



Waterford Institute *of* Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

COLLEGE CHOICES

THE PARENTS'
GUIDE

The steps involved in research

College choices – the parents' guide will help you guide a prospective college student to make their own decisions and become independent. Here are some of the steps involved in making the right course choices.

1 Understand the CAO process

In Ireland you can apply to most colleges through the Central Applications Office (CAO) which has an excellent parents' guide to the process. Download it at www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/CAOparentsguide.pdf

2 Identify interests

Where does the prospective student's interests lie in both academic terms and in their personal life? We have put together worksheets to help CAO applicants figure out what areas they're interested in so they can then start researching related courses. See the *How to research your CAO options* booklet at www.wit.ie/how

3 Research courses related to interests

Once a person knows their interests they are better placed to start researching courses. Research can include online searches, visiting careers websites, college websites and reading through handbooks. Compare courses and make lists of questions to ask about them.

4 Talk to people

Put together a list of questions to ask lecturers, students or graduates about the course, the modules and the future it leads to.

5 Visit colleges, campuses and cities/towns

See if the colleges that run courses the prospective college student is interested in have an open day or facilitate campus tours. There's nothing like visiting a place in person to get a feel for it. It's also good to get a sense of what the place is like to live in and what transport links and accommodation are like.

6 Money

Our worksheet on comparing the cost of going to college from place to place will help you get a sense of finances to feed into your own budgeting and family finance plans or conversations.

Where do we begin?

College choices – the parents' guide is to assist parents and guardians in communicating with a prospective CAO applicant about making informed choices.

Here you will find tips on how you can help a prospective college student understand where their interests lie and research related courses thoroughly.

This booklet accompanies our *How to research your CAO options* booklet for CAO applicants which you can download and print out at www.wit.ie/how. *How to research your CAO options* contains worksheets for CAO applicants to fill out and help them figure out their interests and make the CAO choices that are best for them.

So where do you start? The earlier the better. Ideally parents/guardians should start discussions early on in 6th year. A good approach is to have ongoing informal chats about possible choices rather than formal sit down discussions.

If your son or daughter has a Guidance Counsellor then they will benefit from the professional advice they receive. Your main part to play is to encourage them to engage with the guidance service and to give due consideration to the options that might interest them.

We have included plenty of questions to use as prompts to help discover what a prospective college student is really interested in, as well as worksheets on finances and those on understanding your expectations.

Regardless of what your son or daughter wants to study make sure they check out the campus, the student supports available and understand the costs of their choice.

This is both a daunting and exciting time. Remember that college is a time for change and a chance to explore new ideas, try new sports, socialise with students from different counties, countries and cultures, and explore academic and career goals.

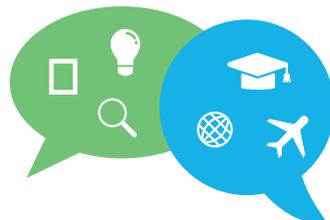
We encourage parents to get in touch with queries, attend open events or sign up as a family for one of our one-hour campus tours. Come talk to us, we'd be delighted to help.

See www.wit.ie/campustour to book a campus tour and www.wit.ie/events for up-to-date details of open days/evenings and 'Ask WIT' events in the week of 1 February and 1 July CAO deadlines and at CAO offers.



Time for honest conversations

Every teenager and young adult is different. Every family is different. So rather than making sweeping assumptions it is important to sit down to talk choices and options through.



Peer pressure

Peer pressure is a real issue for college applicants. They may be influenced by friends' choice of college or feel uncomfortable in telling classmates where they really want to go. It's important they understand they should choose what they really want to do as their friends may not receive an offer for the same institution. Anyone worried about meeting new friends as their schoolmates are going elsewhere must realise that many other students will be in the same position. Some of the most lasting friendships are made at college.

Qualification quality

While some people are particular about the type of institution they get their qualification from, in Ireland we have a standardised system for educational attainment. This means that a qualification offered by any higher education institution has to meet certain criteria so that the public can know and trust the quality of a qualification. Nationwide qualifications are classified from Level 1 to 10. WIT offers from level 6 (Higher Cert) right through to Level 10 (Doctorate). The CAO has two lists one for Level 8 and one for levels 7 and 6.

Homebird or adventurer?

Just because a young person is confident and outgoing doesn't mean he or she is keen on living far away or in a large city just yet. On the other hand, a quiet and shy individual, may be very keen to spread their wings and live independently from home. Have a conversation about how prepared the teenager you're helping is for independent living, as well as the challenges and adventures it might bring.

