
DARE HEAR SUMMARY REPORT 2023

DARE and HEAR are higher education admissions schemes which aim to achieve equity of access by providing reduced points places to school leavers. These schemes were developed by a number of universities and colleges over 10 years ago 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 National Access Plan and Priorities 2022-28 and in the HEA's System Performance Framework 2023-2028.

2023 saw both DARE and HEAR in operation in all public higher education institutions in the country for the first time as NCAD, who joined the schemes in 2022, admitted their first students via DARE and HEAR . All 20 participating HEIs reserve a minimum of 5% of their places for reduced points offers for each of DARE and HEAR. In 2023, almost 1 in 5 students who applied to CAO on the basis of their Leaving Certificate (and were aged under 23) were assessed for DARE and or HEAR eligibility, and 13,650 offers were made to DARE and HEAR applicants across the entire Irish higher education sector (some applicants received both a Level 8 and a Level 6/7 offer).

Key DARE and HEAR Statistics 2023

- 20% of all 2023 CAO applicants made an online DARE or HEAR application (1 in 5)
- Over 5600 DARE and HEAR applicants accepted a place in Higher Education in 2023
- 12% (220) increase in the number of reduced points DARE offers accepted by applicants, compared to 2022
- 30% (1,394) increase in the number of on/above points DARE offers accepted by applicants, compared to 2022
- 9% (-131) decrease in the number of reduced points HEAR offers accepted by applicants, compared to 2022
- 1% (-165) increase in the number of on/above points HEAR offers accepted by applicants, compared to 2022

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:



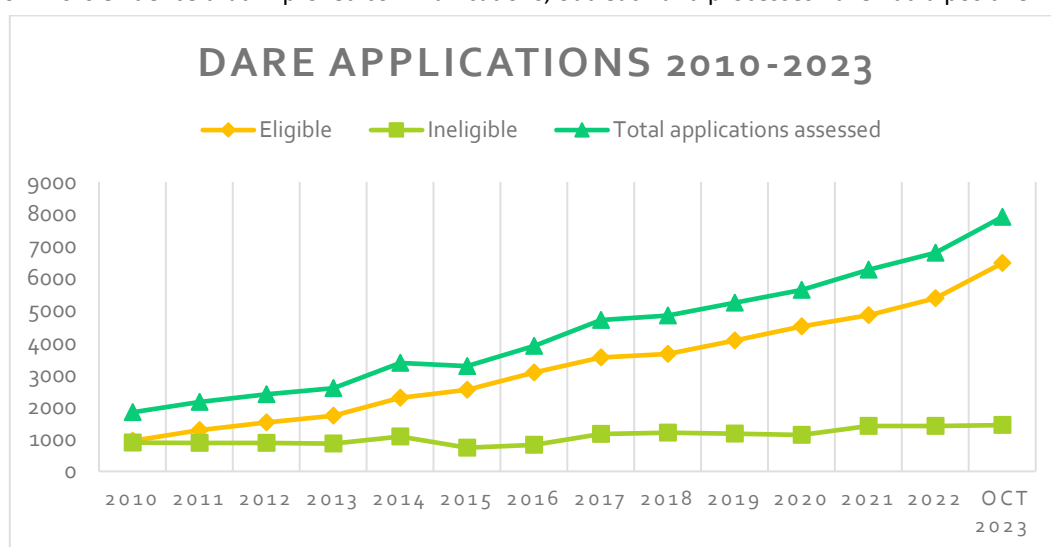
Each participating college has a reserved number of places to offer eligible DARE applicants at reduced Leaving Certificate points (typically 5% of overall first year undergraduate places). The number of reduced points

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

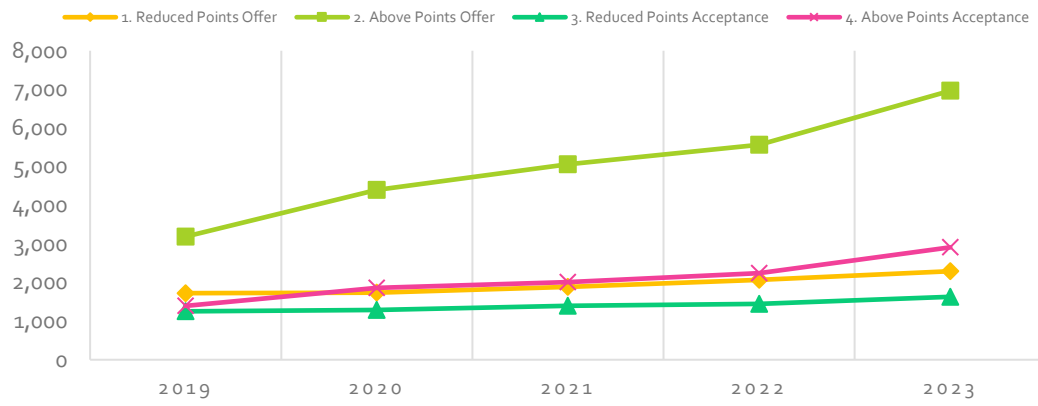
DARE Applications, Offers and Acceptances 2023

