
DARE HEAR SUMMARY REPORT 2020

DARE and HEAR are higher education admissions schemes which aim to achieve equality of access by providing reduced points places to school leavers. These schemes were developed by a number of universities and colleges to mitigate the negative impact socio-economic disadvantage and/ or disability can have on progression to and participation in higher education. Both of these groups have been identified in the HEA's Progress Review of the National Access Plan and Priorities to 2021.

This year with the addition of Carlow Institute of Technology to HEAR we are continuing to grow. All 25 participating HEIs reserve a minimum of 5% of their places for reduced points offers for each of DARE and HEAR. In 2020, almost 1 in 5 students who applied to CAO were assessed for DARE and or HEAR eligibility with 11,576 places offered to these applicants across the entire Irish higher education sector.

DARE



DARE is a third level alternative admissions scheme for school-leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education. DARE offers reduced points places to school leavers who, as a result of having a disability, have experienced additional educational challenges in second level education. In order to be eligible for DARE applicants must fulfil the following criteria:

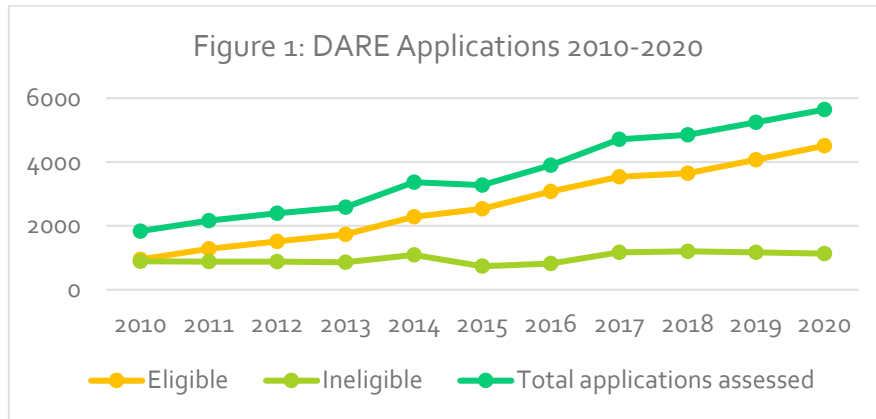


Each participating college has a reserved number of places to offer eligible DARE applicants at reduced Leaving Certificate points. The number of reduced points places available differs college by college, and course by course. The reduction in points can likewise vary every year and is dependent on a number of factors:

1. The overall number of places on the course
2. The number of reserved DARE places on the course
3. The number of DARE eligible applicants competing for these reserved places
4. The Leaving Certificate performance of DARE eligible applicants in that year

DARE Applications, Offer and Acceptances 2020

The demand for the DARE scheme is increasing year on year. As was the case in 2018-2019, the number of applications to DARE from 2019 to 2020 grew by a further 7.5%. As the DARE scheme has developed, we have worked to make the scheme more accessible and inclusive whilst endeavouring to protect the integrity of our application and eligibility processes. In 2020, 80% of applicants to DARE met the eligibility criteria, compared to just 52% in 2010, evidence that our improved communications, outreach and processes have had a positive impact.



In 2020, 4012 individual applicants to DARE received an offer of a place in higher education (representing a 27.6% increase on the number of offers made in 2019) with 3146 accepting their offer.

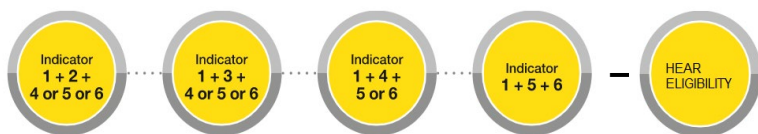
Like other CAO applicants, those applying to DARE can receive two offers (one at Level 8 and one at Level 6/7). In 2020, the total number of offers to DARE eligible students was 6132. 1738 reduced points offers were made to DARE applicants, while an additional 4394 eligible DARE applicants already achieved on or above the points required for their preferred course. For those applicants receiving a reduced points CAO offer, this offer was either for a course higher on their list of CAO preferences than their points would normally permit, or where they would not have received any offer at all.

HEAR



The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a third level admissions scheme which offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In order to be eligible for HEAR applicants must fulfil the following criteria:

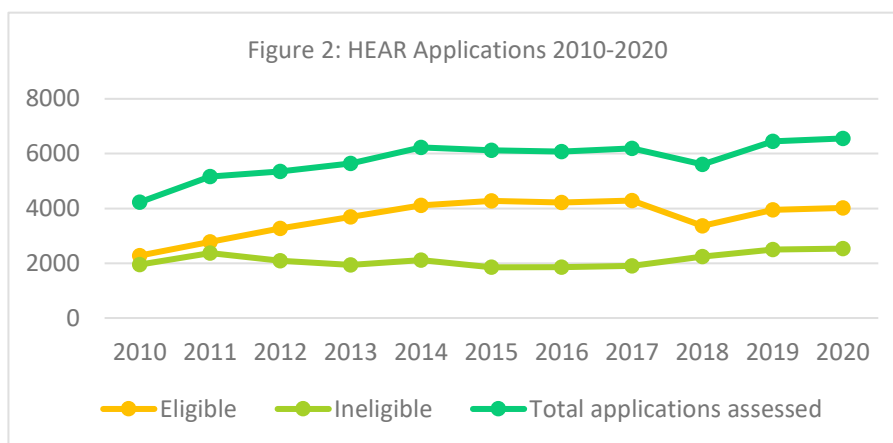
- Eligibility Indicators**
1. Income
 2. Medical Cards
 3. Means-Tested Social Welfare Payment
 4. Socio-Economic Group
 5. School
 6. Area



HEAR Applications, Offer and Acceptances 2020

In 2020, 61% of HEAR applicants met the eligibility criteria, compared to 54% in 2010. This higher eligibility rate is the result of improved communications to students, parents/guardians and schools as well as user-friendly developments in the HEAR application processes.

