CETS. The target date for the new programme is 2017.

Other Useful Contacts:

This booklet gives details of the main providers of adult education in Ireland however there are a range of other organisations that provide education programmes such as Partnerships, Family Resource Centres Men's Sheds and Enterprise Boards. Have a look to see what may be available in your community. Courses may be advertised on notice boards in local shops, in local schools etc. If you need any additional information you can contact AONTAS on **01-4068220**.

EPIC (Employment for People from Immigrant Communities)	epic@bitc.ie	01-874 3840
Family Resource Centres	http://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/family-resource-centres	01-4200580
Citizens Information	www.citizensinformation.ie	076-107 4000
One Family	www.onefamily.ie	01 662 9212
Pobal	www.pobal.ie	01-511 7000
Teagasc	www.teagasc.ie	059-917 0200
Local Area Partnerships	http://ildn.ie/about-irish-local-development-network/members/	
Irish Men's Sheds	www.menssheds.ie	01-891 6150

SECTION 5: Jargon Buster

Here are some explanations of adult education terms that are used in this booklet.

AEO (Adult Education Officer): manages and co-ordinates the adult education services in the Education and Training Boards across the country.

BTEI (The Back to Education Initiative): provides part-time Further Education programmes for young people and adults.

BTEA (The Back to Education Allowance): allows qualifying persons to return to full-time education in approved courses while continuing to get income support.

CAO (Central Applications Office): the office delegated by the Higher Education Institutions with the task of processing centrally all applications to their first year undergraduate degrees.

ETBs (Education and Training Board): Sixteen ETBs provide education and training programmes at local and community level across the country.

HEI: Higher Education Institution.

INTREO: a service from the Department of Social Protection which helps people on the Live Register with employment and income support services. It provides a personalised service, based on needs including; advice on education, training and personal development opportunities, job search assistance as well as information on and access to our a range of income supports.

NALA: National Adult Literacy Agency.

PLCs: Post Leaving Certificate courses.

QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland): brings together the agencies FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council), HETAC (Higher Education and Training Awards Council) and the NQAI (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland) to form a new qualifications authority. Awards will continue to be issued as previously.

SOLAS: the new Further Education and Training Authority manages, co-ordinates and supports the delivery of integrated Further Education and Training by Education and Training Boards.

Springboard: The Springboard initiative provides free, part-time courses in higher education from certificate, to degree, to post-graduate level for people who are unemployed.

SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland): is the Awarding Authority for all new student grant applications.

VTOS: Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme.

SECTION 7: Contacts

Adult Education Contacts:

COUNTY	ORGANISATION	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Carlow	Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	Martha Bolger	059-913 8568	adulteducationoffice@kkvec.ie
Cavan	Cavan and Monaghan ETB	Linda Pinkster	049-433 1044	lindapinkster@cmetb.ie
Cork	Cork ETB	Ger Canning	025-42945	ger.canning@corketb.ie
Cork	Cork ETB	Nuala Glanton	021 4665077	nuala.glanton@corketb.ie
Clare	Limerick and Clare ETB	Aobhan Haverty	065 6824819	aobhan.haverty@lcteb.ie
Donegal	Donegal ETB	Cróna Gallagher	074-9161570	cronagallagher@donegaletb.ie
Dublin City Dublin 1, 3, 7, 9	City of Dublin ETB	Bernadette Sproule	01-872 0576	bernadette.sproule@aes.cdetsb.ie
Dublin City Dublin 7 and 11	City of Dublin ETB	Kevin Smullen	01-8348018	kevin.smullen@aes.cdetsb.ie
Dublin City Dublin 8, 10, 12, 6w	City of Dublin ETB	Liz O'Sullivan	01-7090250	liz.osullivan@aes.cdetsb.ie
Dublin City Dublin 5, 13, 17	City of Dublin ETB	Celia Rafferty	01-862 3828	celia.rafferty@aes.cdetsb.ie
Dublin City Dublin 2, 4, 6, 8	City of Dublin ETB	Eithne Doherty	01-6676267	eithne.doherty@aes.cdetsb.ie
Dublin County (North County)	Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB	Austin Wynne	01-8408946	awynne@ddletb.ie

These contact details were correct at time of going to print in April 2016 but may be subject to change.

