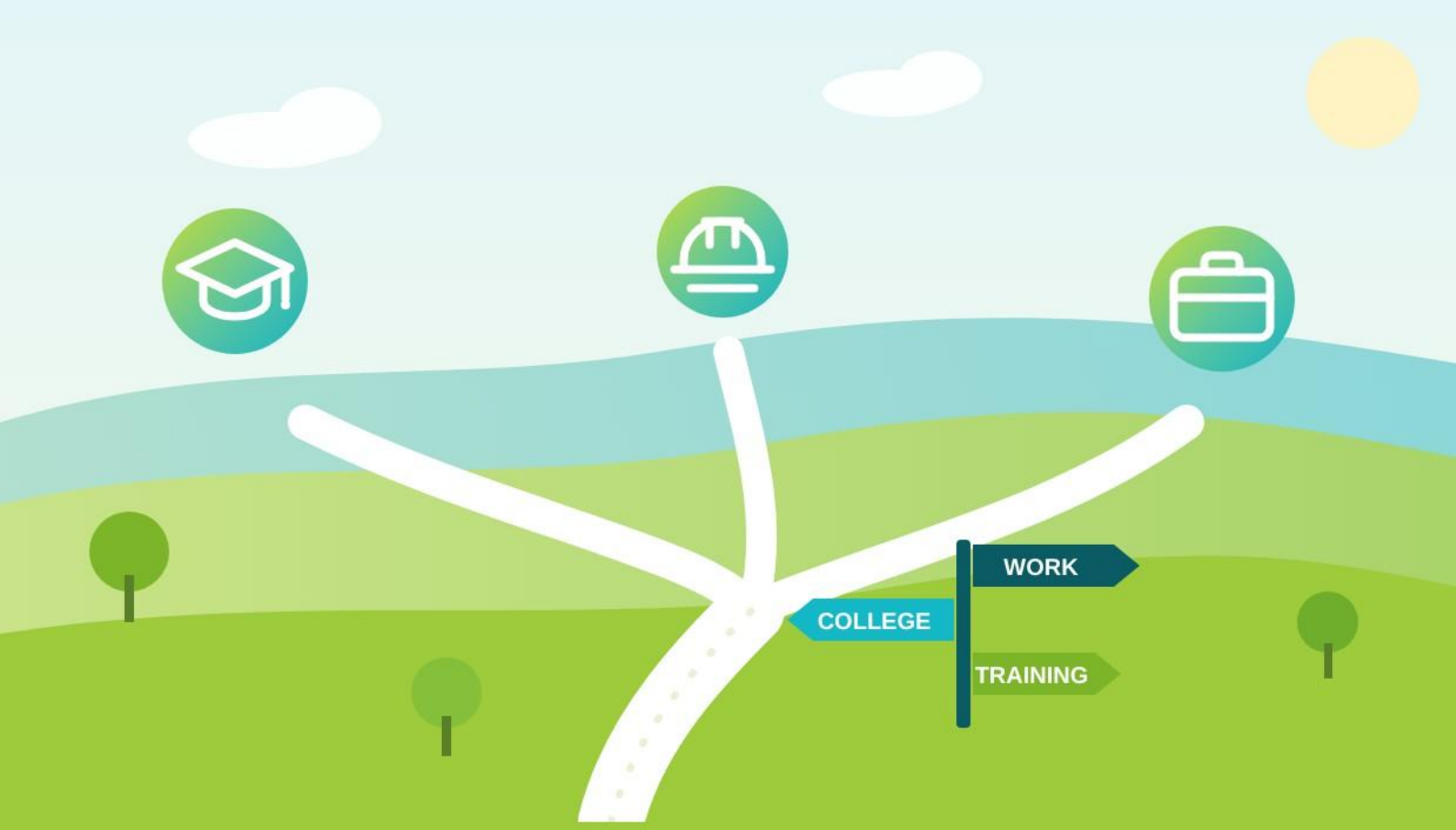


Alternative Education Assessment & Registration Service

16+ Pathways

Education, training and career options for young people aged 16 and over

TUSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION ASSESSMENT & REGISTRATION

About this guide

If you are aged 16 or over and thinking about what comes next, this guide brings together trusted websites and services that can help you explore your options for education, training and work.

Each section covers a different pathway. Click on any link to go straight to the website.

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Free, one-to-one guidance about your next steps, close to where you live.

2 Apprenticeships
Want to earn as you learn? There are around 90 apprenticeships on offer, with qualifications from Level 6 up to Level 9 (Master's).

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There is more than one route into college. These links explain the options if the standard CAO route doesn't suit your situation.

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Not sure where to start? Section 1 – Adult Guidance – lets you book a free, one-to-one appointment with a guidance officer in your county to talk through every option in this guide.



1. Adult Guidance (16 years of age +)

Free, one-to-one guidance about your next steps, close to where you live.

ETB Adult Guidance Services

This website is a great place to start. It applies to anyone aged 18 or over, and to any young person aged 16 or older who is not in full-time education.

Simply click on the map and you will be brought to the Adult Guidance service for your county. There you will find the contact details for your Adult Guidance Officer, and you can make an individual appointment to discuss any aspect of your future: career, courses, applications, interests, training, CV preparation and more.