Transition to adulthood

A young adult will need support as they move into adulthood. At college they will be treated as adults. During the summer preceding college, it is good to encourage independence by providing the opportunity to budget money, cook easy meals, do laundry, pass the driving test, etc.

Finances

At some stage you will need to sit down and look at the costs of the various options. Be realistic if you can't afford a particular choice and look at other colleges with similar courses. Applicants have until 1 July to finalise their choices on the CAO. If finances are a concern you may want to introduce this conversation earlier so you have time to do adequate research.

Grant applications

If you are applying for a grant make sure all the documentation is sent in on time. You can check eligibility at Susi.ie

Accommodation

The earlier you apply for accommodation the more choices you will have. If you are choosing a WIT course, check out costs and choices at www.wit.ie/accommodation

Get familiar with the supports available

Long before a prospective student starts college they can get to know the campus and the supports available. Browse the website and check out where all the resources are located at an open day or campus tour. From student life and learning services to the Student's Union, to new friends made through joining clubs and societies, there's a whole community of people out to help students.

Use your networks

Do you know someone working in a career or studying a course the CAO applicant you're helping is interested in? Can you use your own network of friends, neighbours, colleagues and family to help put them in touch with someone? Take the opportunity to ask the important questions before 1 July.

Career satisfaction

Parents are always concerned about job prospects for their children. It's important to remember that if someone has no interest in an area, it will be hard to enjoy work – even if there are guaranteed jobs.

The contented student

A student that loves the subjects, topics and activities on the course they choose will increase the chance of completing first and subsequent years with good results and achieve better career options.

As a parent I am used to helping sort out problems with school or staff, can I do this with college?

In general students at third level are 18 or over and as legal adults college staff cannot discuss or disclose personal details with a parent. If the student feels they need support outside the college staff the Students' Union is there to support them.

Questions to ask

School subjects

List what parts of the subjects you enjoy and are good at. Is it the practical demon-strations? Team work? Problem solving?

Writing essays? Helping others? Do you find anything particularly interesting or enjoyable?

Extracurricular activities

What did you enjoy the most during transition year, work experience, volunteer work, summer camps, Irish college, sports and hobbies you are involved in outside of school?

What are you interested in? E.g. school subjects, material you have read in books, online, on social media, and activities with friends or family.

Looking to the future

What do you see yourself doing once you have completed your studies? Is it working outdoors? Is it physical work? Is it working in a lab? Is it working in an office? Is it having opportunities to work abroad? Is it being organised? Is it working shift hours? A 9-5 job?

Your future

To be filled out by parent/guardian and shared with prospective student

Ways I would like to help you in your research	
My dreams for you	
Your strengths (things I think you're good at)	
Your personality	
Things I think you'd hate	
Career areas I think you should do, and why	
My biggest fears about your education choices	
Financial restrictions and how we can work around them	
My thoughts about you moving away from home for your studies	
My thoughts about you living at home during your studies	
Why I think education is valuable	

My future

To be filled out by CAO applicant and shared with parents/guardian



	How I'd like your help as I research courses
	My dreams for the future (or where I see myself in the future)
	Subject areas and activities I enjoy and feel I am good at
	My personality
	Things I think I'd hate
	Options I feel pressured into and am not keen on at home/ at school/by my friends
	My biggest fears about the CAO choices I make
	Worries I have about money
	My thoughts on living away from home
	My thoughts on living at home while at college
	Why I think education is valuable

The truth about jobs and careers

Advice for parents of CAO applicants from Angela Collins, Head of Careers, WIT

If the prospective college student in your life has no idea what to study and doesn't have a particular career in mind, don't worry, it's normal.

Careers advisers estimate that about 40% of vacancies advertised for graduates do not ask for specific degree subjects. In fact, many employers are more interested in transferable/personal skills and abilities than degree discipline.

Employers look for graduates who have taken the initiative to develop their skills. Our advice to students is to choose an area of study that they are genuinely going to enjoy and do well at. Then, while they're studying, to do some work experience each year – anything from getting involved in a student society to helping out with a charity project or an internship.

Progression routes

While the focus of many students is to research and apply for level 8 courses, there are other options that can lead to the same outcome for many students.

Further Education (FE) progression routes

Many third level institutes have partnerships with colleges of further education, meaning a set number of students undertaking a relevant course in an FE college can apply for direct entry, via the CAO, onto specific courses.

Please note that participation on a related FE course does not guarantee entry onto a course, so as part of your research contact both institutions to find out if this option is the right one for you.