Dublin County (South West)	Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB	Terry McCann	01-4515733	tmccann@ ddletb.ie
Galway City	Galway and Roscommon ETB	Fiona O'Loughlin	091-706237	fiona.oloughlin@ gretb.ie
Galway County	Galway and Roscommon ETB	Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha	091-706238	eithne. nicdhonnchadha @gretb.ie
Kerry	Kerry ETB	Shivaun Shanahan	066-7121488	sshanahan@ kerryetb.ie
Kerry	Kerry ETB	Sharon Browne	066-7121488	sbrowne@ kerryetb.ie
Kildare	Kildare and Wicklow ETB	Brenda Lynch	045-988001	brendalynch@ kwetb.ie
Kilkenny	Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	Martha Bolger	056-7786896	adulteducation office@kkvec.ie
Laois	Laois and Offaly ETB		057-8621352	info@ laoisoffalyetb.ie
Leitrim	Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB		071-9620024	marybrodie@ msletb.ie
Limerick	Limerick and Clare ETB	Eimear Brophy	061-417688	eimear.brophy@ lcteb.ie
Longford	Longford and Westmeath ETB	Antonine Healy	044-9348389	ahealy.atc@ lwetb.ie
Louth	Louth and Meath ETB	Sadie Ward McDermott	042-9334047	smcdermott@ lmetb.ie
Mayo	Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB		094-9024188	marybrodie@ msletb.ie
Meath	Louth and Meath ETB	Elizabeth Lavery	1800 991 898	elavery@lmetb. ie

Monaghan	Cavan and Monaghan ETB	Linda Pinkster	047-84900	lindapinkster@cmetb.ie
Offaly	Laois and Offaly ETB	Tony Dalton	057-9349424	tdalton@laoisoffalyetb.ie
Roscommon	Galway and Roscommon ETB		090-6626151 090-6634189	
Sligo	Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB	Mary Brodie	071-38310	marybrodie@msletb.ie
Tipperary (South)	Tipperary ETB		052-6126269	adulsted@tipperaryetb.ie
Tipperary (North)	Tipperary ETB	Antoinette Coffey	067-31845	acoffey@tipperaryetb.ie
Waterford City	Wexford and Waterford ETB	Michael Kirwan	051-873195	michaelkirwan@wwetb.ie
Waterford County	Wexford and Waterford ETB	Mary Walsh	058-51404	mwalsh@wwetb.ie
Westmeath	Longford and Westmeath ETB		090-6474080	anne@whvec.ie
Wexford	Wexford and Waterford ETB	Fran Kennedy	053-9123799	frankennedy@wwetb.ie
Wicklow	Kildare and Wicklow ETB	Catherine Byrne	040-460500	catherinebyrne@kwetb.ie

THIRD LEVEL CONTACTS:

COUNTY	ORGANISATION	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Antrim	Open University (Belfast)		0044 (0)28 90245133	
	University of Ulster (Belfast)		0044(0)28 70123456	
	Queens University (Belfast)		0044(0)2890 245133	www.qub.ac.uk
Carlow	Institute of Technology Carlow	Ashling McHugh	059 9175603	aisling.mchugh@itcarlow.ie
Clare	Shannon College of Hotel Management	Joan Markham	061-712590	joan.markham@nuigalway.com