Visit etbi.ie →



2. Apprenticeships

Want to earn as you learn? There are around 90 apprenticeships on offer, with qualifications from Level 6 up to Level 9 (Master's).

Apprenticeships – CareersPortal.ie

See all of the apprenticeships on offer, listed in alphabetical order. Click on the apprenticeship you are interested in to find further information such as entry requirements, duration and job details.

Visit careersportal.ie →

Apprenticeships Ireland

Ireland's official apprenticeship website, with a huge amount of information for anyone interested in an apprenticeship. It also lists current apprenticeship vacancies.

Visit apprenticeship.ie →

3. Third Level – Alternative Entry

There is more than one route into college. These links explain the options if the standard CAO route doesn't suit your situation.

CAO Applicants (GCE A/AS/GCSE)

Are you studying GCE A/AS/GCSE exams? This link gives you information from the Central Applications Office (CAO) on how to apply for third level courses in Ireland. It also has a Points Conversion Chart so you can see how your results convert into CAO points.

Visit cao.ie →

CAO Admissions Officers

Depending on your educational journey to date, you may need to be considered on a case-by-case basis by the colleges. In this case, contact the Admissions Officers of the third level institutions you wish to apply to. This link gives a list of all third level colleges in Ireland along with the contact details of their Admissions Officers.

Visit cao.ie →

CAO Access Officers

Do you have an ongoing physical or health condition (including mental health) or a learning difficulty, or are you disadvantaged in any other way when it comes to third level? Contacting a college's Access Officer could help.

Access Officers can put supports in place for you during your time in college, and can guide you to alternative entry routes into third level. This link lists the Access and Support Officers for each third level institution. They can also advise you on the ACCESS courses described below.

Visit cao.ie →

ACCESS Programmes and Courses

If you are finding it difficult to get to third level by the standard routes, many universities and institutes of technology offer an ACCESS course or programme. These give you the skills and knowledge needed for a full-time third level course and make the move to college easier. They also help you identify the course best suited to your interests and abilities.

Successfully completing some ACCESS programmes may allow you to apply to that college for a place on a degree course.

> **Good to know:** You won't get a student grant for these programmes or courses, but they are generally free.

Visit careersportal.ie →

CAO – QQI/FET/FETAC Qualifications

Thinking of doing a QQI Level 5 Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course and using it to get into third level? Use the drop-down menu on this page to select your preferred college(s). You will see the number of places reserved on each course for people who have completed QQI Level 5, along with any requirements for the PLC area or subjects.

Visit cao.ie →

Irish Language Requirements

Some Universities have an Irish or third language requirement. This applies if you are applying to 3rd level as a Leaving certificate student. In general, if you are applying from an Access course, or a QQI level 5 (PLC) , mature student, etc you do not need to meet this requirement. Please click the list of admissions officers in the above sections if you have any questions in relation to this.

Visit cao.ie →

4. Career Events Calendar

Open days, taster days and information sessions, all in one place.

Career Events Calendar – CareersPortal.ie

Nearly all college events, open days, information sessions, taster days and career events are listed here, week by week. Click on any event that interests you for more information or to register. Looking at the next few weeks makes it easier to plan ahead.

Visit careersportal.ie →

5. Tertiary Degrees

A new type of degree that does not use the CAO points system.

National Tertiary Office

Tertiary degrees are designed to widen access to third level. You start your degree in a QQI Level 5 (further education) college and then transfer to a partner third level institution, generally into year two.

On the website, click on Courses to see every course, its third level institution and its partner further education college. Click on a course to find out more, including the modules you will study and the entry requirements.

Visit nto.hea.ie →



6. External Candidates

Studying for the Leaving Certificate outside of school? Start here.

State Examinations Commission

If you are studying for a Leaving Certificate subject outside of a recognised school, you need to register with the State Examinations Commission (SEC) to sit the exam. This link has information for external candidates, including how to register.

Visit examinations.ie →

Leaving Certificate Subject Information

A great source of information if you are deciding which Leaving Certificate subjects to study. Every subject is listed, with a brief summary of what it involves, grades awarded, course overview and content, exam structure, career possibilities and third level entry requirements.

Visit careersportal.ie →



7. Course Finder

Search for courses by subject, location and level.

Career Guidance Tools for All – CareersPortal.ie

Type the course you are interested in into the search bar and all related courses will appear. You can filter by area or course level, then click on a course for details of what you will study, entry requirements, course videos and more.

Visit careersportal.ie →

8. Useful Links

More websites that can help with grants, applications and your rights.

Link	What it's for
Career Aptitude Tests	Take the free CareersPortal Interest Profiler to find your top career interests and get matched to careers and courses. You will need to set up a free account.
Classroom Guidance Tests	Take free self-evaluation tests to reveal your personal strengths preferences helping you understand yourself better and with choosing your future
SUSI Grants	Do you think you may be entitled to a grant? Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) awards student grants. You can check whether you meet the eligibility criteria and apply on their website.
CAO – Useful Links and Further Information	Key dates, application guidance and further information from the Central Applications Office.
Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)	An alternative admissions scheme for school leavers whose disability has had a negative impact on their second level education.
Citizens Information	Clear, impartial information on education, training, grants and your rights.
Youthreach	If you have left school without any formal qualifications, the Youthreach programme can provide you with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience.

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