The number of applications to DARE, offers of college places and acceptances of those places continues to grow. In 2023 the number of completed applications (i.e. those who completed the application form and provided supporting documentation) to DARE grew by 16% from 2022 (and has increased 102% since 2016). In 2023, 82% of applicants to DARE met the eligibility criteria (the same % as in 2022) but compared to just 52% in 2010. This is evidence that improved communications, outreach and processes have had a positive impact.



Like other CAO applicants, those applying to DARE can receive two offers (one at Level 8 and one at Level 6/7) but can only accept one of those offers. In 2023, 9,254 offers of a place in higher education were made to the 6,473 eligible DARE applicants, with 4,539 accepting their offer. Of this figure, 1,629 accepted a reduced points offer, whilst an additional 2,910 eligible DARE applicants already achieved on or above the points required for their preferred course. Those receiving a reduced points offer via DARE may not otherwise have received any offer at all, or as a result of DARE, their offer was for a course higher on their list of CAO preferences than their points would normally permit. Irrespective of which type of offer was accepted, DARE-eligible entrants can receive disability supports at their college.

DARE OFFERS AND ACCEPTANCES

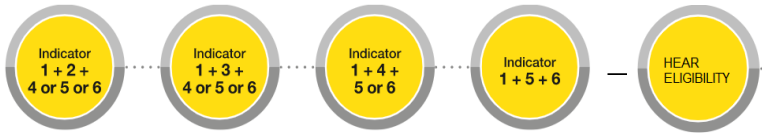


HEAR



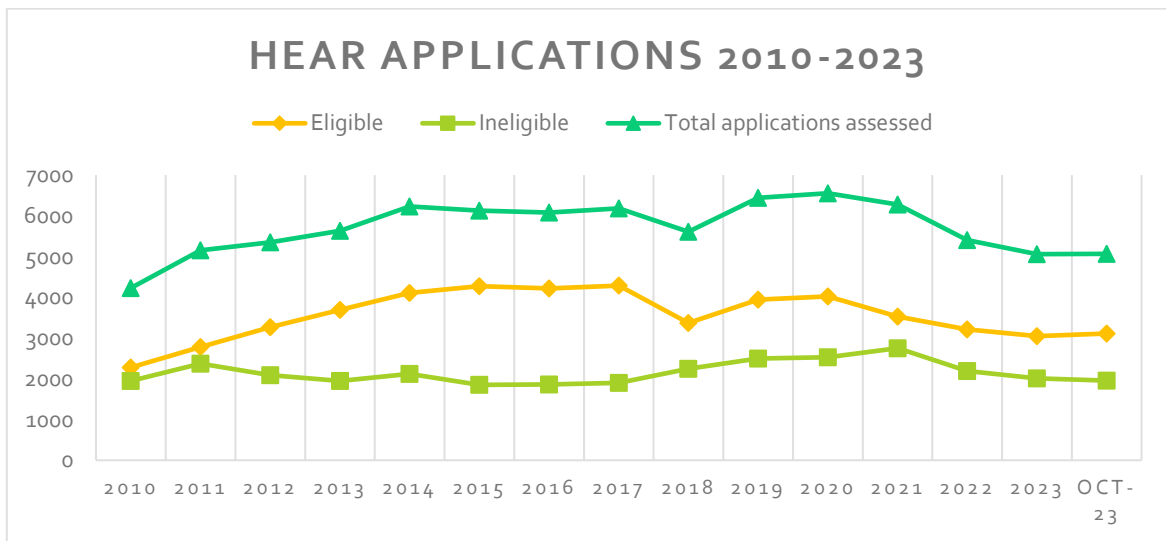
The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a third level admissions scheme which offers places on reduced points and extra college supports to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In order to be eligible for HEAR applicants must fulfil the following criteria:

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

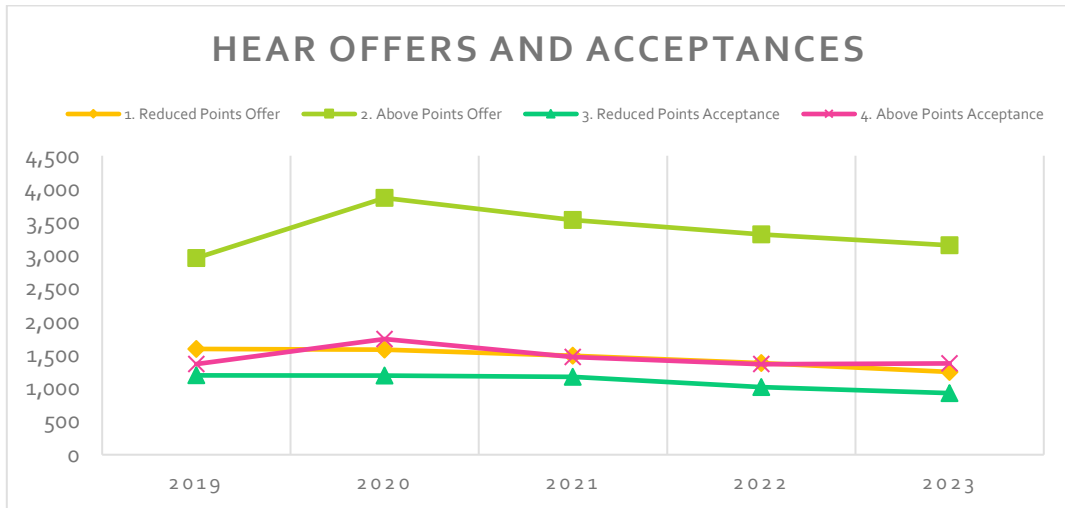


HEAR Applications, Offers and Acceptances 2023

In 2023, 62% 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 applicants can receive two offers (one at Level 8 and one at Level 6/7) but can only accept one of those offers. In 2023, 4,396 offers (representing a 7.5% decrease on the number of offers made in 2022) of a place in higher education were made to the 3,113 eligible HEAR applicants, with 2,300 accepting their offer. Of this figure, 927 accepted a reduced points offers re, whilst an additional 1,373 eligible HEAR applicants already achieved on or above the points required for their preferred course.



Prioritisation

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

- a) students with disabilities who are also from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds;
- b) students with physical disabilities, are blind/vision impaired or are deaf/hard of hearing.

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 2023, the number of applicants eligible for both DARE and HEAR was 382, with 245 accepting a place. In 2023, of the 218 applicants who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing 126 of them accepted a place in higher education, and of the 91 applicants under the Blind/Vision Impaired category, 64 accepted a place.

Spotlight On

Kealan Begley Schade – Atlantic Technological University

Kealan entered into ATU on the HEAR scheme. “I first learned of HEAR in an off-chance meeting with my guidance counsellor, a former teacher of mine. When I was told of HEAR & my guidance counsellor helped me apply, I immediately had hope, that even if I could not perform as well as I would have liked in my Leaving Cert, I could still turn a new leaf and get into college. HEAR not only helped me get into college but supported me long after and continues to do so.

I've received help in forms of a student mentor who I could speak to frequently, financial bursaries, study support & I've frequently been informed that if I need help with anything.” Kaelan mentions the level of re-assurance and support he has gotten, not just through ATU's student services but in the social aspects of college too. “All of this has given me quite a secure safety net. I've since joined several clubs, namely Rugby & HEMA. I'm happy, active & busy for the first time in a long time”.



Laura O'Connor – Munster Technological University

Laura is in 3rd Year of the Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Accounting. “Once I knew about the HEAR scheme, it took the pressure off my existing financial worries. It also reassured me that I could still access college was I to underperform in my Leaving Cert exams.

From the very first day I attended college as a HEAR student, I was introduced to all the various supports in place I could benefit from. Meetings were, and still are, constantly offered first to assess what supports we may need, then to be given guidance on the financial, academic and personal supports available.

Each advice given has been very much tailored to my own needs, from reminding me to meet deadlines applying for funding opportunities, to setting up support to help me in my study skills, and ensuring I avail of every single opportunity available. Once I got into college, I never looked back thanks to the extra college supports I have been getting through HEAR. I feel it has enhanced my college experience knowing that support is always at hand at the click of a button.”

