

Planning Ahead & Making Choices for Third Level – a Guide for Parents & Guardians

Parents and Guardians play an important role in their child's chosen career path. This is why it is important to plan ahead, and engage with your child in discussing their options, to make informed decisions.

Third level education gives your child an opportunity to study something they are interested in.

It is often the first step in their career path and will help them mature and gain confidence in their abilities. It is important to make the time to talk to your child and actively listen to their responses, thereby support your child to make informed decisions based on their strengths, skills, interests and values.

Individual strengths – encourage your child to identify their strengths; what do they enjoy doing; what do they like most about their favourite subject; how do they like to learn; what is important to them; what motivates them.

www.careersportal.ie - excellent online resource to identify interests and personality profiler

Research – this takes time and effort. Research gathering on the structure and content of courses must be prioritised. This enables your child to gain valuable information on what is involved and how it can fit their own strengths and interests. Also consider practical elements of completing a course i.e. length of course; options for work placement; blended learning options; how is course assessed; do the modules/course content suit you; etc.

www.qualifax.ie - excellent research tool for information on higher education courses.

www.apprenticeship.ie - research tool for traditional and 'new' apprenticeship routes

What courses are available? - Ireland has a national framework of qualifications (NFQ). This system classifies qualifications from Level 1 to 10. Third Level qualifications fall under Levels 6-10 on the framework.



CAO – this is the Irish system for applying to HE (Higher Education) institutions for Undergraduate qualifications. Courses are allocated based on CAO points and subject entry requirements. It is very important to choose courses on your CAO application in order of preference rather than on points predictions. Your child can apply for three different qualification levels through CAO. These are: *Honours bachelor's degree (Level 8); Ordinary bachelor's degree; Higher Certificate (Level 6)*. Application to CAO is through www.cao.ie

Further Education (FE) Courses – This is another option for gaining entry to Higher Education, commonly known as PLC (Post-Leaving Certificate) courses. Most PLC courses lead to a Level 5 or a Level 6 qualification on the NFQ framework. Many FE colleges have links with HE institutions, whereby there are opportunities to gain access to third-level courses upon completion of your PLC course. Application is made direct to the FE college online and is free to apply.

What job will the course lead to? - The Careers advice section on www.gradireland.com has a useful section called 'jobs with your degree'. There are also useful tools on www.careersportal.ie

Finance – It is important to check the relevant institutions for their fees and charges associated with the course your child wishes to complete. Most colleges charge a Registration fee or Student contribution fee. Grants and scholarships are available to eligible students. Useful websites include www.studentfinance.ie & www.susi.ie

Supports – Extra supports are available if required for third level education. More information can be found on www.accesscollege.ie if applying through the CAO application system. There is also an Access office in all institutions, and it is important to link in before your child begins their course to make sure the necessary supports for your child are catered for.

Additional information will be given to your child in their Career class. Please make sure they are familiar with all options available to them and to link in regularly with their Career Guidance teacher and information uploaded on their Teams group to avoid missing important deadlines.