Level 6/7 progression

It is recommended that a prospective student researches the courses they are interested at levels 6, 7 and 8 and use the 20 spaces on both lists. Some level 6 or 7 courses allow students to progress on to a related level 7 or 8 course once they meet the required grades and there are places available.

Additional points and reserved places

Applicants may be eligible for extra points for certain courses or for previous third-level education. There are also agreements in place with certain schools. For example, in WIT you can find out more at www.wit.ie/admissionspolicies

Access

There are access programmes in place around the country for students experiencing long-term disadvantage and who have the ability to succeed academically.

Disability

You will have seen on the CAO form that you need to tick the box for disability so that the college has been informed. Find out what happens next at: www.wit.ie/disabilityservice



How to turn interests into course choices



What I love				
Related Careers				
Related Courses				
Minimum Entry Requirements				
Questions				
Actions				

Money

	COLLEGE 1	COLLEGE 2	COLLEGE 3
COLLEGE NAME			
ESTIMATED GRANT <i>Fill out the eligibility reckoner on SUSI.ie (List the correct campus as this can impact the distance/eligibility)</i>			
Grant (under 45km)			
Grant (over 45km)			
ESTIMATED EXPENSES			
Student contribution			
Transport			
Public transport			
Cost of bike			
Lift share cost			
Car cost for year			
Car repayments			
Tax			
Insurance			
Fuel			
Upkeep			
College parking			
Living expenses			
Accommodation Rent			
Broadband			
Gas/Electricity/Heating			
Food shopping			
Mobile phone			
Other expenses			
Total for 9 months			
Total for 12 months			
Positive points about this institute <i>Your comparison could include: Student body size, class size, league table place, accommodation choices, transport links, facilities, etc. It's important to visit a campus and get a feel for a city if you're moving away from home, so this might play a part in what you like or dislike about certain places.</i>			

Making the most of third level

College days can define a young person and help shape their future life. Here's how students can make the best of the opportunities available and get the social and practical skills employers look for.

Going to college is the key part of the college experience

The knowledge attained at higher education broadens the mind; mixing with new classmates and moving around a large campus from lecture to lecture is different to secondary school.

Work placement

Many courses offer work placement as a mandatory or optional feature of a course. With some planning, a student could seek work placement abroad or in another part of Ireland so that they get to experience life away from home for a few months, while gaining valuable experience.

Study abroad

Some courses offer a study abroad option, and students find this a great opportunity to gain independence, valuable life experience and enhance employability.

Summers away

Students who really want to broaden their life experience can spend the summer working or travelling away from home. Students have three months to make the most of whether it is seeking internships related to their course, or casual work in another part of Ireland, Europe or the US for example. Inter-railing and student work visas are two rites of passage to look into.

Live out of home

Living at home can be a great convenience, especially for first years. If you want the student in your family to have true independence and local rents are reasonable, check if living out of home is in the family budget for subsequent years.

Driving forward

One way to get independence and freedom is to invest in a small car and commute, rather than paying rent.

Getting involved in clubs and societies

Involvement with a club or society can give a student an extra-curricular activity which broadens their group of acquaintances beyond local school friends or classmates to people from around Ireland as well as international students.





WHY CHOOSE WATERFORD?



RENT	SOCIAL	WIT	TRANSPORT	FORMER STUDENTS	GYM
<p>WIT</p> <p>€370</p> <p>Per Month</p>	<p>PURPLE FLAG STATUS</p> <p>For a vibrant and safe evening and night-time scene</p>	<p>South East's largest third level institute</p>	<p>WIT</p> <p>is a smarter travel campus. Free WIT campus shuttle bus</p>	<p>Notable students who studied in Waterford (WIT)</p>	<p>WIT</p> <p>Arena gym</p> <p>€150</p>
<p>Galway €500 pm</p> <hr/> <p>Cork €560 pm</p> <hr/> <p>Dublin €700 pm</p>	<p>Restaurants, bars</p> <hr/> <p>Cinemas, theatres</p> <hr/> <p>WIT arena, sports clubs</p>	<p>70 CAO courses, 5 campuses</p> <hr/> <p>10,000 students, 60 clubs and societies</p> <hr/> <p>1,000+ employer links</p>	<p>90 mins from Dublin / Cork</p> <hr/> <p>60 mins from Wexford</p> <hr/> <p>40 mins from Kilkenny</p>	<p>Henry Shefflin, Kilkenny hurler</p> <hr/> <p>Niamh Briggs, Irish rugby player</p> <hr/> <p>Philip Irish, CEO, IAWS group</p>	<p>Cork €290</p> <hr/> <p>Dublin €380</p> <hr/> <p>Wexford €450</p>