HEAR is the only higher education admissions route that seeks to offer students in the care of the state the opportunity to gain access to third-level. In 2020, 190 such applicants were eligible for the scheme constituting a 34% increase on 2019.



In 2020, 3548 individual applicants to HEAR received an offer of a place in higher education (representing a 13.6% increase on the number of offers made in 2019), with 2933 accepting their offer.

It is important to note that applicants to HEAR (like other CAO applicants) can receive an offer at both Level 8 and Level 6/7. In 2020, the total number of these offers to HEAR eligible applicants was 5444. 1579 reduced-points offers were made to HEAR eligible applicants who had not met the normal points requirements for their preferred course, while 3865 additional offers were made to those HEAR eligible applicants who achieved on or above the points required). Applicants receiving a reduced points CAO offer either received an offer for a course which was higher in their CAO choices or would not otherwise have received any offer.

Prioritisation

Our research has identified that two particular groups of students face the greatest obstacles when it comes to progression to higher education:

- students with disabilities who are also from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds;
- students with physical disabilities and sensory (blind/vision impaired or deaf/hard of hearing) disabilities

In order to increase the opportunities for these students in higher education, colleges participating in DARE and HEAR have agreed to prioritise these groups under the schemes. In 2020, the number of applicants eligible for both DARE and HEAR increased to 384 which represents a 28.4% increase from 2019.

Key DARE and HEAR Statistics 2020

- 28% increase in the number of offers to applicants who were eligible for DARE, compared to 2019
- 14% increase in the number of offers to applicants who were eligible for HEAR, compared to 2019
- 22% increase in the number of DARE eligible applicants accepting offers, compared to 2019 (3146 in 2020, compared to 2578 in 2019)
- 15% increase in the number of HEAR eligible applicants accepting offers, compared to 2019 (2933 in 2020, compared to 2557 in 2019)
- 9.2% of all offers to CAO applicants (under 23 with a current Leaving Certificate) were to DARE eligible applicants (compared to 7.8% in 2019)
- 8.2% of all offers to CAO applicants (under 23 with a current Leaving Certificate) were to HEAR eligible applicants (compared to 7.8% in 2019)
- 9% of all CAO offers accepted (under 23 with a current Leaving Certificate) were to DARE eligible applicants (compared to 7.9% in 2019)
- 8.4% of all CAO offers accepted (under 23 with a current Leaving Certificate) were to HEAR eligible applicants (compared to 7.9% in 2019)

Further development of the HEAR Scheme

In 2019 the IUA's Access Steering Group established a HEAR review working group to ensure that the HEAR scheme continues to effectively and efficiently target those applicants experiencing socio-economic barriers to higher education. The outcomes of this review group's work will be considered by the Access Steering Group and the participating institutions in 2021, and are expected to be integrated into the HEAR scheme for the 2022 admissions cycle.

Spotlight On



Iqura Naseem – Maynooth University

Iqura lives at home in Ballyfermot with her mum dad and her sister. Iqura came to Ireland from Pakistan when she was about two years old. Currently undertaking a Masters Degree in Accounting, Iqura came to Maynooth having previously studied in Saint Dominic's College in Ballyfermot Dublin 10. She entered the University (studying for a Degree in Accounting and Finance) via both the Higher Education Access Route and the Disability Access Route to Education.

Iqura is a wheelchair user as a result of her Cerebral Palsy. Upon registering as a student, she was able to access a range of supports through her Disability Advisor at the Maynooth Access Programme – this included arranging exam accommodations and sourcing a resting place for when she gets tired during busy days of lectures and studies.

Iqura has really enjoyed her overall college experience joining the Access Society, Anime Society and Mental Health Society and making new friends through volunteering. However, she also describes how "her love of financial reporting and producing financial statements" has really assured her that she has chosen the right course of study. After she finishes her Masters Degree, Iqura hopes to find employment soon after.



Cian O'Donnell – Cork Institute of Technology

Cian is a second year Biomedical Engineering student in CIT. He first heard of the HEAR scheme while at the CIT Open Day and then sought out some help from his secondary school guidance counsellor in applying to HEAR.

Upon accepting his place in CIT, he attended an access orientation day before college started, providing him with the chance to meet CIT support staff and make some new friends with other students on the day. Since then, the access service in CIT has helped him in many ways from one to one meetings to financial bursaries to help in purchasing a new laptop to enable Cian to continue his study online during COVID-19.

He got involved in various activities offered by the HEAR team including joining CookIT, a programme run in the evenings in CIT which teaches students how to make cheap and easy meals - some of the recipes he is still using a year later in his student accommodation!

From his experience Cian recommends applying to HEAR: "if you might be eligible, the HEAR Coordinator may also advise you to apply for SAF and or DARE. You might never need the help, but it is good to know you always have the option."