

December 2019

Dear Parents / Guardians,

Following on from my meeting with you at the 6th Year Information Night in September, I am writing to you to give you a number of updates and reminders regarding college applications and supplementary schemes available to your daughter.

The **CAO** deadline is fast approaching on **February 1st 2020**. We have covered the registration and form completion process in class in November and I have urged the students to register their applications in order that we can continue to work on them during class time. The month of January will be dedicated to the CAO in Career Classes. The online fee is €45, with a discounted fee of €30 in place if applications are made prior to January 20th.

Students must check to see what **level course** they are applying for through the CAO. (**Level 8 or 7/6**). Sometimes, the same course is offered at 2 levels. eg. CIT Tourism is offered at Level 8 and Level 7. In a situation like this, students should consider applying for both levels on their CAO as there will undoubtedly be a points difference. All these such courses have different codes and course progressions, so it is imperative that a student checks information carefully.

Student must continually check the **Alert Lists** section on the CAO website as instructed, to see if there are any course, level or entry requirement changes.

The **biggest mistake** that students make when filling out their CAO is to rank their choices in order of descending points. This ranking is based on 2019's points, which is now merely a historical guide. Points can and do change from year to year. Students should always rank their choices in order of preference. Thorough research must be carried out on all courses a student places on her CAO form, not just her first or second preference. It is important to be realistic about points hoped for, and always remember to check entry requirements first.

The other item to also remind parents of is that all **Restricted CAO Application Courses** must be applied for before February 1st and cannot be added in the

Change of Mind process. (May 5th to July 1st). These courses are generally in categories such as Music, Theatre, Medicine, Art etc.

This year's **HPAT** (Medicine Aptitude Test) is on February 22nd 2020. The interested students registered at the beginning of November and have been advised to use the practice tests as much as possible. Registration is still open.

Also following on from the information pack given to you in September, the CAO incorporates two supplementary schemes (**HEAR and DARE**) into the application process for 3rd Level. The schemes are – Disability Access Route to Education – DARE, and the Higher Education Access Route – HEAR. The online application for each of these schemes must be commenced in conjunction with each student's CAO application if applicable to them. DARE is to do with disability – learning, health or mental health. HEAR concerns financial and personal support for 3rd Level students. If you are unfamiliar with these schemes or are unsure what to do, please go to www.accesscollege.ie or contact us at school in order to get more information or to pass on material pertaining to your daughter. The final closing date for submission of all these applications is March 15th 2020.

Ms Kelly (SEN Coordinator), Ms O Leary and I have met and continue to work with all the students who have made us aware of their application for **DARE**. It is each student's responsibility to ask for help when filling out Section A and to ensure that it is done correctly. There is an information session relevant to all colleges participating in **DARE & HEAR** in UCC on Saturday, January 11th.

Students who are applying for a **Grant** through SUSI, can register their names and contact details on the CAO form. This speeds up the grant application process, which is made online through SUSI in April. Students should ensure that this box is ticked and updated on their CAO forms. This ticking exercise simply ensure a speedier processing of the Grant application – it is not the application itself.

Students who have an **Exemption/s** from Irish or a Foreign Language/s or both, must tick this box on their CAO form. This is imperative, as otherwise the colleges the student is applying to will not be aware of her Exemption/s and therefore she may not meet the entry requirements for the courses she is applying to.

We will be commencing the **Further Education Colleges/Post Leaving Certificate (PLCs. eg. College of Commerce, CSN, St Johns' College etc.)** applications after the CAO closes in February. There is no specific deadline for these courses and no application fees in place. A student can make an online application to each college and can generally apply for 3 courses in order of preference for each college. If her initial application is successful, she will be invited to attend an interview for her first course as indicated on her application form. These interviews generally happen in blocks in March/April and August.

The final closing date for remaining **UCAS** applications is January 15th 2020. It is the student's responsibility to meet this deadline and to ensure that her application is fully completed and submitted on time.

Students making applications to **EUNICAS** should keep an eye on dates and deadlines also. Different European countries and colleges have different deadline dates.

Some Third Level **scholarship** application systems, for example UCC's QUERCUS scholarship programme, are approaching closing date deadlines. Students should be encouraged to look at these programmes and submit applications.

I would strongly advise students who wish to go on to Third Level next year, to make applications to all education systems and options possible. In this way, a student is keeping all her **options open** and relieving the pressure of 'all eggs in one basket'. Each application system is separate to the next and students, if successful, can receive offers from all and then select which choice is best in August.

I also feel it is of critical importance to encourage your daughters to undertake **thorough research** into all her courses, and not just her top preferences. I feel it is always important to emphasise that there is almost always alternative ways into chosen areas – this certainly helps to relieve stress and points pressure.

I would encourage each student to give due consideration to her career interests, aptitudes, work values, work skills, work environment, personality traits, strengths and abilities in conjunction with entry requirements before making any decisions. I would hope that the worksheets given to you in September's pack would prove helpful to this. It is never too late to attend Open Days, to undertake Work Experience or to participate in course taster programmes.

As always, you are most welcome to follow the school's career Twitter feed for updates on career events, news and updates. **@saccareers**

At the 6th Year talk in September, I gave you an information pack with booklets and leaflets on all of the aforementioned application systems and supplementary schemes, or if you were unable to attend, I gave one to your daughter. But if you would like a further copy of anything contained in these information booklets, please just ask.

Best wishes,

Ms Niav Gallagher

Guidance Counsellor