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Cork	UCC	Mary O'Sullivan	021-4904702	mary.osull@ucc.ie
	CIT	Deirdre Creedon	021-4335140	deirdre.creedon@cit.ie
		Sinead O' Neill	021-4335109	sinead.oneill@cit.ie
Dublin	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Patricia Byrne	01-2144628	info@iadt.ie
	Institute of Technology Blanchardstown	Adrienne Harding	01-8851015	adrienne.harding@itb.ie
	National College of Ireland	Niamh McAuley	01-4498502	niamh.mcauley@ncirl.ie
	DIT College of Technology	Bobby Maher	087-2904609	bobby.maher@dit.ie
	Open University	Jennifer Osborne	048-90245025	ireland@open.ac.uk
	Royal College of Surgeons Ireland	Sandra Bonetto	01-4022106	sbonetto@rcsi.ie
	Royal Irish Academy of Music	Francis Hogan	01-6325312	frances.hogan@riam.ie
	National College of Art and Design	Finola Mc Ternan	01-6364217	mcternanf@staff.ncad.ie
	St. Patrick's College	Maura Fallon	01-8842208	maura.fallon@spd.dcu.ie
	Dublin City University	Colette Keogh	01-7008868	colette.keogh@dcu.ie
	All Hallows College	Lisa Maye-Gregary	01-837-3745	info@allhallows.ie
	University College Dublin	Ronan Murphy	01-7167123	ronan.murphy@ucd.ie
	American College	Damien O'Farrell	01-6768939	dofarrell@amcd.ie
	Trinity Access Programme	Cliona Hannon	01-8962752	channon@tcd.ie
	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Patricia Byrne	01-2144628	info@iadt.ie
	Mater Dei Institute of Education	Carmel Carroll	01-8086584	carmel.carroll@dcu.ie
Institute of Technology Tallaght	Colm Downes	01-4042173	colm.downes@ittdublin.ie	

Donegal	Letterkenny Institute of Technology	Brian McGonagle	074-9186170	brian.mcgonagle@lyit.ie
Galway	NUI Galway	Imelda Byrne	091-524411	imelda.byrne@nuigalway.ie
	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	Deirdre O'Connor	091-742129	deirdre.oconnor@gmit.ie
Kerry	Tralee Institute of Technology	Valerie Moore	066-7191682	valerie.moore@staff.ittralee.ie
Kildare	NUI Maynooth, Centre for Adult & Community Education	Emer Sheerin	01-7086025	access.office@nuim.ie
Limerick	Mary Immaculate College of Education	Maura Moore	061-204927	maura.moore@mic.ul.ie
	University of Limerick	Rhona McCormack	061-213481	rhona.mccormack@ul.ie
	Limerick Institute of Technology	Carolann Bargary	061-293103	carolann.bargary@lit.ie
Louth	Dundalk IT	Eileen Lynch	042-9370200 Ext:2883	access@dkit.ie
Sligo	Institute of Technology Sligo	Catherine McNelis	071-9155381	access@itsligo.ie
	St. Angela's College	Karen Kennedy	071-9143580	kkennedy@stangelas.nuigalway.ie
Tipperary	Limerick Institute of Technology - Tipperary	Linda Barry	061-490103 Ext:103	linda.barry@lit.ie
	St. Patrick's College	Paula Hourigan	050-421201	phourigan@stpats.ie
Waterford	W.I.T.	Nuala Lennon	051-302762	nlennon@wit.ie
Westmeath	Athlone Institute of Technology	Theresa Ryan	090-6483050	tryan@ait.ie

Membership

Becoming an AONTAS member offers you:

- Networking opportunities with other practitioners and learners at our free events
- Up to date information on adult education, adult education organisations and events
- Promotion of the work of your organisation through our website and weekly ebulletin
- Free AONTAS publications and research reports
- A strong collective voice for lobbying government
- A Nationwide Adult Learners' Festival

How can you join AONTAS?

Find out more at www.aontas.com/membership or fill in our online membership form.

For information on Individual or Organisational membership contact Christine Hynes on 01 4068220 or email: chynes@aontas.com.

Membership Type	Membership Category	Annual Income Band	Annual Fee
Individual membership	Regular fee		€30
	Reduced fee (Unwaged)		€2
Organisational membership	Small organisations	€0 - 80,000	€40
	Medium organisations	€80,000 - €250,000	€150
	Large organisations	€250,000 +	€300
Associate membership	Overseas individuals and organisations		€100



National Framework of Qualifications



AWARDING BODIES

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) makes awards in further and higher education and training
- SEC - State Examinations Commission (Department of Education and Skills)
- Institute of Technology
- Universities

AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK

There are four classes of award in the National Framework of Qualifications:

- Major Awards cover the entire range and the principal class of awards leads to a level
- Minor Awards are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award
- Supplemental Awards are for learning that is additional to a Major Award
- Special Purpose Awards are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement



For further information consult: www.nfq.ie www.QQI.ie

AONTAS

The Voice of Adult Learning

National Adult Learning Organisation

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SOLAS

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Léarnúnaigh agus Scileanna
Further Education and Training Authority